

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16

COUNCIL

24th JUNE 2015

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA ITEM 6

**THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT
CORPORATE PERFORMANCE
REPORT FOR 2015/16**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 in accordance with Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Endorse the Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 in accordance with Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (**Appendix 1**) that sets out a public assessment of performance for 2014/15 along with priorities for 2015/16 and plans for achieving them.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. As part of discharging this legal duty, local authorities are required to:

- Publish improvement priorities and plans for achieving them as soon as is reasonably practicable after the start of the financial year to which they relate. The Welsh Government and the Wales Audit Office have provided helpful interpretation of the legislation in that unless there are significant extenuating circumstances, 'as soon as is reasonably practicable' will be interpreted as no later than 30th June;
- Make a public assessment of their performance for each financial year by no later than 31st October following the end of the financial year to which the information relates. In the case of Rhondda Cynon Taf, 'assessments of performance' are called 'performance evaluations'.

- 3.2 For the 2014/15 financial year, the Council at its meeting on 25th June 2014 approved seven priorities and has reported up dates on progress for each as part of quarterly

Performance Reports during the year. The approved priorities were (in no particular order):

- Public health and protection;
- Education;
- Children and family centred services;
- Maintaining people's independence;
- Improving our communities¹;
- Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green²; and
- Making best use of our budget³.

3.3 To help ensure the Council effectively discharges its legal duty, Scrutiny Working Groups were established in 2014 to review and challenge evaluations of performance and priority plans as part of developing pre-scrutiny arrangements. At this time, the arrangements were a two step process:

- Priority plans reviewed and published by June for the financial year ahead and included in a document called a Corporate Plan; and
- Performance evaluations (assessing performance for the previous financial year) reviewed and published in October in a document called an Annual Delivery Report.

3.4 Following consideration of the above process by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 15th October 2014, a number of points were highlighted by Members to help further strengthen existing arrangements. The primary area deemed in need of improvement was 'timing' in that the performance evaluations and priority plans were not considered together.

3.5 To address this, Lead Officers evaluated the performance of 2014/15 priority areas and at the same time drafted priority plans for 2015/16 with the aim of enabling a more complete picture of performance to be presented. These combined up dates were reported to Scrutiny Working Groups in April and May 2015 where Members were asked to form judgements on the extent to which:

3.5.1 The 2014/15 draft performance evaluation(s):

- **Provide a balanced and fair assessment of performance?**
 - Are evaluative i.e. do the evaluations set out the impact the Council's work has had and also where impacts did not materialise as intended?
 - Link with the relevant draft 2015/16 priority plan where appropriate i.e. do key findings / themes from the evaluation feature in the 2015/16 priority plan where it would be reasonable to expect them to?

3.5.2 **The 2015/16 draft priority plan(s) has understandable outcomes supported by actions and performance indicators that will enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised?**

¹ Improving our Communities – this priority was titled Regenerating our communities in 2013/14

² Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green – this priority was titled Streetcare services and the natural environment in 2013/14

³ Making best use of our budget – this priority was titled Medium Term Service Planning in 2013/14

4. **REVIEW AND CHALLENGE BY SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS**

4.1 Five Scrutiny Working Groups were established to review the draft performance evaluations and priority plans, as part of the Council's pre-scrutiny arrangements. A summary of the main conclusions drawn by each Scrutiny Working Group are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Main conclusions drawn by Scrutiny Working Groups

Scrutiny Working Group	Priority Area	Draft 2014/15 performance evaluation – is it fair and balanced?	Draft 2015/16 priority plan – does it support effective scrutiny to take place in 2015/16?
Adult Services	Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently	<p>Further work required to ensure a fair and balanced evaluation is presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full picture not included of how the Council supports all clients i.e. no reference made to those clients supported in care homes; • The need to further explore how the impact of elements of the Service's work can be better gauged e.g. the impact that quality assurance arrangements have; • Clearer links needed between the 2014/15 evaluation and 2015/16 priority plan. 	<p>Opportunity to improve the content of the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More challenging targets needed in some areas e.g. clients supported in care homes; • Completion dates needed for all actions; • Other aspects of the Service's work included i.e. carer's assessments, where performance was amongst the worst in Wales in 2014/15, and delayed transfers of care.
Joint Education and Children's Services	Two priorities: 'A top quality Education' for all and 'Keeping all children and young people safe'	<p>'A top quality education for all' – a fair and balanced assessment overall, albeit, the need to include a short introduction at the front of the evaluation to set out the progress made by the Council in recent years.</p> <p>'Keeping all children and young people safe' – no overall conclusion made due to the need for more evaluative information on performance to be included.</p>	<p>'A top quality education for all' – opportunity to make the plan more focussed by streamlining the number of performance indicators.</p> <p>'Keeping all children and young people safe' – further development of the action plan required to enable effective scrutiny of progress during the year.</p>

Scrutiny Working Group	Priority Area	Draft 2014/15 performance evaluation – is it fair and balanced?	Draft 2015/16 priority plan – does it support effective scrutiny to take place in 2015/16?
Medium Term Service Planning – Overview and Scrutiny	Medium Term Service Planning	<p>Further information required to set out the full picture of the Council's work in this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which 2014/15 savings contributed to the budget gap for this financial year; • More clarity on the medium term financial outlook and how the Council plans to address this; • More information around the extent of the Council's workforce planning arrangements. 	<p>Medium Term Service Planning will remain the single most important programme of work within the Council with up dates being provided to Cabinet and Members during the year, and this built into all areas of the Council's work. It is considered that a priority action plan for 2015/16 setting out the Medium Term Service Planning framework that is already well embedded will add little value to the Council's existing arrangements. Therefore, it is proposed that the Medium Term Service Planning priority area, for the legal purposes of the Local Government Measure, no longer applies.</p>
Social and Physical Regeneration	Improving our communities	<p>A fair and balanced evaluation overall. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More emphasis should be included on the positive achievements during the year, for example, the support provided to businesses; • Further narrative needed that provides clearer links between the 2014/15 evaluation and the 2015/16 priority plan. 	<p>Opportunity to streamline the content of the plan to enable scrutiny to be focussed on the most important areas during 2015/16.</p>
'Streetcare Services' and 'Public Health and Protection'	Two priorities: 'Keeping RCT clean and green' and 'Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour'	<p>'Keeping RCT clean and green' – overall, a fair and balanced evaluation.</p> <p>'Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour' - overall, a fair and balanced evaluation.</p>	<p>'Keeping RCT clean and green' – opportunity to further improve the understanding of the progress / impact of the work included in the action plan by use of case studies as part of in-year reporting.</p> <p>'Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour' -</p>

4.2 Council officers took account of the feedback noted in Table 1 and reported an up dated full suite of documents to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 15th

June 2015. This committee had regard to the conclusions drawn by each Scrutiny Working Group and determined that:

- The 2014/15 performance evaluations provided a fair and balanced assessment;
- The 2015/16 priority plans set out what the Council aims to achieve in 2015/16;
- Improvements are required moving forward to make the information more concise, focussed and meaningful to the reader.

5. THE DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2015/16

- 5.1 The 2014/15 performance evaluations have provided the core evidence to enable Council officers to produce a draft Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16. The document aims to set out in an understandable way how the Council has performed against its priorities in 2014/15 and also propose priorities for 2015/16, and is included at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 In this way, the Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 represents the vehicle to enable the Council to meet its legal duty under Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and, equally important, is a key document to communicate to external stakeholders the Council's ambitions and plans for the future.
- 5.3 In this regard, the proposed priorities for 2015/16 are (in no particular order):
- Public health and protection;
 - Education;
 - Children and family centred services;
 - Maintaining people's independence;
 - Improving our communities;
 - Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green.
- 5.4 Council will note that the 2014/15 priority, 'Making better use of our budget', is not recommended to be a self standing priority in 2015/16 for the purposes of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Instead it is proposed that this area, also called Medium Term Service Planning, will be a fundamental principle that is central to all of the Council's priorities and work moving forward.
- 5.5 Subject to Council's consideration, an approved version of the Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16 will be published bilingually and copies made available at public facing Council buildings and on the Council's web-site. In addition, a summarised version will also be produced bilingually and made available on the Council's web-site.
- 5.6 Lastly, the Wales Audit Office has a statutory duty to audit the approved version of the Council's Corporate Performance Report, the results of which will be formally reported to the Council later in the municipal year.

6. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 All councils in Wales have a legal duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to publish improvement priorities and plans for achieving them as soon as is reasonably practicable after the start of the financial year to which they relate, and also to make a public assessment of their performance for each financial year.
- 6.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has discharged this responsibility through the compilation of a Corporate Performance Report for 2015/16. The content of the report has been subject to the Council's pre-scrutiny arrangements and has been updated in line with the feedback received through this process, where deemed appropriate.
- 6.3 It is considered that the overall outcome from the programme of work is an evaluation of performance for 2014/15 that is fair and balanced together with priority action plans that set out the Council's ambition and what it aims to achieve for 2015/16.

Rhondda Cynon Taf
County Borough Council
DRAFT
Corporate Performance
Report 2015/16

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



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

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This document contains the Council's priorities for 2015/16 and performance of 2014/15 priorities and should be considered as the Council's first and second stage reporting prepared under Part 1, of the Local Government Measure 2009 – Wales Programme for Improvement

FOREWORD

Welcome to the Council's Corporate Performance Report that assesses how we have performed against our priorities in 2014/15 and sets out what we want to achieve in 2015/16.

It is the first time we have brought together in one place an assessment of our current performance and our plans for the year ahead. This has been done with the aim of providing a more joined up picture of our work. Hopefully this makes the report informative and useful, but above all, I hope it provides you with opportunity to challenge us, feedback your views and ideas to us and work with us in the future.

The priorities we have set over the past few years have all contributed to a number of important goals: supporting the local economy to grow; protecting our most vulnerable residents through better prevention and early intervention; helping to create a safe environment for people to live and work; and delivering a more efficient Council. These goals remained key in 2014/15.

The assessment for 2014/15 shows that our results have generally improved with continued strong performance in areas such as helping to prevent people becoming homeless and the cleanliness of streets, where for both we were amongst the best in Wales. We also continued our focus on managing our finances effectively and continued our generally strong performance in improving the standard of teaching in schools. The assessment also tells us that if we are to meet our future goals, the speed of improvement needs to be quicker as in some areas it is amongst the lowest performance levels in Wales. This includes examination results of pupils aged 16 achieving 5 A* - C in GCSEs including Maths and English or Welsh; how quickly we assessed children at risk of harm and the extent to which qualified social workers were involved in this work; and the amount of waste residents recycle.

Overall I am pleased with the progress the Council made during 2014/15, but, as our assessment shows, there are many areas we still need to improve on at a time when there will be huge funding cuts to public services as a result of the UK Government's on-going austerity measures. I am under no illusions of how difficult this will be to achieve during a period of austerity as we estimate that through to 2017/18 we will need to reduce our spending by over £42million.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has been recognised as an efficiently run Council, most recently in the independent report into administration costs of local authorities commissioned by the Welsh Government, and we aim to deliver a wide range of services to meet residents' needs within our available resources. This approach has helped us plan and deliver in excess of £64m in efficiency savings over a number of years without impacting on front line services. The scale of the funding reductions more recently has meant we have been unable to protect front line services to the same extent as in the past and have needed to take tough decisions on services such as libraries, services for young people, day centres, meals on wheels and Arts and Culture Services, from which further savings of over £15m have been delivered. During the coming year we will be asking elected Councillors to scrutinise the impact that our decisions have had to help ensure they continue to meet residents needs and also asking for their help to identify other cost saving opportunities.

Making savings from an already restricted budget is going to be a significant challenge particularly when demand for a number of our services is likely to grow, and our ability to make the majority of future savings through delivering services more efficiency is not feasible. Without more radical action the rising costs in social care alone, which is clearly some of our most vital work, mean that we, along with other councils, will face serious financial risk. Change can sometimes be

controversial and difficult for people to accept, particularly when it affects services they value; however, there is no alternative but to do things differently.

With a decreasing budget, the Council will over this difficult financial period reduce in size and as a consequence employ fewer people. The relationship between the Council, partners, providers and citizens needs to adapt. What does this mean? It means we are open to new ways of doing things and we are not fixed on the status quo. To help us do this we will be working together more closely with a wide range of partners and community groups, further streamlining how our managers and staff are organised to ensure maximum efficiency, delivering services differently and where absolutely unavoidable, reducing or stopping some services.

Our primary focus will be to continue to ensure that services are of a good standard and achieve the outcomes residents want. The demand on local services will continue to rise and is being driven by a growing population of younger and older people. Managing the rising demand on services requires a step change in the Council's approach to early intervention and prevention, working across the public sector and with residents to prevent problems rather than just treating the symptoms. In some cases, residents will be required to pay more for certain services as the Council prioritises its resources.

The Council is committed to working together to help business start ups and create better conditions for business growth through initiatives such as Superfast Broadband and development opportunities, for example on the Treforest Industrial Estate, and we will continue to prioritise investment in Aberdare, Pontypridd and the Lido project so that our town centres remain vibrant and competitive. We will also continue our work with schools and the FE College to further improve the quality of teaching and invest in facilities so that young people can access a top quality education, and have opportunities to further their education, gain employment or access further training; but we must acknowledge that the Council is only one part of the wider picture. To achieve this, we will need our residents, our schools and colleges, and our businesses to play an even bigger part in improving prosperity.

We will work together to protect our most vulnerable children and adults, putting increased emphasis on preventing escalation of need by earlier identification of problems and better targeted support. This will mean more individuals will be able to live more independent and fulfilled lives with less or no support from us, where it is safe to do so.

We will work together to focus on preventative services to help people stop committing crimes such as anti social behaviour and domestic violence so that victims and the wider community feel safe. We will also be asking residents and businesses for their help to further increase how much they recycle so that the cost of collecting and disposing of resident and business refuse is reduced.

I think the word **together** is really important – no one person, organisation or group can achieve what we all want for our communities if they work alone. Everyone has a part to play and a contribution to make, and this principle is central to our new approach to better engage with you through 'RCT Together'. Therefore, before we make changes that impact directly on residents we will continue to ask for your views and will provide opportunities for you to be involved in shaping specific service changes.

Supporting our local economy to grow, protecting our most vulnerable residents through better prevention and early intervention, helping keep people safe and delivering a more efficient Council are our core aims. Our Corporate Performance Report provides more detail on how we have performed during 2014/15, what we aim to achieve in 2015/16 and how we will measure and track

success. But I know we cannot achieve these aims alone: we need everyone in the County Borough, residents, businesses and partners, to contribute to securing a prosperous future for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Lastly, I would like to place on record my utmost appreciation for the continued commitment of our staff, elected Councillors and partners in helping to improve the quality of life for residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Leader

DRAFT

How we performed in 2014-15 and set our Improvement Priorities for 2015/16

This is our first Corporate Performance Report which brings together a look back at last year's performance and then goes on to set out our priorities in 2015-16. We have previously published the information in two separate documents at different times of the year to meet our legal duty but in listening to feedback, we felt that people would be better able to get a more complete and timely picture of our performance by following a continuous flow of information.

Our Corporate Performance Report aims to tell you the story of how the Council performed during 2014-15 and also how we have used this information to help us set our priorities for 2015-16. We hope that the information it contains about our past performance and future plans will help you better understand the work we do and why we do it, and encourage you to give us your views to help us get better at what we do.

We try to ensure that all the things we do make a positive contribution to the longer term plan for the County Borough that we agreed with our partners in April 2013. We are working with these partners, South Wales Police, Cwm Taf Health Board, Interlink (the County Voluntary Council) and other organisations to deliver changes that will meet the needs of communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. These are set out in a document called "Delivering Change". www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan

Delivering 2014-15 Priorities:

In June 2014 the Council approved seven priorities for 2014/15 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CorporatePlan-2014to2015Report. These were:

Safety

1. Protecting people from harm and tackling anti social behaviour
2. Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'

Health

3. Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently
4. Keeping all children and young people safe

Prosperity

5. Providing a top quality education - Every School a great School
6. Improving our communities
7. Making the best use of our budget

In the last year we have been working hard both as a Council and with our partners to deliver the plans we set out. Where work will take longer than a year to complete it has been reviewed and if necessary will be carried on. Progress in each of the priorities has been scrutinised by Councillors every three months in reports that are available for everyone to see at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilperformance

Now we are at the end of the reporting year we can look back to see whether we achieved what we set out and more importantly, what difference did it make. This document contains a section which summarises each of the detailed evaluations that we have prepared for all the priorities. Each of the sections gives you our assessment of our work during 2014/15. Not only have we looked at our own

information, we have used feedback from people that use our services and also used data and information that compares us with other Welsh councils.

We also looked at how our work helped to contribute to the wider aims of our partnership plan 'Delivering Change' (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan) because much of the work we needed to do involved working with our partners. All of our Council priorities contribute towards the bigger picture of working towards a safer, healthier and more prosperous Rhondda Cynon Taf.

How did we set our Priorities for 2015-16

Most of the priorities we set last year will take longer than one year to tackle properly and so despite generally making positive progress, these will continue into 2015/16. This is also what Councillors and officers have been told by most people during meetings with residents, in surveys, in focus group meetings and by talking to people as part of our every day business. As well as looking at what you told us, we also looked at feedback from our regulators, the challenging financial climate we were facing and the progress we had made last year. We also considered the changes that we have to make in our work that are outside our control, e.g. changes to our Social Care arrangements because of the Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, as well as what would be of long-term benefit to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. But we also know that we need to get better at some of the things we do, continue to try new ideas and keep services going with less money and fewer staff.

We deliver many services by working with our partners. We know that this is even more important at a time when all public organisations are under pressure to make difficult decisions to reduce the amount they spend on services. It is important that whatever we do whether it is alone or with or through others, the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf get the best possible outcomes.

Taking all this into account, at its meeting on 24 June 2015 the Council agreed six priorities (***if agreed***) for 2015/16 that will make the biggest difference to the lives of people who live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

These are

- 1. Protecting people from harm and tackling anti social behaviour*
- 2. Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'*
- 3. Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently*
- 4. Keeping all children and young people safe*
- 5. Providing a top quality education - Every School a great School*
- 6. Improving our communities*

In setting our priorities the Council considered that one of last year's priorities, 'Making the best use of our budget', was central to everything that we do and as such did not lend itself to being a self standing priority. For this reason there is no separate forward plan for this area in 2015/16. We have however included information on 'meeting the financial challenge' within our evaluation of 'Making the best use of our budget' and will be providing more detail on this during the year as our plans develop.

How will you know how we are doing?

By tracking our detailed action plans

As we have in previous years, for each of our priorities we have set out a plan of what we want to do by when, and we have set ourselves targets for performance. These plans have been put together by officers and then challenged and agreed by your Councillors to make sure that they focus on making a real difference to people in Rhondda Cynon Taf. These plans are detailed and will allow us to report progress clearly and show you what we've achieved at the end of the year.

Many of the improvements we want to make this year will again, involve working together with our partners and will continue to take longer than one year to make a difference. Where this is the case, we will review whether they are still relevant at the end of this year. If they are, we will include them in our plans for next year so that you can continue to follow and comment on our progress.

Our progress reports

Throughout the year, the plans will be regularly monitored by Councillors and progress reports will be available for you to see for yourselves on our website in September and November 2015, and then February and July 2016. These reports on our performance will show where we are not on target and what we are going to do about it. They will also show where we have performed better than expected. So that we can get our information to you as quickly as possible we have compared our performance with the latest available national data, which was for 2013/14. The next update of national comparisons will be available September 2015 and we will be including updates of how we compare in our quarterly performance reports and on our website for you to see.

The priorities in this plan are not the only areas we will be focussing on over the next year and we will be working hard to make sure that local people get good outcomes from their services. At the end of the year, in March 2016, we will review progress against our priorities and further areas of activity and set out our findings and your views in our next Combined Performance Report in June 2016.

How we communicate with you

We are committed to improve the way we communicate with you and to be open about what we do. We also seek and welcome your views and feedback on the quality of our services and any changes we are considering.

Last year we responded to residents who told us we could do better in our communications. To do this we have taken a number of steps e.g. more public drop in sessions with Councillors and officers, improving our website, greater use of social media and making complicated information easier to understand so that people are better able to respond to our surveys.

We have improved our consultations and as part of a wide ranging approach to consulting with as many people as possible in a number of different ways we now

- hold Leader events with Councillors and Officers so that people can talk to them face to face
- hold live twitter sessions with the Leader and Officers
- hold drop in sessions for all service change proposals
- provide easy read information for young people on service change proposals

We have also posted a You tube video setting out our new approach in 'RCT Together'.

We think we are getting better at involving our residents but we know there is still more to do to find better ways to ask you about what we do and whether it is making a difference. In the meantime, there are lots of ways you can contact us to give us your views, and they are set out for you at the back of this report.

What does our Independent Auditor say about our progress?

In the most recent report in July 2014, the Council's Independent Auditor, the Wales Audit Office, said that we had responded well to the recommendations in its previous report and that:

- We are *"driving improvement in education and social services but still face a significant challenge in meeting national targets for waste recycling."*
- We are *"improving the scrutiny and reporting of performance although there is scope to improve the way we evaluate the progress it is making towards achieving its improvement priorities."*
- *"The Council's strategic financial planning arrangements remained sound but improved communication and engagement with citizens is needed around the scale of the Council's improvement ambitions and the impact of service changes in its priority areas."*

What this means is that we need to continue to make progress in Education and Social Services and pick up the pace for recycling, which remain within our priorities. It also shows that in setting our priorities, we have good planning and monitoring arrangements to enable our priorities to be delivered. But, although we are being clearer about how we tell people about our progress and the difference we make, we still need to continue to improve. We also need to make sure that people have enough timely information about our plans to change services as a result of budget cuts. We think that since the Auditor's report was published we are continuing to move in the right direction but we welcome your views on whether you think we are on the right track by e mailing Improvement@rctcbc.gov.uk or by any of the ways set out on page ****.

We are encouraged by the comments from the Auditor but also recognise we need to do better. You will see how we are already addressing this in each of the sections below. You can see the Auditor's full report from the Wales Audit Office at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WAO-Air2014. The Auditor's next report is due in July 2015.

Our performance in 2014/15

For each of our priorities, we have produced detailed 'Performance Evaluations' setting out our progress during 2014/15, which you can find at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/AllPerformanceEvaluations2014to15. We have summarised these evaluations so that you can see them all more easily and they are set in the following pages, together with what we plan to achieve in 2015-16.

These evaluations contain some information that we have developed to show our progress and some is information that we also provide to the Welsh Government and the Local Government Data Unit Wales (DUW). Every year, all councils in Wales provide the Welsh Government and DUW with data that these national bodies say best shows the progress of important services. We use some of this national data in our priority plans and compare our performance with others. You can see the data we provided to Welsh Government for 2014/15 here at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/statutoryPls. In summary, of the 42 national indicators and measures where we can compare our 2014/15 data with the most recent all Wales comparisons for 2013/14:

- We were among the best in Wales for 11 of 42 indicators, which was better than last year when we were among the best in Wales for 7 indicators,
- 27 measures showed that performance has improved, although we were still amongst the worst in Wales for 3 of these measures,
- 1 indicator showed that performance was the same and stayed among the best in Wales,
- We were amongst the worst in Wales for 7 of our indicators which is better than last year when we were among the worst in Wales for 14 measures,
- Performance in 14 of our measures showed that performance dropped, and 4 measures fell among the worst in Wales.

The next set of national data we can use to compare our performance will be available in September 2015 and we will be including updates of how our performance compares with others in our quarterly performance reports and on our website for you to see.

Comparing our performance against our 2014/15 targets,

- 28 indicators met our targets, although performance of 3 measures was among the worst in Wales
- 5 indicators were within 5% of our target although our performance was still above the average for Wales
- 7 indicators missed the target, 4 of which were amongst the worst in Wales

Using information about our own performance in 2014/15 and how we compare with others, we have again set ourselves performance targets for 2015/16. Some of these targets drive improvement, some aim to keep the same level of service or even reduce it if we have less money to spend.

However, performance indicators are not the only measure of the services we provide, nor do they tell the whole story, but they can help. Comparing our performance with other councils can raise more questions than answers. This is positive as it can help us to better understand what we do, learn from better practice as well as provide us with an indication on how well we are performing. If we can see that our performance is not improving over time and remains below the Welsh Average without good reason, we can then focus on what we need to do to improve.

The Welsh Government uses national data to check our progress against national priorities and the DUW helps councils to organise data so that councils can compare their performance with each other. DUW produces comparative data every September and the Welsh Government the following February. The most recent publications that report 2013/14 data and comparisons can be seen at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/LGDUperformancebulletin2013to2014 for the DUW publication, and www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WGLAservicesperformance2013to2014 for the Welsh Government publication.

Safety

We have two priorities that contribute to the Safety outcome for the County Borough:

- **Protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour;**
- **Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and 'Green'.**

Protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour.

This section provides you with information on what we have done over the last year and our plans going forward.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would ensure:

- **Fewer people are the victims of anti-social behaviour.**
- **Fewer people are the victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.**
- **Fewer people misuse alcohol and drugs.**
- **More properties that were vacant will become occupied.**
- **The promotion of good practice in public houses and food businesses.**

The evaluation tells us that in the majority of areas our performance improved; however some of the outcomes we aimed for were not achieved primarily due to increasing demand and the scale of the challenge facing the Council. We have come to this conclusion because:

- A greater proportion of victims suffering anti social behaviour reported a positive outcome in terms of no longer experiencing victimisation following intervention. However, despite our preventative work, antisocial behaviour complaints increased during the year;
- Where people accessed our services because they were substance misusers, a greater proportion reported a positive outcome in terms of reducing the extent of their misuse.
- Where people accessed our services because they were victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, a lower proportion reported a positive outcome in terms of no longer experiencing abuse and seeing an improvement in their quality of life;
- The number of long term empty properties we helped bring back into use increased; however, more previously occupied properties became long term empty and demonstrates the continuing challenges of the local housing market;
- We inspected 100% food businesses that were due for inspection and provided them with support to improve standards of hygiene. As a result more than 90% were broadly compliant with food safety requirements, although this remains below the all Wales average due to the high turnover of businesses in the area.

Performance evaluation

How did we support victims of anti-social behaviour?

By working with offenders to tackle their behaviour, supporting repeat and vulnerable victims by putting in place supportive action plans and preventative measures.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Fewer people are victims of anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of vulnerable / repeat victims we work with will no longer experience anti-social behaviour. • 75% of people we work with that commit anti-social behaviour will no longer be committing this activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did better than we expected, with 82% of the victims we work with no longer experiencing anti-social behaviour. • We slightly missed our target, but still found that 73% of people we work with no longer committed anti-social behaviour - that was 1,655 people.

During 2014/15 more antisocial behaviour complaints were made (7,238 compared to 7,028 in 2013/14) and on average South Wales Police had 603 anti-social behaviour complaints per month.

The number of offenders referred to our specialist anti-social behaviour unit also increased, the team then work with offenders to tackle their offending behaviour by carrying out home visits, warning letters and behaviour contracts. The team also refer offenders to specialist services to help tackle root causes of their behaviour, such as mental health or substance misuse issues. In some cases, perpetrators and victims are referred to the Mediation Service provided by Gweddol, which helps members of the community to solve long-standing disputes in a practical way.

We have a dedicated victim officer who works with high risk / vulnerable victims. This helps us to put in place personalised action plans by working in partnership with South Wales Police. These action plans implement specific protective measures such as increased Police patrols, CCTV and frequent contacts to the victims. In 82% of cases, victims have told us that they are no longer experiencing ASB and feel safer as a result of our support and interventions.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>'Info provided was great. Numerous visits from the ASB Victim officer, within 1 month the issue was resolved'. (Resident)</i> - <i>'We were very happy with service, reassured all the way through, progressed quickly when ASB Team got involved'. (Residents)</i> |
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We have worked hard to improve people's feelings of safety, particularly within town centres and we can only reduce the anti-social behaviour that we are aware of. We have looked at complaints to the Police, reports from the community and Elected Members, and intelligence from our partner agencies to understand when and where anti-social behaviour takes place. As a result, multi agency teams work within targeted areas at key times e.g. on Friday nights or at certain times of the year, like school holidays and Halloween to tackle issues in hotspot locations on an intelligence led basis.

<p>During last Summer's <i>Operation Streetwise</i> campaign, the team worked with 1,082 young people to give advice and address any community safety issues. A total of 77 referrals for anti-social behaviour were generated, as well as 217 units of alcohol being seized during this targeted summer campaign.</p>
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During 2015/16, we plan to work with our partners to specifically reduce offending and re-offending through working with young people and females (through the 18 to 25 and Women's Pathfinder Programme), as well as continuing our work through the anti-social behaviour unit that tackles all offenders and works to support victims. We want 75% of the offenders that we work with in 2015/16 no longer committing this crime. Part of this innovative new approach to tackling and reducing offending will see the community safety team aim to implement a specific programme of work tackling first time offenders in the 18 to 25 age group. This has been targeted due to the age group committing the highest volume of criminal offences on a disproportionate level.

How did we support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence?

By supporting victims and challenging perpetrators.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Fewer people are the victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 80% of people we work with will no longer experience abuse. ● 85% of people we work with will see an improvement in their quality of life. 	We did not meet our targets for either of these measures, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 68% of people we worked with no longer experience abuse. ● 74% of people we worked with saw an improvement in their quality of life.

The Oasis Centre in Pontypridd opened in 2012 and provides a 'one-stop-shop' for those affected by domestic violence. Over 4,000 referrals were made to the centre last year with 66% of those being new referrals. High-risk victims are offered support by the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and there are various other services involved that can offer help, such as Victim Support and Women's Aid. As a result of the support provided by IDVAs, 78% of people said that they felt safer and 68% reported the abuse had stopped.

We have received a 'White Ribbon Accreditation' for our action plan on tackling violence against women and girls. During November 2014, an event was held to mark 'White Ribbon Day' attended by survivors of domestic abuse and also partner agencies including Hafan Cymru, the Housing Advice Centre and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, as a result of the action plan, a 'Domestic Violence Workplace Policy' has been created. We have more work to do in 2015/16 to support the action plan and promote a zero tolerance to domestic violence.

We are also working with perpetrators of abuse. Our clients have told us that there should be whole family support (not just for the victim) and that perpetrators should receive services that help them, rather than just custodial sentences. With this in mind, we introduced a 'Voluntary Perpetrator Programme', which aims to support men to change their behaviour and attitudes, ensuring the safety of any women and children they are in a relationship with, and supporting the wellbeing of all concerned. We will shortly be evaluating this programme and considering how we provide effective support to perpetrators in changing their behaviour in future.

How did we support people who misuse drugs and alcohol?

By commissioning treatment and preventative services and working with our partners including the voluntary sector, Cwm Taf Health Board, South Wales Police and the National Probation Service.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Fewer people misuse alcohol and drugs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% of people we work with will tell us their substance misuse has reduced. • 56% of people we work with will an improvement in their quality of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% of people we worked with reported a reduction in their substance misuse. • We did better than expected, with 71% of people seeing an improvement in their quality of life.

Over 1,600 people started treatment for drug and alcohol misuse last year, a similar level as 2013/14. We have done well in providing 86% of users with treatment within 20 days of a referral, slightly higher than the average across Wales of 85%. Support services for people with substance misuse problems are provided by a number of different agencies and arranged by an 'Area Planning Board', which is the strategic planning and commissioning group for substance misuse services in Cwm Taf. In 63% of cases last year, clients reported a reduction in their misuse of alcohol or drugs. We are aiming to improve performance during 2015/16, with 67% of clients reporting a reduction in their misuse of alcohol or drugs.

Case Study– Cwm Taf Children and Young People’s Service (2015)

L was referred to the Children and Young People’s Service for support with her use of Cannabis, Alcohol and Mephedrone. At assessment it was identified that L had previously accessed services over four years and had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. L also had anxiety and depression.

L engaged well with the Children and Young People’s Service and had support to reduce her substance use, i.e. Motivational interviewing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, goal setting and relapse prevention.

L was supported to visit her GP for assistance with her anxiety and depression and to access “New Pathways” Counselling Service. Initially there was an increase in substance use as a result of the counselling sessions.

L also became alcohol dependent and suffered minor liver damage. This meant L needed increased support from her key worker, who went with her to appointments and referred her to the Rhondda Integrated Substance Misuse Service, which resulted in an inpatient detox. Following this support, L remained abstinent for three months during which time she re-engaged with New Pathways and commenced prescribed medication for her anxiety and depression. Her relationships with family and friends also improved.

L now practices controlled drinking on special occasions. She is hoping to go to college in September to study mechanics and is currently waiting for voluntary opportunities at an animal sanctuary. L’s case was closed in March 2015, treatment complete and substance free.

During 2013/14, we asked service users what they thought of the needle exchange services. Their ideas included late night opening and fewer needles in pre-packaged kits in order to reduce drug-related litter. Over the last year, we have put these changes in place with revised opening hours, including one late night opening until 8pm in two of our needle exchange centres. Needles are now provided in kits of three or ten needles per pack. We have also increased the information and advice given to anyone using needles.

We have also changed our services to make better use of resources across our organisations. This has focussed on how service users with complex substance misuse issues are given the right support.

This has helped us to come up with a new delivery model for reducing the harms associated with substance misuse, which we will put in place during 2015/16. In order to help us improve further, two service users have been appointed to the 'Area Planning Board' to provide direct feedback

How did we help more vacant properties come back into use?

By providing advice, support, funds and enforcement actions.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
More properties that were vacant will become occupied.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% of vacant properties (around 55 properties) will be returned to occupation through the support we provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were above target, with 114 vacant properties brought back into use with our support.

255 empty properties were subject to our intervention through advice, support and intervention as appropriate compared to 212 in 2013/14. More specifically, our direct action enabled 114 long term empty properties to be brought back into use, which includes 11 brought back into use as a result of the Welsh Government's 'Houses to Homes' loan scheme.

Despite this work, the total number of long term empty properties in the County Borough increased from 3,133 in 2013/14 to 3,381 in 2014/15. Consequently we will continue to prioritise work to return empty properties back into use using a range of interventions, through enforcement, advice and support and targeted funding where available. We aim to bring a further 75 properties back into use in 2015/16.

We have also Invested in housing to help improve people's health and wellbeing by reducing 237 hazards in homes, for example, damp and trip hazards, and delivered energy insulation measures to over 400 homes. At the same time we have worked with landlords, particularly those who own homes in multiple occupancy, to make sure they are properly licensed and fit to standard.

We have gathered intelligence over the year, which has helped us to see the benefits of targeted housing action. We launched the 'Housing and Health Action Areas' scheme in February 2015 in Tylorstown, in partnership with Cwm Taf Health Board. This aims to improve health and wellbeing through housing improvements and encouraging healthy lifestyles. We have already had 160 residents sign up for a survey of their home in the area. We will be using this information to develop an action plan for the area in 2015/16..

Last year, the Council was successful in attracting Welsh Government *Vibrant & Viable Places* funding for the Pontypridd settlement area. This will help to increase the supply of affordable housing, create homes above shops and deliver more energy improvement measures to over 400 households and we will be continuing this work during 2015/16.

How did we promote good practice in public houses and food businesses?

By focusing on high and medium risk licensed premises to ensure they are compliant with licensing laws.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Promote standards of good practice in public houses and food businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of public houses will be inspected by us on time. • 85% of food businesses inspected by us will be judged to be broadly compliant with the law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 100% of our high risk public houses were inspected on time. • 90% of our food businesses were also inspected and found to be broadly compliant with the law.

Last year, 100% of our high risk licensed premises were inspected. We have given training on responsible management and good practice, targeting owners with problems of underage drinking, nuisance, crime and disorder. We have also encouraged good practice through our 'Best Bar None Awards', with 40 premises being awarded in 2014/15.

Trading Standards have carried out 50 test purchases to check that alcohol and other age restricted items are not being sold to minors. This resulted in three people being served a fine and prosecution cases being made against two others. Test purchases for tobacco also resulted in one illegal sale, which the team successfully prosecuted.

Our Trading Standards team has worked across Cwm Taf (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf) since 2013/14. The service continues to deal with doorstep crime, the shadow economy and rogue traders; during the year, for example, we have dealt with over 83 incidents of doorstep crime and prosecuted 11 traders in the shadow economy. We have also raised awareness with over 200 elderly people about the dangers of doorstep crime and all reported that they felt better prepared afterwards.

We work to ensure that the County Borough has a fleet of taxis that safely meets the needs of our communities and whose drivers are subject to stringent vetting. Last year, we revised the Taxi Licensing Policy to improve the services provided to passengers. We did not complete an evaluation of the new BTEC Taxi Driver qualification, as planned, but work around this is scheduled for 2015/16.

We continued to inspect the standards of hygiene and management practices at food premises across Rhondda Cynon Taf. When the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was introduced, 50% of our 1,930 premises were 'broadly compliant'. As a result of a focused training and enforcement in uncooperative businesses, this figure has steadily risen year on year. During 2013/14, 88% of these food premises were 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene legislation. Last year this rose to 90%.

Although business start-ups are positive, they are often underfunded and have inexperienced and poorly trained staff, which can be a high risk to consumers. We aim to inspect new food businesses within 28 days of opening and we set up a system to ensure early feedback. At the start of 2014/15 we were inspecting 28% of new businesses within 28 days of opening. We have improved and this has almost doubled to 55% at the end of 2014/15.

You can see more information in the detailed assessment of how we performed in ***Protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour at*** www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PerformanceEvaluationPublicHealthandProtection2014to15

What does this mean for 2015/16?

The performance evaluation for 2014/15 told us that:

- There was continued high demand for services that help vulnerable people suffering antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Also for people needing help because they misuse drugs and alcohol. In addition, Rhondda Cynon Taf wide information tells us that the number of antisocial behaviour complaints increased in 2014/15 compared to the previous year;
- When vulnerable people accessed our services and told us what impact our support had, there was an improving trend of positive outcomes for those receiving antisocial behaviour and substance misuse services and a worsening trend in outcomes for those in receipt of domestic abuse / sexual violence services;
- Although the number of long term empty properties we helped bring back into use increased, more previously occupied properties became long term empty and resulted in the total number of long term empty properties increasing overall;
- Continued strong performance around inspecting public houses and food businesses that will enable this area to become core business rather than a key priority.

Based on our evaluation, there will be a need to heighten the focus on the most vulnerable within our communities and target support to address specific community needs. We will do this by:

- **Ensure vulnerable people in our communities are supported by us using intelligence led interventions.** This will include:
 - A greater emphasis on helping people early or stopping problems from happening in the first place, delivering services where they will have the greatest impact.
 - Reviewing services for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in line with Welsh Government law and work with the South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner.
 - Working in a targeted way to reduce reoffending, in certain areas and with particular groups of people.
- **Focus activities and actions on providing targeted support, addressing the specific needs of our communities.** This will include:
 - Developing and delivering the Housing and Health Action Area Action Plan for Tylorstown and deliver the Housing Schemes within the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme for Pontypridd.
 - Working closely with the Police & Crime Commissioner and partners to tackle anti social behaviour in specific communities.
 - Improving services aimed at bringing empty properties back into use.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

- At least 80% of victims of anti-social behaviour feel safer as a result of our work; this is slightly less than last year when 82% felt safer
- At least 75% of people that we work with that commit anti social behaviour will no long commit ASB. This is the same target as we set last year and is better that our current performance of 73%
- At least 85% of clients report feeling safer as a result of being helped by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) - we know this is ambitious as people can feel unsafe for many reasons but we are looking to improve the current figure of 78% year.
- At least 67% of people we with confirm that they are reducing their substance misuse, which is more than our current level of 63%

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-publichealthandprotection2015to16

DRAFT

Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green.

This section provides you with information on what we have done over the last year and our plans going forward.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would ensure:

- **Deliver clean streets.**
- **Improve recycling rates helped by more targeting of areas with low recycling rates.**
- **Maintain the condition of our roads.**
- **Improve flood prevention.**

Our evaluation tells us that despite the changes to services, reduced budgets and lowering standards, we either maintained or improved in some key areas. However, we failed to meet an important target we set ourselves around waste recycling. We therefore need to make improvements more quickly in 2015/16 if we are to avoid future fines from the Welsh Government.

We have come to this conclusion because:

- We have maintained or improved the cleanliness of our streets, the overall condition of our roads, and the number of homes and businesses where flood risk was reduced;
- We missed our own recycling target of 55% as we recycled only 54.08% of the waste we collected. The Welsh Government has set a national target for 2015/16 of 58%; if we do not meet this target it is likely that we will have a hefty fine. The amount of waste that we have recycled from January 2015 is increasing every month, so if this trend continues we will meet the target and avoid the fine, but it remains a risk to the Council.

Performance evaluation

How did we deliver clean streets?

By making sure that we balanced the need to keep the County Borough clean with the increasing financial pressures that all councils in Wales are facing.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Deliver clean streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95.8% of our streets inspected will be of a high or acceptable level of cleanliness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did better than expected with 99.8% of our streets inspected being of a high or acceptable standard in 2014/15, making our performance one of the best in Wales according to 2013/14 data.

An independent survey carried out by 'Keep Wales Tidy' in November 2014 found that 97.6% of streets inspected were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness - above the Wales average of 96.6% and is the same as our performance last year. The commitment and dedication of the

cleansing staff has meant we have maintained a high performance. Between January and March 2015 we also undertook preparatory work to reduce the service standards of the street cleansing service (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Cabinet-10-Oct-2014) that will be introduced from April 2015.

But, feedback has been mixed, with residents telling us:

'I don't see street cleaners anymore...' Resident R.M.

'Lot of litter in Ponty town centre, especially after the weekend... The Council doesn't come to clean it up fast enough or regularly enough... they do it every now and again though' Resident J.B.

We recognise the importance of keeping our town centres clean, especially after periods of heavy use and we now have dedicated street care operatives in Pontypridd and Aberdare who clean the town centres before 9am to make sure cleanliness standards are maintained.

By tackling owners about dog fouling. During their inspections, 'Keep Wales Tidy' also found that there has been a significant improvement in the streets affected by dog fouling compared to 2013/14. This is an issue that our residents have been concerned about for many years and we have targeted dog fouling by installing 821 dog fouling bins, raising awareness, encouraging people to pick up after their dogs and as a last resort by penalising those people who continue to allow their dogs to foul our streets; in 2014/15 this included issuing 7 fixed penalty notices. It is, therefore, particularly pleasing that 'Keep Wales Tidy' found such a significant improvement.

Examples of feedback from residents include:

'Most individuals clear up after their dogs' Resident R.M., Rhondda

However, we must be mindful that dog fouling continues to be a problem in some areas. Another resident fed back:

'Dog mess is the biggest issue in the area that I live – there's a bin in the area and signs around to make people aware of the dog mess bins and that they will be fined but they fail to put the mess in the bins and there are never any wardens around to fine people.' Resident J.B., Pontypridd

By dealing with envirocrimes. In 2014/15, we cleared 3,644 of the 3,729 reported fly tipping incidents within 5 working days. This was less than our 2013/14 performance but even with the financial pressures affecting the way we deliver the service, we are pleased that we would still be above the 2013/14 all Wales average. We also removed 205 reported incidents of graffiti within 5 working days and 117 incidents of abusive graffiti within a working day (100%).

'This area is generally clean and there is rarely any fly tipping. The community should take responsibility for their local environment with the assistance of the community council.'

Resident A.A.

In summer 2014, we joined forces with the Welsh Government and 'Fly-tipping Action Wales' to crack down on fly tipping. The Council's Enforcement and Awareness Officers are equipped with the latest technology and use a smart phone to log, photograph and plot fly-tipping incidents onto a GPS mapping system in real time. This pinpoints fly-tipping 'hotspots' in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Other councils taking part are Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Newport, Denbighshire and Cardiff.

We also worked with 'Keep Wales Tidy' and local businesses in the County Borough. This included a litter pick on the Taff Trail near Rhydyfelin with the McDonalds 'tidy team'. The teams collected over 20 bags of litter! Activities like this are taking place throughout the year across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

How did we improve recycling rates?

By targeting areas of low participation and raising awareness to encourage residents to participate in reuse and recycling initiatives.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Improve recycling rates helped by more targeting of areas with low recycling rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the % of waste we recycle at least 55% in 2014/15, which was more than the all Wales average Reduce the amount of waste that we send to landfill to 45%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We didn't do as well as we planned, narrowly missing our target with only 54.08% of our waste recycled and placing our performance below the 2013/14 Wales average of 54.33%. However, signs for improvement in 2015/16 are more encouraging. We did better than we expected, with only 35.01% of our waste sent to landfill and making our performance better than the 2013/14 Wales average of 37.72%.

We secured funding from 'Waste Awareness Wales' to carry out the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign, to encourage residents to waste less and recycle any unavoidable food waste. We have found that targeting our awareness raising at areas where not many people recycle has very positive results.

These campaigns last for four weeks and begin with letter drops to all households telling them that the Awareness Team will be working in the area. This is followed by intensive door knocking and weekly recycling participation checks. After the third week, the Awareness Team are given a list of properties where there has been no sign of recycling and they follow up more door knocking with residents who are not recycling. At any point, residents can contact the Awareness Team directly if they require recycling bags, food waste bins, nappy bins or further information on the Council's recycling schemes.

Case Study – Recycling Participation Campaigns - Some results in 2014/15

Penywaun - 21st March 2014 – 11th April 2014

Dry recycling participation increased from 52.7% in week 1 to 70.0% in week 4

85.9% of residents recycled at least once in the 4 week period.

Food waste participation increased from 27.7% in week 1 to 37.2% in week 4

49.2% of residents participated in food waste recycling scheme in the 4 week period.

Cilfynydd - 26th May 2014 – 20th June 2014

Dry recycling participation increased from 48.4% in week 1 to 80.3% in week 4

87.5% of residents recycled at least once in the 4 week period.

Food waste participation increased from 17.6% in week 1 to 46.1% in week 4

49.1% of residents participating in the food waste recycling scheme in the 4 week period.

Rhydyfelin (Phase 1) - 4th August 2014 – 29th August 2014

Dry recycling participation increased from 62.6% in week 1 to 85.1% in week 4

95.1% of residents recycling at least once in the 4 week period.

Food waste participation increased from 29.5% in week 1 to 52.0% in week 4

57.7% of residents participating in the food waste recycling scheme in the 4 week period.

We have also visited supermarkets with our recycling trailer and spoken to around 500 residents about their recycling habits and how they feel about changes to collections. Of the people that completed our questionnaire, everyone said that they already recycled - 98% recycled every week. 94% found the Council's current recycling schemes easy but 43% said they weren't willing to separate some of their recycling into the various material types at home, and 40% said they would either reduce or stop recycling altogether.

Other feedback we received from residents who were interested in taking part in a focus group about recycling included:

'If you look at other councils, RCT are very good at recycling. 'We put very little into black bags now – once a fortnight if that' Resident L.C.

'Can I say though that I am very happy with my waste collections especially the ability to get rid of the garden waste that I can't compost.' Resident A.A.

'RCT don't show enough of what has been recycled for people to realise its worth. We need more advertising, more education, leaflets through doors to get the message out there – show what is being recycled. We need to educate people – younger people are being brought up to recycle and look after their area' Resident L.C.

'More pressure should be put on the retail sector to use biodegradable packaging. What about a grading system for shops and businesses that take recycling seriously .perhaps like the five star grades for food outlets' Resident A.A.

'Green Glyncoch' started in 2009, with the aim of turning Glyncoch into a 'Zero Waste Area' where at least 95% of residents recycle both their dry recyclables and their food waste and everyone respects their environment. By working with residents, partner agencies and volunteers, recycling levels have increased greatly over the past five years from 46% to 95.5% of residents recycling dry waste and 43% to 69.8% recycling their food waste. Residents have also supported activities such as litter-picking and good dog ownership schemes. Whilst this project has had its challenges, the scheme is now beginning to deliver successes with high recycling participation in the village.

We have also continued to promote recycling with our younger residents in schools by introducing the Christmas Card Recycling Challenge in January 2015. Thirty three schools took part and together collected over 323 stone (4,532.16 lbs) of Christmas cards - that's equivalent to the weight of 77 average 8 year old pupils!

We re-opened the 'Go Green Baby' disposable nappy recycling scheme to new applicants in September 2014 and the demand exceeded 4,500 in its first few months. We are now able to send 20 tonnes of nappies for recycling every week and have collected and recycled 1,500 tonnes of nappies since the scheme was launched in 2013.

Our "Too Many Black Bags, Recycle or Face a Fine!" campaign also encourages recycling www.rctcbc.gov.uk/toomanyblackbags. From autumn 2014, we asked that residents in the Rhondda minimised the black bags they put out for collection. As a result of the changes, black bag waste in the Rhondda has reduced by over 30%. The scheme was rolled out to the Cynon area in November 2014 and the Taff Ely area in January 2015.

In order to increase the amount of waste being recycled, we said we would develop two waste treatment plants with Merthyr Tydfil Council and others. These are large projects, with complicated bidding processes. Biogen (UK) Ltd has designed, built and will operate the new food waste-to-energy plant at Bryn Pica, Aberdare. The construction was completed in December 2014 and the plant is on schedule to be operational by June 2015. The new facility has the capacity to convert 22,500 tonnes of food waste into green electricity and also produce a fertiliser for farmland. Based on current food waste recycling rates across the three councils involved, this project will generate one mega-watt of green electricity, sufficient to power 1,500 homes. We hope to award the contract for the other treatment plant in September 2015.

We are pleased that as a result of these efforts, we continue to send less municipal waste to landfill. We are among the best in Wales at recycling dry material (paper, plastics and metals) at a rate of 42.23%. However, we are one of the worst in Wales when it comes to recycling green materials, with only 11.28% of material like food waste and grass cuttings being recycled.

When you put together dry and green waste, we have recycled 54.08% or 59,744 tonnes of municipal waste, narrowly missing our local target of 55%. Our performance is below the current all Wales average of 54.33%. This means that, although we have recycled more than last year (49.31%), we still have to make significant improvements to meet the Welsh Government target of recycling at least 58% of municipal waste in 2015/16. If we do not, this puts us at risk of a significant fine, estimated to be around £1million.

More positively, with the work we are continuing and the new plans in place, we are confident that we can meet this target. We can evidence this through the most recent information for February 2015, where the data showed a recycling rate of 62.3%. This suggests that the actions we have and continue to take are starting to have the desired impact.

How well did we keep our highways maintained?

By continuing to improve our highways infrastructure through a programme of investment, making sure our structures were sound and modernising our street lighting network.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Maintain the condition of our roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% of all roads will be in an overall poor condition, better than the all Wales average for 2012/13 of 13.4%. This is slightly worse than our performance last year, where the position was 9.9%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9.4% of our roads were in an overall poor condition – exceeding our target of 10% and making our performance better than the 2013/14 Wales average of 13.2%.

We have resurfaced 68 streets and 65 footways as part of an on-going programme of investment. This included traditional and environmentally-friendly preventative treatments, which are quicker, more cost effective and restore the skid resistance of road surfaces and seal it to prevent deterioration. Traditional surfacing materials have also been used on roads in worse conditions, such as the A4061 Rhigos Mountain Road. We have also improved safety by renewing 300 metres of barriers on the Maerdy and Rhigos mountain roads and we contracted Merthyr Tydfil Council to do the work on our behalf.

We know that this investment is contributing to improving the condition of our roads: the percentage of our roads in overall poor condition has fallen from 9.9% in 2013/14 to 9.4% in 2014/15, above the 2013/14 Welsh average of 13.2%. We also recognise that within this overall picture, the % of principal A roads and non-principal B roads in poor condition were amongst the worst in Wales.

We completed the £1 million refurbishment to the Victoria Bridge in Pontypridd, which crosses the River Taff next to Pontypridd's iconic William Edwards Bridge. The bridge is one of the main routes that link the Rhondda Valleys to the A470 and needed essential strengthening repairs to ensure the long-term stability of the 148-year-old structure.

We also completed a £0.260million scheme to replace the substandard bridge deck which carries traffic over the river at Blaenrhondda. We tried to minimise disruption with work undertaken in two halves so that the only vehicular access to Blaenrhondda was maintained whilst these critical works were undertaken.

We operate and maintain 28,500 lights in residential and non-residential areas. Last year, as part of well-publicised service changes to reduce spending, we introduced part night (midnight to 5am) switch off of all streetlights in non-residential areas and the part night (midnight to 5am) switch off of alternate (every other) streetlight in residential areas. We also replaced street lighting columns that were due to be replaced in 80 streets across the Council with new columns that are fitted with energy efficient LED lanterns. This will generate savings on energy costs of around £0.300million in a full year and also reduce carbon emissions. Initial consultation with residents revealed broad support for this savings initiative, but since they were introduced a number of concerns have been raised including personal safety and security. However, these have generally been limited by the fact that few people are actually out walking the streets after midnight.

How did we increase protection from flooding, improve road safety awareness and training for our residents within our most vulnerable groups?

By introducing four flood alleviation schemes, making our roads safer and encouraging people to walk and cycle where possible.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Improve flood prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 375 homes / businesses will have a reduced risk of flooding as a result of flood prevention schemes. The areas benefitting will be Nant Cae Dudwg (Cilfynydd); Nant Gwawr (Aberaman); Nant Yr Fedw (Ynysboeth); and Bwllfa Road (Cwmdare). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We secured £2.5million in Welsh Government, European and Council funding to focus our work on reducing the risk of flooding. This meant we did better than we planned with 411 homes/businesses in the areas described having a reduced risk of flooding as a result of flood prevention

We improved pedestrian safety at the A4058 Broadway/Sardis Road junction thanks to £0.250million funding from Welsh Government. A new pedestrian crossing outside the Probation Office/Wetherspools makes it safer for pedestrians to cross lanes of traffic and navigate a traffic island. As part of the scheme, new street lighting and new signs will be put up. We have also introduced traffic management schemes in Rhydyfelin and Maerdy.

We are encouraging more people to take public transport, walk or cycle when travelling. Positively, Local Transport Funding of £0.250million was granted by Welsh Government to improve public transport infrastructure in the Rhondda Fawr. These improvements will help people to get around sustainably and assist the one in three households that do not have access to a car.

We have also tried to resolve parking pressures for residents in Pontypridd, Treforest and Aberdare. In May 2014, we consulted with residents and business owners to gauge support for a proposed residents parking scheme in the area. Last year, we consulted on revised proposals and the final schemes will be introduced during 2015. We will be taking enforcement action to ensure residents, visitors and businesses are compliant.

You can see more information in the detailed assessment of how we performed in **Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green at** www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PerformanceEvaluationStreetcare2014to15

What does this mean for 2015/16?

Our performance evaluation told us that our performance levels were either maintained or improved but a key waste recycling target was not met and the % of some of our roads in poor condition was amongst the worst in Wales.

This theme is important to you, and as part of our consultation for the Budget, 55% of you told us that we had made improvements in keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'.

To address these areas in 2015/16 we plan to:

- **Increase recycling rates to 58% by March 2016.** This will include:
 - Targeting areas of low recycling to encourage people to recycle and improve our performance. We have seen the value of four week intensive exercises in communities to improve recycling and we plan to target more areas this year. We also want to showcase areas that are doing really well and set a good example.
 - Raising awareness, using interesting and engaging schemes that residents of all ages enjoy taking part in, like the Christmas Card Scheme and 'Love where you Live' awards.
 - Developing treatment plants for our waste to keep costs down and have modernised waste disposal.
- **Make sure streets are clean all year round.** This will include:
 - Using new technology and feedback from you to make sure 'hotspot' areas for fly-tipping, litter and graffiti are dealt with quickly. We will continue to target our teams at these areas.
- **Make sure our highways network is well maintained and well managed.** This will include:
 - A number of planned, large projects to make certain our roads are safe and stand the test of time.
 - Delivering improvements to ease traffic congestion, enabling people to travel more quickly and boosting the economy.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

- We will recycle at least 58% of the waste we collect, currently 54.08%
- At least 95% of our streets inspected will be of a high/acceptable standard of cleanliness, which is lower than we achieved last year, 99.7%
- 85% of streets returned to Grade A standard within one working day, which is lower than our current performance of 100% but we have to take account of service changes and few resources
- 10% of all roads will be in an overall poor condition - which is slightly worse than last year when our performance was 9.4%

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-cleanandgreen2015to16

DRAFT

Health

We have two priorities that contribute to the Health outcome for the County Borough:

- **Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently**
- **Keeping all children and young people safe**

Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently

This section provides you with information on what we have done over the last year and our plans going forward.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would ensure:

- **Safeguarding vulnerable adults.**
- **Helping people to live independently.**

Our evaluation shows steady improvements in the majority of our performance results. However, we need to complete important service developments and we need to help more people to remain in their own homes for longer. We have come to this conclusion because:

- Services that helped people remain living independently continued to have a positive impact: a greater proportion of people who completed a reablement programme no longer needed our support; the waiting list for aids and adaptations reduced and disabled facilities grants were delivered more quickly;
- Despite the positive results in helping to keep people independent, we supported a high number of people in care homes, and were amongst the worst in Wales when compared to other councils;
- Many service developments that we started were not completed: these included improving quality assurance arrangements; offering more carers an assessment; and creating a single service for reablement and intermediate care with our health partners.

Performance evaluation

How did we safeguard vulnerable adults?

By working effectively with our partner organisations.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Safeguard vulnerable adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96.1% of adult protection referrals completed will result in the risk being managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have achieved more than planned and risk has been managed in more than 99.5% of adult protection referrals.

We have worked hard to put in place a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub - MASH. What this means is that people from all of the organisations that need to work together to protect children, adults and older people, are in one place. We put the Adults team together first in January 2015 and the arrangements for children followed shortly after. Based in Pontypridd Police Station, social care professionals, health, probation and the police now all work together more closely, share information more quickly and help to keep people safe.

It is too soon to say how this new service directly affecting our vulnerable adult residents but early signs show that we are able to respond more quickly to concerns and also put in place joint solutions more quickly.

MASH - how working better together delivers better help

Through the work of the MASH Mrs X had access to the right support at the right time and the certainty and assurance that she was safe.

Mrs X is in her 70s, and married to Mr X for over 50 years. They have an adult daughter, who lives locally but has not been in contact for a number of years. However, Mrs X recently contacted her daughter because, following an initial visit to A&E, she was admitted to hospital for the treatment of injuries, including multiple fractures to her hands and ribs. Mrs X had disclosed to hospital staff that she had been assaulted by her husband. Mrs X's daughter subsequently maintained that both she, as a child, and her mother had experienced regular violence at the hands of Mr X, but that Mrs X always refused to seek help or leave him.

*A&E staff contacted the police, who attended A&E to take an account of what happened. Mr X was arrested and then bailed with a condition to have no contact with Mrs X pending further enquiries. The arresting officers completed a Public Protection Notification (PPN) and submitted this to police colleagues in the **MASH**, who were able to review the information on the PPN and quickly access information on Mrs X's medical condition from health services and engage with the Safeguarding Liaison Officer.*

Mrs X stayed with her daughter following discharge from hospital. However, she learned that Mr X had also been admitted to hospital. In his absence, she returned to the marital home, supported by her daughter. Mrs X's case was referred to a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, as a result of which she was contacted by the Safeguarding Liaison Officer. Mrs X indicated that she was struggling with personal care tasks as a result of her injuries, and was also referred for Reablement services. Mrs X's needs were assessed by the Council's Single Point of Access Team and services to support her were put in place that day. Further discussion took place between police, the Safeguarding Liaison Officer and RCT's Adult Protection Officer to agree that the safeguarding actions that had been taken so far had been sufficient.

Mr X was diagnosed with early dementia whilst in hospital. When he was medically fit to be discharged, he had nowhere to live as Mrs X was now living in the marital home and he remained subject to police bail conditions that stated he was to have no contact with Mrs X. The Short-Term Intervention team undertook a needs assessment for Mr X to determine whether he had any care and support needs.

We had planned a new Safeguarding website but haven't made as much progress as we intended. We have now agreed hosting arrangements and a Cwm Taf website that will cover both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr will go live during 2015/16.

We have also not made as much progress as we anticipated in quality assuring our own work and that of other service providers where we use them. This is partly because we have focused on working with health colleagues and putting partnerships arrangements in place to provide more joined up services. The work we have completed highlighted that we need to assess and review the needs of people in a more timely way and also remove unnecessary administration that we carry out and we will be continuing with this work in 2015/16.

More positively, the number of formal complaints we have is low. In our most recent Annual Complaints Report for 2013/14, we showed that of the 6,428 clients dealt with by Adult social services, we received only 70 formal complaints. We make sure that we resolve and respond to complaints from service users and when things go wrong, we listen and learn so that we can improve what we do. You can see the annual report at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CommunityScrutinyCommittee-04-Nov-2014

By making sure that carers get the help they need.

The most recent estimates tell us that 1 in 10 of our residents is already a carer, which is higher than the average for Wales. Carers need help and support in order to help others. We identify people as carers when they first make contact with us and make sure that they are directed to the right information and support. We also produce a carers' newsletter on a wide range of services, events, support and third sector organisations that can help. You can see an example of our newsletter here. www.rctcbc.gov.uk/carersnewsspring2015

So that people who work for the Council know and understand how important carers are, over 1,000 staff have undergone training and awareness raising to help them better understand the caring role and we are supporting over 2,300 carers through our dedicated Carers Project, which provides information and training including finding out more about Dementia, Carers' First Aid, looking after money and many other events.

Are you a carer? Have a look at information about the Carers project and get in touch www.rctcbc.gov.uk/carerssupportproject

However, we need to get better at offering a formal assessment to our carers, as last year we were one of the worst Councils in Wales to do this. We are making improvements, but the current data would suggest that it is likely that we will remain among the worst again this year. The Social Services Inspectors raised this in its most recent inspection report www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CSSIWPerformanceReport2013-14; however, we think the data may not accurately reflect what we do. We want to get this right as quickly as possible, so that we can be clear about what needs to be done to improve the lives of carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and this has been included as part of our plan for 2015/16.

By introducing a 'Butterfly' approach for Dementia Care.

Our 'Butterfly' approach for Dementia Care continues to improve the way residents with dementia are cared for. We have three Council managed care homes, Clydach Court, Trealaw and Dan y Mynydd (Porth) that specialise in Dementia Care as part of the '**Butterfly**' project. Friends and family of those living in these care homes have seen a noticeable difference in the outlook and behaviour of their loved-ones, which allows them to explore themselves, their lifestyles and their pasts in a gentle, soothing environment.

Butterfly Project:

"it's like a happy family - I love it here! I've seen the difference as my dad was here before the Butterfly project was started when people were bored. Now its a joy to visit. I never worry at all when I walk out the door and look forward to coming back!"

Daughter of a man living in Dan y Mynydd

Following monitoring visits by Dementia Care Matters last June, Dan y Mynydd kept its level 1, top, status for its care. However, Clydach Court was awarded a level 3, meaning observers saw 'good dementia care with many positive elements' which although not as good as level 1, is still positive. The reason for the lower award was changes in management and staffing and we are working to ensure that Clydach Court is back up to level 1 this summer.

We also introduced the 'Butterfly' way of working to Cae Glas home for the elderly. Although it is too soon to check our progress in detail, early signs are encouraging. In January 2015, we were pleased that two privately run Care Homes i.e. Rhondda Care Home, Ystrad and Ty Pentwyn Care Home in Treorchy decided to implement the 'Butterfly' approach using grant funding. These homes will be supported by the Council's Contracts and Commissioning Team and they will also be subject to unannounced visits and rigorous monitoring by Dementia Care Matters.

How did we help people live independently?

Last year we were one of the best councils in Wales for supporting older people over 65 in the community, at 106.9 per thousand population. Our performance this year has dipped, although it is still above the current Welsh average. We are looking at the reasons for this, but it may have been affected by our success in reducing waiting lists for aids and adaptations. By reducing waiting times, people are being seen more quickly and not waiting a long time for an assessment for aids and equipment. When they get the equipment, they no longer need this support in the community.

Similarly, at 97.26%, we were one of the best in Wales at supporting people aged 18-64 in the community and if we continue at this level of performance, we will remain in the top quartile in Wales. However, we were also one of the worst councils for the rate of older people over 65 that we support in care homes and this something we are focusing on in next year's priority plan.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Help people to live independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% of care packages completed will result in the person requiring no on-going services from the Council (at the point the package is completed). • 92% of people that underwent a period of reablement¹ felt that we helped them to remain independent (This maintains the same service level that was achieved in 2013/14 based on the people who returned questionnaire)s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have achieved more than we planned with 74.73% of the care packages we put in place resulting in people not needing longer term care, exceeding our target of 65% • The target for this measure was increased from 92% to 95%. We missed our revised target as 94.40% of short term reablement clients felt we helped them to remain independent

¹ Reablement is a time limited service designed to increase an individual's independence

By improving the way we organise getting aids and adaptations in place for people that need them.

This has helped more people to live in the community without our help. More people are also able to get Disabled Facilities Grants more quickly as we have shortened the time it takes to deliver grants for adults from last year by 27 days to 205 days, which is above the current Wales average.

Customer Comments arising from work carried out through Disabled Facilities Grants:

- **External works to improve access to a house in Pontypridd:**
"I am extremely grateful for all the work carried out. It has made my day to day living so much easier."
"The people who helped with the decisions and the building Contractors were very professional and polite."
- **Internal works to bathroom in Nantgarw to accommodate new seated shower:**
"Absolutely delighted with all the work done!" "
My quality of life has been improved."
"All people involved were marvellous! I am so grateful for everything you have done for me."

By dealing with requests for help in one place.

Rhondda Cynon Taf residents have a Single Point of Access to the reablement and intermediate care services provided by the Council, which means that, already, people are directed to appropriate services in a co-ordinated and timely way. Work is continuing to create a single integrated service with health partners for all reablement and intermediate care, which will mean that referrals for both community health and social care can be accessed from a single point. This has taken longer than we planned because we need to be clear about how a joint service can be set up properly and how it compares to what we already provide. As a result of these ongoing discussions, work will be carried forward into 2015/16.

By getting people back on their feet through services such as our Reablement Service.

The service lasts for about 6 weeks and helps people to regain their independence so that they have less need for ongoing care. For the third year running, fewer people that completed the reablement programme needed any ongoing services when it ended; we exceeded the target we set ourselves.

Between April and March 2015, we asked over 1,600 people that received a service whether they felt we had helped them to remain living independently at home and 94.4% of the 232 responses said that we had. This is more than last year but slightly less than we anticipated we would achieve this year.

We had positive feedback on our Reablement service:

- *"The service received from all ladies was excellent. I couldn't have survived without it."*
- *"Thanks to everyone concerned I can now manage on my own."*
- *"Without this support I don't think I would have been able to recover so quickly and then maintain my independence."*

However, people also told us when things didn't go so well:

"care received was excellent but there was a lack of communication between hospital discharge and services being set up"

Feedback like this reminds us that we need to continue to work hard to improve communication between health and social care services.

We have three 'Step up, Step down' beds in Rhondda Cynon Taf in Parc Newydd, Garth Olwg and Tegfan. These beds provide people with temporary help when they are discharged from hospital or as a result of the need for full time care, which means that people have the time they need to help their recovery and get them back on their feet so they can return home. We said in 2014/15 that we may need more of these beds, but have since found that alongside other options of temporary support, there is not the demand for additional beds and we did not continue with this action.

By providing TELECARE.

We have been looking at ways different ways we can help people through Telecare, by simplifying the Telecare arrangements and promoting the service. The findings will be available shortly. The number of people that are using Telecare to help them stay at home is falling and, at 394, is now less than 2013/14.

An example of how Telecare can help people stay independent:

Mrs D is an 80 year old lady who lives alone in a terraced property. She lives and sleeps downstairs. There are Telecare heat alarm systems in place in her home.

Mrs D suffer from dementia and currently receives 3 calls per day as part of her car package and she also attends a day centre 3 times a week. There is substantial support from her family who call daily and spend several hours there, also a neighbour calls in regularly. Concerns were raised about Mrs D's activities at night, around whether she distressed and pacing in her own home.

'Just checking' system was installed at Mrs D's home and monitored over a four week period. The information provided by the system was easily accessible online and indicated that Mrs D was going to bed at a regular time following carer's intervention. It also showed that for the majority of time Mrs D remained in bed until the following morning when the carer arrived. Over the four weeks it was established that Mrs D was mainly settled at night and there was little activity.

As a result of this information and following discussions with the family and other professionals, it was agreed that there was no evidence that Mrs D was distressed and risks were minimised. Family have peace of mind that Mrs D is safe and well at night, so she is able to still live at home and a long term placement has been averted.

By giving people the freedom to manage their own arrangements and pay their carers themselves through direct payments.

To do this, they need to have the right information and confidence. In the last twelve months we have learned lessons from a pilot that was aimed at people who would meet the criteria for a direct payment, but have difficulty in managing money. An example of an issue raised by one family is that they needed more information about our expectation that they make sure Personal Assistants receive police checks. The pilot was managed by a service user organisation, 'Dewis Centre for Independent Living', which helped a small number of people to access a Direct Payment service. This pilot proved successful and also with help, there is less risk that service users get into debt. The involvement of Dewis Centre has now been incorporated into our Direct Payments policy.

As a result of reviewing what we did, we have made it easier for people to give us their views about the benefits and barriers to using the system, and have plans to survey people who are receiving Direct Payments or have a Managed Account in 2015/16. We are currently slightly above the target we set ourselves and last year's performance with 359 out of 2,758 clients choosing their own service providers (13.02%). The work to continue this is not in our plan for next year as it will become part of our day to day service delivery.

How Direct Payments has helped L to maintain her independence:

L has a neurological disorder which she has had for approximately fifteen years. At the time of her diagnosis, her daughter was a toddler and her husband was working full time in a job which involved spending time away from home overnight. A small Direct Payment helped Lucy to spend time safely with her daughter and enable her husband to carry on working, knowing she had support. She was also able to retain control over her own decisions and use the Direct Payments to provide her with flexibility when arranging her care.

Over the years, L's health has deteriorated slowly and she is now dependent on others for all her care needs. Her Direct Payment has increased over the years to accommodate changes to her health and to enable her to employ people who had come to know her well and who understood her illness. She was able to ensure that she had continuity of her own care and also had confidence that people coming into the home were familiar to her child.

Unfortunately, L's illness is now at a level that means her husband has had to reduce his working hours to help to care for her. The Direct Payment continues to assist her to meet her care needs and the presence of her small team of personal assistants, supplemented by the Independent Living Fund, means her husband is able to spend quality time with his daughter, carry on working and still be satisfied that L is receiving good quality care from people who are very familiar with her needs. This has helped L remain with her family in her own home, maintain her independence and avoid the need for residential care.

By working to provide more specialist housing.

We are continuing with our plans for a new purpose built 42 unit extra care housing facility in Talbot Green. The work will now be completed in Summer 2016, slightly later than October 2015 as planned. We also wanted to make sure that the arrangements we put in place to meet the demand for specialist housing meets the requirements of the new Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act so we will make sure that this remains a priority for 2015/16. We are also working on a new way of providing housing support with a new provider later this year. In looking at the needs of our communities, we are also developing three bariatric friendly housing units for people with significant health or disability needs.

Following new arrangements we put in place for the Adaptation and Community Equipment service, we have been able to reduce waiting lists for aids and adaptations in people's homes from 444 days to 173 and help people more quickly.

By working with others to assess the needs of our older residents living in their own homes, residential care or hospital to get the information from professionals so that they can live fulfilled lives.

The Welsh Government has set out what it expects of councils and Health Boards in working together to meet the needs of older people with complex needs, which you can see at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WGIntegration. We and our partners in Merthyr Tydfil and the Cwm Taf University Health Board have set out a statement of intent which you can find at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/statementofintent and provides information on how we will join up our services, focus on preventing problems from getting worse, helping people to help themselves and making sure the people get the help they need in the right place at the right time and by the right person.

This is a huge task but we have already taken steps to make sure that everyone over 65 that needs care when leaving hospital is assessed in the same way and we will continue to join up more of our services next year.

What the regulators have told us

In the most recent report published in October 2014, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) told us that they could see we were making progress in changing the way we deliver adult services, and that our work will help to meet the requirements of the law. They also saw that we have been working together with Cwm Taf Health Board and Merthyr Tydfil Council to make the most of resources. Despite our progress we have to do more to make the changes needed more quickly. You can see the Regulators' full report at - www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CSSIWPerformanceReport2013-14

You can see more information in the detailed assessment of how we performed in **Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently** at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PerformanceEvaluationAdultsIndependence2014to15

What does this mean for 2015/16?

As our resources reduce, we need to make the best possible use of what we have and focus our help on those people that can most benefit. Our evaluation shows that services are being modernised and we are focusing on working with our partners in the Health Board, Merthyr Tydfil Council and the voluntary sector to support older people, vulnerable people and their carers to have choice and say in their care arrangements.

We need to change the way we respond to the needs of our community, and help the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf to find the solutions themselves. This includes concentrating on services that will prevent problems from getting worse. This will continue in 2015/16 and beyond as part of the new Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, and is why it will remain in this priority plan.

Our plan for 2015/16 focuses on:

- **Safeguarding adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect and are protected from avoidable harm.** This will include building on the success of the MASH and making sure there are strong arrangements in place to safeguard adults, according to our legal requirements.
- **Giving adults and older people who need support greater choice and control, within available resources, through prevention and greater integration of health and social services.** This will include:
 - Continuing our work on the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act so that we make sure our duties are delivered jointly with the Health Board.
 - Providing services that help people to safely regain and keep their independence.
 - Empowering people to have great choice and control, focussing on preventing long term illness.
 - Redesigning and modernising our services, including the Learning Disability Service, to support people to be independent and manage our resources.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

- At least 99.50% of adult protection referrals completed will have the risk managed - which is the same level as this year
- At least 66% of care packages completed will result in the client requiring no ongoing services, at the point of completion, which is lower than last year when 74.73% required no ongoing service. We have taken into account that we will continue to work with more people with dementia and they are likely to need further support.
- At least 95% of people that are helped by a reablement package, feel that we helped them to remain independent, currently 94.40%
- At least 86% of carers will be offered an assessment in their own right, current 76.3%
- We will support more people aged 65 or over in the community, increasing to 83.8 per thousand population from 81.82 last year
- We will support fewer people aged 65 or over in care homes, reducing the percentage from 24.46% to 23%

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-adultsindependence2015to16

Keeping all children and young people safe.

This section provides you with information on what we have done over the last year and our plans going forward.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would focus on:

- **Providing children and their families with the support they need as early as possible to help prevent problems getting worse.**
- **Improving our decision making for children that are in our care.**

Our evaluation tell us that performance overall is getting better but the speed of change needs to be accelerated if outcomes for children at risk are to be further improved and the on-going cost of Children's Services is to be delivered within the budget allocated. We have come to this conclusion because:

- A number of our key measures are showing steady year on year improvement although many of these still remain amongst the worst in Wales when compared to other welsh councils and have been identified by the CSSIW as in need of further improvement;
- More children are remaining with their own families, through earlier preventative support from us and our partners, and when this happens evidence tells us that children have better outcomes. More children remaining with their families has been shown through a reduction in the number of children being looked after by the Council and also a reduction in the number of children on the CPR; however, numbers in both areas remain high;
- Children's Services over-spent its budget during the year primary due to on-going demand pressures, for example, a rising number of high cost residential places. There are early signs of positive developments that will aim to manage demand and need better, and create more cost effective service delivery arrangements.

Performance evaluation

How did we provide children and their families with the support they need as early as possible to help prevent problems getting worse?

By working with partners and communities to provide help early to families.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15	How did we do?
Children and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of children on the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 449 children were on the CPR as at 31/3/2015, better than the 565 target we set. Whilst an

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15	How did we do?
are provided with the support they need as early as possible to help prevent problems getting worse.	<p>protection register will increase by around 20%, from 471 to 565. This is a worsening picture, based on anticipated increased demand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of children becoming looked after will be maintained at around 218. 	<p>improving position, it continues to represent one of the highest recorded number of children on the CPR when compared to other councils in Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 228 children became looked after during 2014/15, worse than the 218 target we set and represents one of the highest recorded number of children becoming looked after when compared to other councils in Wales.

The picture of performance during the year is one of steady improvement at the same time as continued high demand for services to support children on the CPR and services to support looked after children. This improving trend has come about through a on-going shift in emphasis from managing crisis to earlier intervention and preventing escalation, and is part of a programme of work that started in 2014/15 to begin to reshape how Children's Services operates.

In the case of children on the CPR, a greater focus on earlier intervention showed encouraging signs in that the number of children on the CPR increased between April and December 2014 (from 471 to 528) and then started to reduce during the last three months of the year to 447.

A similar picture is evident for children becoming looked after following the introduction of more rigorous challenge of decisions taken by our Looked After Children Placement Panels, whose purpose is to put in place the support that will best meet the needs of children at risk. The change in approach is showing positive early signs: the number of children becoming looked after between April and December 2014 was 186 with the full year position being 228; this represents a marked reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after during the last three months of the year. In addition, the total number of children looked after is starting to reduce: at March 2013 621; at March 2014 650; and March 2015 621.

Our information tells us that where children remain with their families, outcomes are better. For example, in terms of education attainment for the 2013/14 academic year, the % of pupils aged 16 who achieved the level 1 threshold (equivalent to 5 GCSEs grade A* - G of approved equivalent qualification) was 93.2% overall; for looked after pupils it was 77.3%.

Our information also tells us that the number of referrals received by Children's Service has remained relatively high (i.e. 3,017 in 2012/13, 3,441 in 2013/14 and 3,102 in 2014/15). The Team Around the Family service (TAF), delivered collaboratively with our Health and Police partners, is intended to work with vulnerable families as early as possible to prevent the need for escalation and referral to Children's Services. During 2014/15, the impact of the TAF Service has not significantly impacted on the level of referrals received by Children's Services in the way we anticipated. We have explored the reasons for this and have concluded that the majority of TAF assessments were being

carried out by services directly commissioned through Families First, with limited capacity within mainstream services to undertake assessments and the key worker role.

We know that improvements are needed in managing the number of referrals dealt with by Children's Services because in many cases where this has happened it has led to statutory intervention by the Council. Part of our work during 2014/15 was to create a service module that would bring together partner agencies to improve the information sharing where referrals of children at risk (and vulnerable adults) are received to enable better safeguarding decisions to be made. This new service module is called the Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and will be implemented during 2015/16 ([link to reports](#)). Whilst its impact may not be significant in the first year of implementation, we anticipate that the new module will enable better use to be made of TAF Services so that families are able to receive support earlier, lessen the need for statutory intervention by Children's Services and support better outcomes.

Case Study - The benefits of joint working following assessment.

Two young carers were referred who were caring for their Mum. She was waiting for a heart and double lung transplant and was very weak. She couldn't walk to the front door, couldn't get upstairs and often needed to use her oxygen tank. Mum was relying on her daughters to do everything for her. They were carrying her upstairs, taking it in turns to stay awake at night to ensure she was breathing, helping her to wash and dress and doing the household chores, all while trying to attend school. The family weren't aware that they could have any support and were wary of people coming into the home. School staff had become aware that things were difficult at home but weren't aware of the extent of caring being carried out.

The assessment worker gradually built a relationship with the family and supported Mum through an assessment of her needs. Since then, a stair lift has been installed, Telecare has provided sensors and monitors, direct payments have been set up so that Mum has a PA to help her and the girls are receiving the emotional support they need.

During the period March to May 2014, the Wales Audit Office completed a review of Welsh councils' assurance and accountability arrangements for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to. For Rhondda Cynon Taf, a number of recommendations were made that will require attention during 2015/16 and were:

- Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding;
- Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these;
- Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively; and
- Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Councils corporate policy on safeguarding.

How did we improve our decision making for children and young people in our care?

By changing the way services operate to meet increasing demands.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15	How did we do?
Improve our decision making for those children that are in our care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of initial assessments will involve a social worker seeing the child. • 65% of initial assessments of children's needs will be carried out within 7 working days. • 61% of looked after children placed with in-house and more cost effective foster carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74.72% of initial assessments involved a social worker seeing the child, better than the 70% target set. Whilst an improving position it continues to represent bottom quartile performance when compared to 2013/14 all Wales performance results • 60.05% were completed in 7 working days, this being worse than the 65% target set. Whilst an improving position it continues to represent bottom quartile performance when compared to 2013/14 all Wales performance results • 62.9% of children in foster care as at 31/03/15 were placed with in-house foster carers, better than the 61% target set. No all Wales performance comparison is available for this area.

The overall picture is again one of steady improvement compared to previous years; however, performance levels in a number of key areas remain amongst the worst in Wales and require further improvement. Similar conclusions were also drawn by the external regulator for local authority Children's Services, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), in its latest report to us in October 2014 (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CSSIWPerformanceReport2013-14). Whilst the findings and conclusions from this report relate to our 2013/14 performance, they remain equally relevant to the current year and illustrate the improvements needed will take a number of years to achieve.

We consider that a recurring factor over recent years that has adversely affected our performance is demand and this continued to be the case in 2014/15. There were high numbers of referrals to Children's Services and we met this challenge by ensuring that decisions on all referrals were made within our target of one working day. Following a decision being made on each referral, a high number of these needed an initial assessment to enable informed decisions to be taken in the best interest of the children concerned (2,219 in 2012/13, 2,646 in 2013/14 and 3,012 in 2014/15) and high numbers of more in depth assessments, called Core Assessments, were also deemed necessary (658 in 2012/13, 679 in 2013/14 and 954 in 2014/15). The picture that emerged was whilst our performance results for the timeliness of completing initial and core assessments improved in all but one case², performance levels remained amongst the worst in Wales.

We also consider that demand was one of a number of factors that influenced our performance and opportunities were available to better manage it, improve our performance and at the same time

² The average time taken to complete initial assessments that took longer than 7 working days to complete – our 2014/15 target was 26 working days and our performance was 60.05 (and compares to our performance in 2013/14 of 23 working days)

support better outcomes. To achieve this we started a single programme of work in 2014/15 to remodel the whole of Children's Services, with this work also directing and informing all development activity within the service. Overall, the progress we made during the year was mixed because:

- We agreed a revised operating model for Children's Services (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/cabinet-12-feb-2015) in line with targeted timescales and recognised from the outset that this work would not impact on performance during 2014/15 as implementation would take place during 2015/16;
- We were not able to implement revised Quality Assurance arrangements from October 2014 or implement a revised Prevention Strategy from November 2014 due to the focus needed on establishing a revised operating model for Children's Services; as a result of this we ensured that existing arrangements for prevention and quality assurance continued to operate. Work in both these areas will be addressed as part of implementing the revised operating module in 2015/16; and
- We developed a workforce strategy in partnership with practitioners, technical specialists and managers that has resulted in better retention of staff and has enabled vacant social worker positions to be appointed to. These developments have contributed to improvements in the timeliness of completing initial and core assessments, and helped to increase the number of qualified social workers. The increase in qualified social workers has also positively supported improved performance in other areas: more referrals were allocated to social workers for initial assessment (from 72.2% in 2013/14 to 76.9% in 2014/15, better than the target we set of 74%) and more initial assessments took place where there was evidence that a social worker had seen the child (from 68.7% in 2013/14 to 74.7% in 2014/15, better than the target we set of 70%). There were instances where improved performance is not yet being demonstrated, for example, the percentage of open cases of children looked after with an allocated social worker (68.7% in 2013/14 to 63.3% in 2014/15, worse than the target we set of 80%) and will need to be an area of on-going focus in 2015/16;
- We developed a model for services aged 16+ but were unable to commence implementation from December 2014 as planned. Again, this was due to priority being given to the creation of a revised operating model for the Division and the existing services remained in place during the year. Implementation of the new service model for services for young people aged 16+ will take place during 2015/16.

Where our assessment processes determine that children need to be in the care of the Council to maintain their safety and well being, we aim to ensure that suitable care arrangements are in place that meet the child's needs. Our approach to achieving this is to firstly work with the family / family members so that the child can return to the family environment when deemed safe to do so; however, where this is assessed as not appropriate, we aim to secure permanent long term permanent care such as adoption.

A comparison of the children looked after as at April 2014 and March 2015 shows that:

Placement Type	No. of LAC as at April 2014	No. of LAC as at March 2015	Increase / (Decrease)
With family	52	55	3
Adoption	27	38	11
Council employed foster carers	303	295	-8
External foster carers	210	174	-36
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council residential care	10	8	-2
External residential care	40	48	8
Other forms of accommodation	8	3	-5
TOTAL	650	621	-29

The information we hold tells us that further work is needed to support more families to help ensure their children do not enter the care system or where this is unavoidable, they are able to return to the family environment as soon as it is safe to do so. The information also tells us that on-going focus is needed to recruit even more adoptive parents who are able to provide long term and stable family environments; we worked toward this goal by recruiting 23 new adoptive parents but this was short of the target we set ourselves of 27. The creation of a Regional Adoption Service, 'Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative', will be implemented during 2015/16 and will aim to further increase adoptive placements for the three councils.

There are also financial implications to the Council based on the decisions we make. We always try to ensure that in meeting children's needs we also put in place the most cost effective arrangements.

When service and financial information is considered together for 2014/15, the picture that emerges is one of a growing requirement for high cost residential placements, due to the complex needs of the young people, a decrease in lower cost placements and the overall position creating a significant financial pressure on the Council's looked after children's revenue budget amounting to £0.818million.

What does this mean for 2015/16?

The performance evaluation for 2014/15 told us that:

- Demand for Children's Services remained high in terms of the number of referrals dealt with and the number of initial and core assessments completed; this position had an adverse affect on the speed at which performance results improved. More effective arrangements to manage demand and need will therefore be fundamental to the successful future operation of the service;
- There are early signs that preventative work is starting to make a positive difference in terms of reducing the number of looked after children and also reducing the number of children on the Child Protection Register; albeit, the numbers in both areas remain high. Further work is therefore needed to coordinate preventative and early intervention services for families in the greatest need more effectively;
- The service over-spent its revenue budget during the year primarily as a result of demand pressures and a rising number of high cost residential places. There is therefore a need to

accelerate the creation of more cost effective placements to support the service to live within its means into the future.

To address the above, our plan for 2015/16 focuses on: :

- Implementation of the MASH to help ensure that referrals are allocated to the appropriate service, as earlier as possible, to more effectively manage demand and need;
- Implementation of the revised operating model for Children's Services that will provide heightened focus on prevention and earlier intervention, including making better use of the TAF Service;
- The creation of more cost effective placements, such as adoptive parents; and
- Implementation of the recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office in respect of safeguarding policies and procedures.

The impact of this work will aim to support fewer referrals to Children's Services; more children remaining with their families where safe to do so; an improvement in key performance indicators particularly in terms of timeliness of assessments and more social worker involvement in assessments; and a reduction in cost pressures within the service.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

- 75% of initial assessments will involve a social worker seeing the child.
- 65% of initial assessments of children's needs will be carried out within 7 working days.

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-safechildren2015to16

Prosperity

We have two priorities that contribute to the Prosperity outcome for the County Borough:

- Providing a top quality education - Every School a great School
- Improving our communities

Providing a top quality Education - "*Every School a great School*".

This section gives you some information on what we have done over the last year and our plans going forward.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would focus on:

- **Building great school leadership.**
- **Providing high quality teaching and learning.**
- **Overcoming barriers to learning.**
- **Honestly assessing our current performance, where we are good and where we need to do better.**
- **Encouraging the wider community to engage in learning.**
- **Improving school accommodation and building new schools.**

Our evaluation of the strategies and initiatives we are delivering jointly with schools tells us we continued to make a positive difference to pupil achievement, their attendance at school as well as the environments in which our pupils are taught. However, we need to make further improvements so that performance moves closer to the all Wales average levels in the short term and then continues to improve. We have come to this conclusion because:

- The programmes we have put in place are already showing improvements in our pupils' reading ability and speech, language and communication;
- The results at Key Stage 2 (aged 11), Key Stage 3 (aged 14) and Key Stage 4 GCSE level, all continued to improve and for the first time pupils achieving five GCSEs A* - C including English or Welsh and maths passed the 50% level. However, results in some other areas remain below the all Wales average;
- All primary and secondary schools improved their pupil attendance levels at a faster rate than the Welsh average. However we remain below the all Wales average attendance levels for both primary and secondary;
- School Estyn inspection results are improving, in particular in respect of the inspector's judgements for the quality of Leadership, Teaching and Prospects for Improvement, but Education Standards are still judged to be too low;
- The £160M 21st Century Schools investment programme is improving the facilities and the learning environment in our schools, and surplus school places continued to be removed releasing savings for further investment..

Performance evaluation**How did we build great school leadership?**

By continuing with our work with the Central South Consortium, schools and Governors so that we work together to provide the best possible chance to all our pupils so that they can reach their full potential.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Make sure our Schools set high standards and are well managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estyn find that at least 90% of our schools have good leadership (was 72.7%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We missed our ambitious target of 90% with 71.2% of our schools over the last three years have been graded at least 'good' by Estyn for leadership. However this is still above the all Wales average of 69.1% <i>Where leadership was judged 'adequate' or 'unsatisfactory' more rigorous monitoring has taken place to ensure activities to promote improvements are quickly adopted.</i>

The Central South Consortium is a group of 5 authorities working together to improve schools across the region. We have set standards across all parts of Education and then provided support and challenge to check that they are being met. This has included 'school-to-school' support, where schools with similar priorities work together to improve.

We can identify schools that need extra support by using the Welsh Government school categorisation model which is based on data together with our wider, but more local knowledge of schools. We put in place the help needed, but we also take action when school improvement, including leadership and management are too slow.

We have strengthened arrangements for appointing headteachers and senior leaders so that expectations are clear about the need to focus on raising standards. We have put in place training for existing headteachers, teachers and school governors so that we can improve teaching and learning across the board.

Case study: Excellent leadership

St John Baptist High School was recently inspected by Estyn and invited to prepare a written case study to describe the practices in the school which result in excellent standards. They said that there is "consistent high level of expectation by the entire community of the school" (Estyn 2014)

Improving leadership will remain a key priority in 2015/16, as effective leadership and governance is at the heart of school improvement.

How did we make sure our schools provide high quality teaching and learning?

By attracting new talent and providing incentives for teachers to improve their skills and further their development.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Provide high quality teaching	<p>Continue to reduce the gap in results between pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the all Wales average.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring at least half of all Rhondda Cynon Taf pupils achieve 5 GCSE passes at (grades A* to C). Level 2 Threshold including in English or Welsh (first language), Mathematics grade A*–C • Estyn find that at least 70% of our schools are good or better (was previously 51.5%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are reducing the gap between our results and the Welsh average with more than half of our pupils (50.5%) aged 16, achieving the Level 2 Threshold including in English or Welsh (first language), Mathematics grade A*–C for the first time ever, exceeding our target of 50%. • Over the last 3 years, 54.2% of our schools have been graded at least 'good' by Estyn at the time of inspection. We improved on last year but missed our ambitious target of 70% and are below the all Wales average of 62.5%.

We have recruited and retained teachers through the 'Teach First' scheme, finding high quality staff to fill posts in core subjects where there are national shortages. We have also strengthened the skills of existing teachers through our Outstanding Teacher programme. Last year, Treorchy Comprehensive School became an accredited centre for the delivery of the programme, showing that we have first-class practice in our schools here in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We have also made good use of technology to improve teaching by providing access to the 'Hwb' virtual learning environment in 129 schools.

Around 59% of pupils achieve a reading score that is average or above for their age. We have worked to improve this through our focused approach to improving communication skills, reading and writing. Teachers have supported young people through the 'Catchup' and 'Cumbria Reading Intervention' programmes, which helped to improve pupils reading age by an average of 20 months. We also provided temporary support to schools for children that were shown as needing extra help in reading by a national test. By implementing the Communication & Literacy Inclusive Classrooms (CLIC) project, we were able to identify and help children to improve their speech, language and communication difficulties.

Improving communication and numeracy skills is important for our whole communities, as skilled and capable individuals create economic success. We are working with our partners, including

Communities First, to help families to become more engaged in education and to support the young people themselves to do well in school. We have worked with 93 adults since April 2014, who between them have achieved 42 literacy and 57 numeracy accredited qualifications.

We believe our efforts to improve teaching and learning are having an impact, with pupils achieving improvements in their results at key stage 2 (aged 11) and key stage 3 (aged 14). But, still some children are not making sufficient progress at key stage 3, so this remains a focus for us in the year ahead.

Good progress has been achieved at key stage 4, with results improving against the previous year. This has been achieved by assessing pupils in a better way so that we can target and offer support to those who need it. More pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C or equivalent (84.6%) last year, better than the all Wales average (82.3%) and for the first time performance for the indicator including English or Welsh and maths passed the 50% mark.

Despite the progress made, we remain as one of the worst 22 local authorities in Wales. If we are to continue to close the gap against the all Wales average, we have to continue to maximise pupils' performance in key stage 2 and 3 to see greater improvements in key stage 4. Therefore, improving teaching and learning will remain a priority in our 2015/16 plan.

Case study Improving Together

The 'school-to-school' work that is led by headteachers across our region has resulted in Y Pant, Treorchy and Cardinal Newman secondary schools becoming 'hubs' or specialist schools. These schools have generated the capacity to give their time in helping other schools to deliver programmes to improve teaching and learning. A number of our primary schools have also recently applied to become 'hub' schools to improve the quality of Welsh language and Foundation Phase outcomes.

Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive is a 'hub' school and has an offer of teaching and leadership programmes that focus on improving pedagogy and leadership skills that they share with other schools. Y Pant Comprehensive School and Treorchy Comprehensive School are also 'hub' schools offering specialised programmes.

A 'Pathfinder' partnership has flourished between Tonyrefail Comprehensive School and Willows High School in Cardiff, where the schools shared areas of work that is regarded as excellent practice. Both schools achieved their highest ever Key Stage 4 results in the summer of 2014. The headteachers of both schools were asked to present on the benefits of their collaboration at a recent Welsh Government conference.

How did we work in partnership to improve the wellbeing of our young people and help them to overcome barriers to learning?

By supporting young people to feel valued in school, have a positive attitude to learning and their wellbeing.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Make sure more of our children attend school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pupil attendance at primary school from 93.4% in the 2012/13 academic year to 94.2% in the 2013/14 academic year. • Improve pupil attendance at secondary school from 92.0% in the 2012/13 academic year to 93.2% in the 2013/14 academic year. 	<p>Both Primary and Secondary school attendance improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school attendance reached 94.5%, and exceeded our target of 94.2%; and • Secondary school attendance also improved and we met our target of 93.2%.
Work with others in the community to help families to learn together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of families told us that they benefitted from attending the Family Learning Programme³. 	The funding that the Council received for the Family Learning Programme has been withdrawn and we have been unable to get the information for this from families involved.

With attendance being one of our priorities it was pleasing that last year, every one of our schools improved their attendance figures. We have improved the quality and frequency of the data we collect on attendance so we were better able to identify problems and provide more targeted solutions. We raised the awareness of the importance of school using our 'Super Attender Challenge' campaign, intervened early when pupils were late or absent through first response or 'meet and greet' visits, and as a last resort, we put in place 85 prosecutions against parents or carers.

Case study: Improving attendance together

In autumn 2013, attendance at Ynysboeth Community School was 91.8% and was ranked 106 out of 110 RCT schools. By using different ways to tackle the problem, attendance improved to 95.8%, and by autumn 2014, the school, was ranked 17 out of 105.

Despite our improvements, attendance in our primary and secondary schools is still below the Welsh average and remains a priority. Together with our schools, we will continue our work to change expectations of pupils and parents, and maintain our campaign to improve attendance.

Children and young people need to be in school to learn and last year there were fewer fixed term exclusions in our secondary schools, but more in primary schools. Overall, there were fewer

³ This programme is where schools identify pupils or families they think might benefit from learning together. Courses are run through the Community Learning Programme.

exclusions than in 2012/13, and the average number of days lost through an exclusion reduced to 2 days from 4 days in the previous year. We are also tackling bullying, which can be a cause of disengagement in schools. Since 2012/13 there have been 35% fewer bullying incidents in secondary schools and a 22% reduction in primary schools.

Our best schools take steps to help and monitor pupils that start school with low levels of communication and social skills. We have programmes in place, like CLIC and SEAL⁴, which help pupils to develop their social and emotional skills. The Families and Schools Together programme also aims to help families develop trust and confidence, improving family learning and home-school relationships.

By identifying and supporting those young people who are experiencing difficulties at transitional times in their life, we have helped 205 young people back into education, employment or training; signposted another 70 young people to further training, and helped a further 58 to get work. Over the last three years, of the 59 schools inspected by Estyn, 45 were graded at least 'good' and 14 as 'adequate' for Wellbeing. Our newly developed 'Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy' will hopefully help even more schools in 2015/16 to identify pupils that need support and strengthen their ability to learn.

Case study: Reaching out

One of our learners on the 'Your Future First' programme said "I was supported in many ways during the programme. I was supported with my feelings, my future, my life and loads more. The course made me happier and more confident".

This young person is now studying youth work and has secured part-time employment as a trainee youth worker.

Learners who have additional needs, are in the care system or affected by poverty often have to overcome many barriers to learning. The attainment results of these groups has been improving and this year, all of the children in the care of the Local Authority left education with an approved qualification. We are changing our special needs classes in mainstream schools to accommodate an increase in the number of pupils with complex needs. As part of our three year plan to change Behaviour Support services, we have set up specialist provision for young people over 16 years old with severe or profound Autistic Spectrum Disorder and complex learning needs. This has meant that some of our most vulnerable learners are able to receive education within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which has also saved £0.45m in its first year. The savings over the 3 years are likely to be nearer £2m. We have also changed Learning Support Classes to better meet the needs of our children and young people.

⁴ SEAL - is a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools

How did we take every opportunity to improve by learning from what we do?

We are collecting and using more robust information and data, tracking pupil progress, attendance, behaviour and overall school performance.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Take every opportunity to improve by learning from what we do	Estyn find that at least 90% of our schools are likely to improve (was 76%).	We didn't meet our ambitious target of 90% with 72.9% of our schools over the last three years being graded at least 'good' by Estyn for prospects for improvement – However, this is above the all Wales average of 68.9%.

We use this to see where we need to support or take other action to make sure that improvements are made to provide better teaching and learning across all our schools. Governing bodies are also improving the way they use and interpret data so that they can improve teaching and learning in their schools. Primary and secondary schools are also sharing information so that they can better support pupils when they change schools. Councillors have more confidence in the information that they receive and as a result are better able to hold schools and council officers more effectively to account.

We are sharing our school data reports with the CSC's data unit so that they can use these to inform their annual performance reviews. We have also used data more effectively to improve the way we work with our partners and to make sure we get the most out of our money.

How did we encourage the wider community to engage in learning?

By co-ordinating our work with the Youth Engagement & Participation Service and working with our partners to help parents, carers and the wider community get involved in learning.

Families and Schools Together (FAST) helps children through family learning and developing better home-school relationships with the aim of children having stronger life chances.

Partnership working in Miskin Primary School

- *As a result of the FAST project, parents reported that they had fewer difficulties with their children and more support from other families. Also, parents felt more confident in helping their children. As a result of the success of the original FAST project, a second project was started in January 2014.*
- *Within an academic year, more pupils achieved better results for Personal and Social Development at end of Foundation Phase. The school believes this to be, at least in part, as a result of the FAST project.*
- *There is now an active Parent and Teachers' Association within the school and parents regularly attend events and training sessions, including weekly family learning sessions*
- *As a direct result of FAST, two families have been supported by Team Around the Family and have stepped down from the interventions and support they needed.*
- *Credit Union is now established and run by community volunteers within the school, with many pupils saving weekly.*

- *School attendance has improved by 2%. Responses to a pupil survey by Estyn in its recent inspection stated that 100% of pupils feel safe; feel that the school deals well with any bullying; know who to talk to if they are worried or upset and that they are doing well in school. FAST has contributed to the positive ethos of the school.*

How did we improve school accommodation and build new schools?

Our modernisation programme means that we have continued to remove surplus school places and align school catchment areas so that we can manage demand better.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Renew and improve our school buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the percentage of primary schools with 25% or more surplus places (30 or more) – 37.8% last year to 32.4% this year. • Reduce the percentage of secondary schools with 25% or more surplus places – from 57.9% last year to 41.2% this year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did better than we expected and have fewer surplus places than last year with 31.2% of our primary schools having 25% or more having surplus places • We didn't do as well as planned, with over half our secondary schools (58.8%) having 25% or more surplus places. Tackling surplus places remains one of our priorities.

We have removed over 810 surplus school places with 600 more to be removed when Aberdare Community School is opened at the end of the year. To achieve this we have realigned 6 schools⁵ and completed major works at 5 other schools⁶. We have worked to realign the catchment area for Y Pant Comprehensive School, and at the same time, tackled the surplus places at Bryncelynog Comprehensive; this will result in 200 fewer surplus places over the next five years. Similarly, primary school catchment areas in Llanharan, Brynna, Dolau and Bryncae have been reorganised as there were too many pupils subscribing at Dolau Primary School while there were spaces at Llanharan Primary School.

To provide the best possible places for children to learn, we have spent £4.753million to improve school buildings and facilities across RCT including a new school hall and classrooms at Trerobart Primary School and improved access to Parclewis Primary school, together with classroom adaptations and works to make a safe route to the school. Also, in the former Glanffrwd Infant School we have created a new satellite Autistic Centre for secondary school aged pupils. Work has already started on new projects, which includes major extensions at Llwynyrwn and Treorchy Primary schools and a £24million investment for a replacement school for Y Pant Comprehensive.

Our commitment to improving schools as part of the 21st Century Schools programme is long-term and continues to be a key priority for 2015/16 and beyond.

You can see more information in the detailed assessment of how we performed in providing a **Top quality Education - Every School a great school at** www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PerformanceEvaluationEducation2014to15

⁵ Glantaf Infants, Ynyswen Infants, Glanffrwd Infants, Aberdare High, Aberdare Girls' and Blaengawr.

⁶ Treorchy Primary (Phase One), Williamstown Primary, Ysgol Yr Eos, Parc Primary and Trerobart Primary.

Going forward into 2015/16 (2014/15 Academic Year)

The evaluation tells us that despite our progress, we still have a lot to do which is why providing a top quality education and making every school a 'great' school is still one of our priorities. In 2015/16, we aim to continue to improve educational standards for all children in our schools, particularly vulnerable groups, so that every child achieves their potential.

To make sure that we provide a top quality education and make every school a 'great' school, in 2015/16 we plan to:

- **Build great school leadership.** This will include:
 - Helping schools to support and learn from each other. We have seen the successes of school-to-school support this year and want to expand this over the academic year.
 - Continuing to work in partnership with the Consortium to help schools to improve; providing challenge and support where needed.
- **Ensure high quality teaching and learning.** This will include:
 - Being clear about what is expected in the classroom to provide excellent lessons.
 - Making sure that reading and writing help to provide good foundations for learning.
 - Supporting secondary schools to meet the demands of the new GCSE and GCE exams.
- **Promote wellbeing and engagement of all learners.** This will include:
 - Helping schools to support young people to overcome the difficulties they face that stop them learning.
 - Using information better and getting involved early so that we can help young people who are in danger of not being in education employment or training.
 - Making sure that pupils that are eligible for free school meals are helped to have the same learning opportunities as other pupils.
- **Provide schools that are fit for the 21st Century.** This will include:
 - Completing the school modernisation projects we are working on e.g. in Aberdare School and Treorchy Primary and making progress on others e.g. Y Pant.
 - Meeting the demand for Welsh Language education and expanding provision for primary aged pupils with additional learning needs.

How will we know if we have made a difference since the last school year?

- Pupil attendance at Primary schools will improve to at least 94.9% from 94.5%
- Pupil attendance at Secondary schools will improve to at least 93.7 from 93.2% %
- At least 88% of 7 year olds assessed at the end of the foundation phase will achieve outcome 5 or above, increasing from 81.8%
- At least 88% of our 11 years olds will achieve level 4 or above in English or Welsh (first language), Maths and Science - i.e. the core subject indicator, improving from 84.3%
- At least 82% of our 14 year olds will achieve level 5 or above in English or Welsh (first language), Maths and Science - i.e. the core subject indicator, improving from 78.4%
- Our 15 year olds achieve an average points score of 346, improving by 9.5 points
- At least 55% of our 16 year olds will achieve the Level 2 threshold with at least one GCSE at grade A-C in English or Welsh (first Language) and Maths, improving from 50.5%,
- At least 30% of our 16 year olds entitled to FSM achieve Level 2 Threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh (first language) and Maths
- Estyn find that at least 56.5% of our schools are good or better, currently 54.2%

- Estyn find that at least 74.2% of our schools have prospect of improvement, currently 72.9

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-education2015to16

We have also seen other service changes within Education. The recently agreed changes to Nursery education will be monitored so that we can check the effect on standards as pupils move through the Foundation Phase of learning. Changes to the School Music Service will be introduced from September 2015 and we will monitor the progress of these and value for money. We have also taken steps to make sure that we continue to comply with the Welsh Public Library Standards following the closure some libraries and the transfer of others to local community groups in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

DRAFT

Improving our communities

This section gives you some information on what we have done over the last year and our plans for next year.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

In our 2014/15 Plan, we said we would focus on:

- **Supporting people to gain employment and take up training.**
- **Helping people to better understand their finances.**
- **Reducing homelessness.**
- **Continuing to develop Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres.**
- **Supporting businesses to create jobs.**

Our evaluation shows our improvements across all outcomes in this priority and that these improvements made a real difference to the people and businesses that services worked with. However, there are still significant challenges ahead if we are to improve the prosperity of communities and meet the continuing high demand for services. We have come to this conclusion because:

- We supported more people to get jobs through our work and enterprise clubs and also helped more people to gain qualifications through community learning programmes. However, around 12.7% of adults in the County Borough still have no qualifications, higher than the all Wales average of 10% and 2.6% of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents claimed Job Seekers Allowance, higher than the 2.4% across Wales;
- We were able to prevent a greater proportion of households becoming homeless and our performance was amongst the best in Wales;
- There was continued investment from various sources in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres. The latest information tells us that many more people are visiting Pontypridd, but visits to Aberdare are falling slightly, as they are in other UK town centres. However, early signs suggest visitor numbers in Aberdare will increase next year;
- The continuing support for local businesses helped them to create new jobs, safeguard existing jobs and bid for and secure contracts let by the Council.

Performance evaluation

How did we support people to gain employment and take up education or training?

By working with our partners to deliver many different skills and training opportunities, as well as our own schemes, which encourage people to gain work experience and improve job prospects.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Support people to gain employment and take up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 288 people enter work following support from work / enterprise clubs, maintaining the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did much better than we expected, with 620 people starting work after being supported by our work /

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
training.	<p>same level as last year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 1,465 accredited qualifications gained by people attending community learning programmes, maintaining the same level as last year. 	<p>enterprise clubs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,090 accredited qualifications were gained by people through community learning programmes, which is way above our target.

Our focus over the last year has been on supporting people to get employment by improving their skills and qualifications. Around 12.7% of adults in the County Borough have no qualifications, which is higher than the average across Wales of 10% of adults (December 2014). We have continued to support people within their own communities to learn new skills, through programmes like 'Communities First'.

'Communities First' works with local people, community organisations, businesses and other key agencies to tackle the long-term causes and effects of poverty. The skills development opportunities provided by 'Communities First' have led to local people achieving over 2,000 accredited qualifications in skills including Information Technology; Sign Language; Counselling; Help with CV writing and introductory courses for specific careers e.g. Food Hygiene and First Aid.

Case Study

Mother of three, A, attended the Upper Cynon Communities First course on 'Hospitality' in 2014, hoping that this would be good for her CV and help her to apply for a part-time bar job. A was initially very shy, but by the end of the training she volunteered in a local bar so that she could gain practical experience and soon became employed part time. A was liked and valued by customers and staff, and within a few months, she got a full time Bar Manager job at the local Rugby & Football Club.

A says: "I am so grateful for the opportunity provided by Communities First.....for without it I would neither have had the confidence or the ability to be able to apply for such an important and life changing position".

Not only did A take a big step back into employment, but working gave her the confidence to take up driving lessons, which she had always wanted to do to support her young family.

Over 1,000 people attended 'Job Fayres' held in some of our Communities First areas last year, giving them a chance to speak to employers such as Argos, the Armed Forces, Remploy, Rocialle and Western Power to get advice on their chosen career path. From these very successful events, 40 people were offered work, 2 people were offered an apprenticeship, 30 people were offered training opportunities and 6 people were offered volunteering work.

We also continued to offer young people different ways of getting work experience and improving their skills within the Council. These include our own Apprenticeship Scheme; a training programme aimed at young people leaving care called a 'Step in the Right Direction' and 'Jobs Growth Wales' (a Welsh Government programme) placements.

We employed 17 new apprenticeships in September 2014 supporting and training young people to gain experience and qualifications. The scheme is proving successful, with 91% of the apprentices that started in 2012/13 now in work or further education

'Since starting my apprenticeship it has opened a whole array of opportunities and first-time experiences for myself. I chose an apprentice as a way to learn new skills along with improving on the very little skills I possessed and also earning a wage the same time. Since then I have been given the most up-to-date technical training both in house and external; I have gained a Foundation Degree from the University of Glamorgan, I have worked along numerous experienced colleagues and members of staff throughout the authority and most important it has aided me in gaining a full time job within Rhondda Cynon Taf Council'.

(Feedback from one apprentice on the scheme)

During the first six months of this year, we received 27 applications for the 'Step in the Right Direction' programme. Seven people were successful and have moved into their chosen work placements within the Council.

Because of the success of these schemes we now offer more opportunities for young people to get involved. For example, we are working with ELITE Supported Employment Agency Ltd to provide 13 weeks paid work experience programmes at Vision products for adults with learning disabilities. We also want to work with our partners to support young people before they look for work and do more to target the young people most likely to not be in education, training or employment when they leave school.

How did we help people to better understand their finances?

By providing advice and support on the financial choices people have, aiming to improve people's 'money management' at an earlier stage in their lives.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Help people to better understand their finances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 49% of people we work with will have a better understanding of their finances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We exceeded our target, with 71% of people having a better understanding of their finances.

We said in last year's plan that we would review the services that give people advice and information, but this has not yet been done because it is a bigger piece of work than originally thought. We will continue to work on this and will join it with the work we are doing on the new law around Social Services & Wellbeing.

But, we have continued to provide advice and support through funding the Rhondda Cynon Taf Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Connects Morgannwg. Last year, the Bureau helped over 2,500 people and helped to bring in almost £1million in total additional income for some of our poorest households. Around 500 social care service-users also had advice from our Welfare Rights Team on the benefits that they can claim.

We have looked at the ongoing impact of the UK Government welfare reforms to make sure we target services at those most affected. We were also going to write a 'Financial Inclusion Strategy', but now plan to do this during 2015/16 as part of our work to tackle poverty.

425 people had training to help them manage their money and weekly budgets from 'Communities First' and 71% of those who were trained told us they feel more able to manage their finances.

How did we reduce homelessness?

By providing services that try to support people as quickly as possible and working to make sure housing is suitable for the needs of individuals and families.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Reduce homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent 88% of potentially homeless families becoming homeless for at least six months. • The average number of days all homeless families with children will spend in Bed and Breakfast accommodation will be 15 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positively, we prevented 95% of potentially homeless families from becoming homeless; and • The average number of days homeless families with children spent in Bed and Breakfast accommodation was only 4.67 days.

Over the last few years, we have seen more young people presenting as homeless and we know there is a lack of suitable housing for them in the area. So, this year, we have worked towards providing facilities for this group but some of our planned projects have been delayed due to funding. We are working with the charities, 'United Welsh' and 'Adref', to open emergency accommodation for young people aged between 16 and 24 at 'The Grange' in Pontypridd during 2015. This emergency accommodation will provide young people with a room, and also help them with a number of lifestyle skills around their safety and health. We have also had agreement for a similar scheme in Abercynon, which we also aim to open during 2015.

The Housing (Wales) Act in 2014 made positive changes to laws around homelessness. Councils can now access privately rented housing to help prevent people becoming homeless. We have employed an additional member of staff to deal directly with private landlords to increase the supply of decent properties. We have also worked with private landlords to develop shared housing in the Taf area for single people aged under 35. But the changes arising from this new law may affect our performance, so some of our targets are set slightly lower than we performed in 2014/15.

Through helping people that are homeless, we are recognising the difficulties they face. This year, we are looking at practical ways to help prevent homelessness, such as a fund which, in some circumstances, could help people to keep their home if they are in prison or it could delay an eviction date. We are also looking at ways to prevent homelessness in local communities.

How did we develop town centres in Rhondda Cynon Taf?

We continued to work in both Pontypridd and Aberdare town centres to create vibrant town centres.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Continue to develop Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the completion of at least 36 property enhancements across Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We met our target, with 36 grants awarded that will support property enhancements in both town centres.

As you may have noticed, our town centres are going through some big changes. From summer 2015, the Grade-II listed Lido in Pontypridd will open once again to the public. This is a multi-million pound project, with £3million coming from European funding through Welsh Government, £2.3million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a £900,000 contribution from the Council and £100,000 from Cadw. When completed, the Lido will be great tourist attraction and facility for local people to enjoy.

Many of the original features of the Lido are being recreated. Part of the funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund provided workshops to inspire and educate people on traditional working practice like lime pointing, plastering and dry stone walling. The community provided memories of the Lido as it was and, as a result, local school children worked with an artist to create a 1920s inspired-artwork that covers the protective hoardings of the site. The construction of the new facility has also provided employment and training opportunities for local people.

Last year, nearly £6million was secured through Welsh Government's *Vibrant & Viable Places* funding to enhance the Pontypridd area. Although there was a delay in funding coming through, work has begun with 174sqm of commercial floorspace created or refurbished and 35 homes with improved energy efficiency. The Council also secured an extra £0.500million from Welsh Government to purchase the Taff Vale site.

We are working behind the scenes to improve the vibrancy of our town centres. For example, we are introducing planning guidance that aims to make the process easier and gives guidance on renovating old buildings in a way that's sympathetic to the locality. We are also looking at Business Improvement Districts, which is a way of raising funds through business rates for businesses to improve and promote their area by marketing their business, creating loyalty schemes or improving the appearance of the community, for example with street furniture and planting.

We have worked alongside the Council's Events Team, Town Council and traders in Pontypridd to put on events and promote the town centre to students, tourists and local people.

Pontypridd Christmas Event

"The event and footfall was amazing and as market traders we made the effort this year to stay open later to support the event. A big thank you to the organisers - very professional organisation and seamless communication - the effect of stepping out onto Taff Street brought a smile to your face both as a trader and a member of the Pontypridd community"

Indoor Market Traders, Pontypridd Indoor Market

We have also listened to traders to understand their concerns. For instance, some felt that the traffic restrictions on Pontypridd town centre had an effect on trade during the afternoon. We introduced a trial scheme, 'Through after Three', which allows motorists to drive through the centre from 3pm - an hour earlier than before. We hope the trial will boost trade during the late afternoon.

In Aberdare and Pontypridd we have continued with our 'Townscape' Programmes, which aim to improve the condition of business premises, bringing spaces back into use and supporting businesses to grow. A total of 36 businesses in Aberdare and Pontypridd received grants for this work. We will carry out surveys this year with visitors to Aberdare and Pontypridd to gauge feedback and make improvements where needed.

Footfall figures (2013/14) show an increase in Pontypridd of 19.3%, which is testament to the work we have been doing and bucks the general trend across the UK. There was a slight decrease in footfall in Aberdare (-3.4%). This is similar to the picture across Wales, where footfall decreased by 3.1%. However, early data for 2015 shows an increase of 2.5% in Aberdare.

We have continued to support businesses in all of our town centres, for example, by the development of a new mobile 'Tonypany Town Centre App' which allows businesses to promote themselves and attract visitors using offers and deals. This seems to be working well, so we are hoping to do the same in Aberdare and Porth this year.

How did we support business and create jobs?

By working with partners to give financial and practical support to businesses, where this will boost the economy and create jobs.

What we aimed to do	What did we aim to achieve in 2014/15?	How did we do?
Support businesses and create jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 jobs will be created in local businesses through grants provided by the Council and by Welsh Government. 30 jobs will be created by companies that are chosen to deliver major contracts on behalf of the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We did much better than expected, with 116 jobs created in local businesses and 77 jobs created by companies that deliver major contracts on behalf of the Council.

We are making it easier to set up businesses by bringing in a 'blanket' planning permission for an area. This Local Development Order will cut the 'red tape' involved in planning, save time and provide planning permission upfront. The Treforest Industrial Estate is our first chosen area for this work because of its crucial location to Cardiff City Region and excellent transport links.

We also set up a levy for all new developments, which will be used to help fund new schools or transport links. This will have long term benefits for the economy of the area.

The Council continued to support businesses through targeted grants. Outside the areas of Aberdare and Pontypridd, 82 businesses were given grants, which created 116 new jobs and safeguarded an estimated 1,214 jobs.

Case Study - With Love...Flowers & Gifts

A new florist has opened in Llantrisant with support from the Council's Business Support Grant, a flexible grant scheme aimed at assisting new and existing small-medium sized businesses to develop their growth potential.

L obtained funding which, along with her own savings, enabled her to open her florist 'With

Love.....Flowers & Gifts'. This has brought a previously empty property back into use and created employment.

L said: "I'm so very excited to open my own business in my home town and am grateful to the support of the local authority in providing grant funding towards the venture. The response and support from people in Llantrisant has been overwhelming and it's great to bring an empty property back into use. As a town, the traders work in partnership to attract more people to visit Llantrisant and enjoy the wide variety of shops, restaurants, pubs and facilities here. During this period of austerity, it's important to work together for the greater good of the entire community and I hope my shop contributes in some way to its ongoing success."

We recognise the opportunities from working with others across South East Wales and wider. A recent joint review showed that there are five priority areas for business growth across the region; ICT being one of them. As a result, we are focussing on this sector during 2015/16 to support ICT businesses to expand and maximise the opportunities of Superfast Broadband being rolled out across the area.

The Council has an impact on the local economy by buying goods and services for the community. Last year, 74.5% of bids/tenders to the Council were submitted by local business. Contracts were awarded to 141 companies, of which 111 (78.7%) were from Cardiff, Newport and Swansea postcodes, which include Rhondda Cynon Taf. We value our local businesses and will do even more during 2015/16 to help them apply for small scale contracts with the Council.

We continue to support the Rhondda Cynon Taf Business Club and the latest data, for 2013, shows that there were 785 new business start-ups and only 480 business closures. This is a turnaround from the year before, when we had more businesses closing over the year than opening. The average percentage of business start-ups in Rhondda Cynon Taf (15.1%) is more than both the Wales (12.6%) and UK (14.1%) average.

In our plan, we also said we would be prepared for the Council to take advantage of the new round of European funding that was due to start in 2014. This was delayed because the European Commission took some time to approve the programmes of funding. But, we have worked with others across South East Wales and the Welsh European Funding Office to try to develop opportunities, which will continue into 2015/16.

You can see more information in the detailed assessment of how we performed in ***Improving our Communities at*** www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PerformanceEvaluationImprovingCommunities2014to15

What does this mean for 2015/16?

Improving our communities is still a priority for us in 2015/16, but we recognise that the goals are long term and we do not always see quick changes. Some of the work in our 2014/15 plan is still being developed or is part of longer term projects. We want to continue our focus on Improving our Communities so that we can bring about lasting change. Therefore, we plan to:

- **Provide opportunities for young people and working age adults to enter employment, education and training.** This will include:
 - Providing community based learning. We have seen the success of our skills development programmes this year, with local people gaining new skills and growing in confidence.
 - Specifically, providing opportunities for young people and people with disabilities to engage in education, training or employment because the number of young people

unemployed remains high in the County Borough and we want to break the cycle of unemployment as early as possible.

- **Help people to better understand their financial choices and improve how people manage money.** This will include:
 - Working with our partner organisations to give people advice and information to people in need of help. We need to make sure we provide good quality information and advice for people to make their own choices, as part of the new laws on Social Services and health.
 - Focusing on tackling poverty, exclusion and inequality.
 - Helping people who will be impacted by the welfare reforms. The introduction of Universal Credit will be a change to how people receive their benefits. We want to support people to make sure they are prepared to cope with the change.

- **Reduce homelessness and provide services that meet the housing needs of individuals and families.** This will include:
 - Increasing the supply of suitable accommodation. We aim to base our services on the information we have about people presenting as homeless, which we know are single young adults at the moment.
 - In line with new laws on homelessness and housing, introducing other ways to prevent people becoming homeless.

- **Sustainable town centres, which contribute to economy of the County Borough.** This will include:
 - Working in our town centres to create economic development, improve appearance and foster the creation of jobs. This will have a positive effect on the surrounding areas.
 - Continuing our successful projects in Aberdare and Pontypridd, including the programme of Welsh Government funding for Pontypridd, which will deliver many benefits.
 - Although footfall has increased in Pontypridd, it has fallen in some other towns. We will support other town centres and traders to encourage visitors and improve trade.

- **Encourage investment to strengthen the economy and create jobs.** This will include:
 - Supporting property development and business creation by introducing planning guidance across Rhondda Cynon Taf and through measures like the Local Development Order in Treforest, which will make it easier for planning permission to go through.
 - Working regionally to understand the opportunities we have in South East Wales to boost the economy. This will include using the results of a report on business priority areas to support growth sectors, like ICT.
 - Building on our successes of supporting business and the great start-up figures for the area by making sure small businesses are prepared to apply for Council contracts, continuing with our grant schemes and offering support and advice to traders.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

- At least 521 people will find work following support from work clubs. Last year more people than we expected were able to find work, 620, so we have set ourselves a realistic target this year.
- At least 1,465 accredited qualifications will be gained by people attending community learning programmes. People gained more accredited qualifications than expected last year so again we have set ourselves a more realistic target.
- 92% potentially homeless families will be prevented from becoming homeless for at least six months, slightly lower than our current performance of 95% as we think the new homelessness laws may affect what we do
- Homeless families with children will spend no more than 8 days in Bed & Breakfast accommodation while we consider their housing and support needs and the housing options available to them
- Support 40 town centre property enhancements Aberdare & Pontypridd, which is more than the 36 we supported last year
- At least 60 jobs will be created (*excluding jobs created through the Pontypridd and Aberdare regeneration*) which is not as many as the 116 that were created last year as we did much better than we expected so have set ourselves a more realistic target

To see the full plan for 2015/16, please visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilpriorities-improvingcommunities2015to16

Making the best use of our budget

This section gives you some information on what we have done over the last year and how medium term service planning will continue to be central to everything the Council in planning for the future.

Evaluation of performance for 2014/15

The overall picture

Our evaluation tell us that overall the Council's medium term service planning arrangements were robust; however, the scale of the financial challenges ahead will mean the speed of change will need to be accelerated to enable balanced budgets to be set and delivered in the future. We have come to this conclusion because the arrangements:

- Have consistently supported the setting and delivery of balanced budgets over a number of years, and also the forecasting of medium term financial projections that calculated the level of budget savings the Council needed to find; however the on-going scale of year on year savings over the next 3 years will mean the pace of change will need to be further accelerated;
- Have helped the efficient management of resources in terms of the workforce and buildings generally well; however, further work is needed to improve staff absence levels;
- Have played a central role in the coordination and delivery of a long term plan for the County Borough, with our partners, that enabled Council services and outcomes to be prioritised;
- Have supported improvements to governance arrangements; however, opportunities remain for improvement to the quality and range of information provided to Councillors to further reinforce scrutiny arrangements.

Performance evaluation

We said we would continue to focus on stability and sustainability in terms of our finances through an effective financial management framework

In our 2014 Corporate Plan we set out a key performance indicator that we would use to gauge our progress:

What we said at the start of 2014/15	Did we meet the target we set?	How did we perform?
Maintain an adequate amount of money in reserve to deal with unexpected events. The level, and whether it is adequate, will be determined at the end	Yes	The Section 151 Officer in his 2015/16 Budget Strategy report to Council on 4 th March 2015 indicated that it remains his view that the Council should hold a minimum of £10M as General Fund Balances (i.e. its working balance). Based on the latest full year financial position for the 2014/15 financial year, forecasted as at December 2014, it is considered that the Council will still be able to

of the financial year.		hold the level of General Reserve balances in line with this requirement.
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The Council has placed fundamental importance in robust financial planning and management to help it focus on financial stability and get the most from the resources available. Key elements of the arrangements include, along with questions we ask ourselves:

- Robust budget setting – did we set a budget that will enable the Council to live within its means in 2014/15 and allocate resources in line with its priorities?
- Robust in year budgetary control – did we spend within the budget allocated and also maintain general reserves at an adequate level?
- Robust medium term financial planning – did we set a medium term forecast of likely spending requirements against likely funding levels to inform current and future decision making?

An overview of how the Council performed during 2014/15 is set out below.

Budget Setting

The funding we received from the Welsh Government fell by 3.7% for 2014/15 and after taking account of a 4.5% increase in Council Tax, the Council was required to find £14.4 million in savings during the year. A proposed plan to deliver this level of saving and allocate appropriate resources to services was compiled, called a budget strategy, and was approved at a meeting of Full Council on 26th February 2014. The Budget Strategy would meet the level of savings through the delivery of efficiency savings (i.e. those that do not impact on front line services), the part year effect of 'Phase 1'⁷ cuts to front line services and the use of one-off funding.

Further to Council approving the 2014/15 Budget Strategy, one 'Phase 1' service change decision was subject to legal challenge in respect of revised admission arrangements for Nursery provision. On the 23rd May 2014 a Court quashed the Council's decision to change admission arrangements on the basis that additional information should have been presented to Cabinet as part of the decision making process.

In addition, for another of the 'Phase 1' service change decisions agreed by Council i.e. reduction in the number of libraries, on the 10th June 2014 a decision was also taken to re-open Rhydyfelin Library and to undertake further dialogue with the community in that area. This process is currently on-going.

The combined impact of these changes was the removal of savings amounting to £1.95million and required the Council to find alternative savings from other areas to balance its budget. It was proposed this would be achieved through the delivery of 'Phase 2' service cuts and charges⁸ that would be implemented during the year, and increasing the amount of one-off funding; this was agreed by Council at its meeting on 25th June 2014 - link. A summary of how the Council delivered £14.4M of savings in 2014/15 is shown in Table1 below.

⁷ Phase 1 cuts – reported to and agreed by Cabinet on 8th January 2014

⁸ Phase 2 cuts – reported to and agreed by Cabinet on 14th May 2014

Table 1 – Summary of savings delivered by the Council in 2014/15

	£ Million	£ Million
Total savings required for 2014/15		14.4
Efficiency savings i.e. those that do not affect front line services	(4.0)	
Phase 1 service cuts i.e. Libraries, Day Centres, Youth Service and Meals on Wheels (excluding savings from changes to Nursery admission arrangements)	(3.2)	
Phase 2 service cuts and charges i.e. Adult Social Care Charging, Heritage Service, Arts and Culture Service, Supported Bus Routes and Paddling Pools	(0.8)	
One-off funding	(6.4)	
Total savings		(14.4)

More detailed information on the service cuts introduced to help bridge the 2014/15 budget gap, all of which were subject to public consultation, can be found at:

- Phase 1 – 8th January 2014 Cabinet report www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Cabinet-8-Jan-2014
- Phase 2 – 14th May 2014 Cabinet report www.rctcbc.gov.uk/cabinet-14-may-2014

After taking account of the above savings, the Council's 2014/15 revenue budget totalled £466.779M and was allocated as set out in Table 2:

Table 2 – Summary breakdown of 2014/15 revenue budget

	2013/14 Revenue Budget	2014/15 revenue budget	2014/15 Increase / (Decrease)	Other important information
	£Million	£Million	£Million	
Schools' budgets	140.896	141.755	0.859	Schools' budgets protected in line with Welsh Government directive and adjusted to take account of pupil number changes
Education and lifelong Learning Services	37.846	35.372	(2.474)	Reduction in budget related to areas such as service changes to Meals on Wheels, Libraries and Youth Service
Community and Children's Services	124.178	125.312	1.134	Part of the increase in funding provided to support priority areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services – funding to support looked after children's services, support for more Special Guardianship Orders and foster carer fees; • Adult Services – funding to support Direct Payments

	2013/14 Revenue Budget	2014/15 revenue budget	2014/15 Increase / (Decrease)	Other important information
	£Million	£Million	£Million	
Environmental Services ⁹	61.285	62.595	1.310	Part of the increase in funding provided to support priority areas i.e. the introduction of a nappy collection service and support for green waste processing. In addition, additional funding allocated for anticipated increases in Landfill Tax
Corporate Services and the Chief Executive's Division	32.327	32.144	(0.183)	Decrease in funding as a result of service efficiencies planned to be delivered during the year
Authority Wide Budgets	72.671	69.601	(3.070)	Reduction in funding due to re-assessing expenditure requirements for insurance claims and the medium term plan for the replacement of vehicles
TOTALS	469.203	466.779	(2.424)	

It is too early to establish if there have been any unplanned or unintended consequences as a result of the service cuts introduced in 2014/15. Service areas are currently collecting information to evaluate impact to date and will report these to designated scrutiny committees during 2015/16 for review.

In Year Budgetary Control

Against a budget of £466.779M, the Council spent £465.968M resulting in a year end underspend of £0.811M. As part of this overall position the required savings of £14.4million were delivered and at the same time a number of key budget variances were managed through strong financial management. Some of these are included below and will require on-going attention during 2015/16:

- Looked After Children – an overspend of £0.818million primarily due to the need to place children in our care with complex needs in specialist residential settings;
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme – an underspend of £0.714million due to lower than anticipated demand for the scheme;
- Commissioned Services – an overspend of £0.690million due to higher demand for specialist residential placements for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems;
- Special Educational Needs - an overspend of £0.217million due to an increase in the need to educate pupils outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

⁹ Environmental Services – in December 2014 the Environmental Services Group was disbanded as a self-standing service group and the individual service areas within it were re-allocated to one of the remaining three Service Groups. The Corporate Services Group was also renamed Corporate and Frontline Services, reflecting the areas transferred in from the former Environmental Services Group

Medium Term Financial Planning

Throughout 2014/15, we up dated our medium term financial forecasts on an on-going basis in line with changing service needs, changing inflationary estimates and likely changes in the level of funding we could expect to receive. This information was also subject to sensitivity analysis to test what the likely impact would be if one or a number of our assumptions were incorrect. The clear picture from all our forecasting was that the Council was facing a budget gap of over £30M in 2015/16, rising to approximately £60m up to 2017/18.

This position was similar to the forecasts we calculated in the previous year and meant that our ability to make the majority of future savings through efficiency alone was not feasible. Instead we will need to focus our efforts on reviewing everything we do as a Council to become even more efficient and ask if every one of our current activities needs to be done, if there are better ways of delivering the same outcomes or if other organisations could work with us to deliver better or the same for less. It will also mean delivering services in different ways and where absolutely necessary reducing or stopping services and there would be a need to continue to make cuts or changes to front line services.

In October 2014 we received provisional information from the Welsh Government around the funding level we were likely to receive for the 2015/16 financial year; this enabled us to confirm the saving requirement as £30.4M for this period. To address this, a series of service changes and efficiencies were planned together with the requirement to use one-off funding of £4.396M to meet the full target; this was reported to Council on 4th March 2015 (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Council-04-Mar-2015). The programme of service changes also included revision to admission arrangements of nursery education amounting to £1.259M for 2015/16 following the Council again initiating public consultation on a proposal for this area, as set out in a public report on 10th October 2014 (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Cabinet-10-Oct-2014).

When our performance in the areas we deem fundamental to securing and maintaining financial stability are considered together, it is our view that overall our financial management and planning arrangements remained fit for purpose in 2014/15. We have concluded this because:

- Budget setting – we set a balanced budget and allocated resources in line with our priorities; we recognise that £6.4Million was one-off funding with the requirement for permanent budget savings to be delivered in 2015/16 to meet this;
- In year budgetary control – we were able to deliver a balanced budget overall; we recognise that there are a small number of activities that significantly under / over spent and will require on-going attention in 2015/16;
- Medium term financial planning – the medium term forecasts we have prepared have proven to be accurate and have provided the impetus to drive a fundamental programme of change within the Council. We recognise however that further work is needed to meet the unprecedented budget saving requirements over the net 3 years.

In addition, the Wales Audit Office issued its latest report to us in June 2014. Whilst primarily relating to the 2013/14 financial year it is also relevant to 2014/15; one part of the report said that:

"The Council's strategic financial planning arrangements remain sound but improved communication and engagement with citizens is needed around the scale of the Council's improvement ambitions and the impact of service changes in its priority areas. The Council is likely to make arrangements to

secure continuous improvement in 2014-15." The full report can be viewed at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WAO-Air2014

We have gained invaluable experience from the above programme of work over the past 12 to 18 months and will be using this to fine tune how we go about service changes into the future. This includes undertaking more public engagement events so that we can discuss the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council, identify opportunities to work together more with local communities, and also help and support communities / groups as early as possible to operate services themselves.

Other important work in this area included:

- The development of our online services to help people access the information and services they need more quickly and deliver customer services more efficiently. For example, an online map for reporting streetlight problems was developed so residents can click on any streetlight in the County Borough and report dim or no light, lighting during the day or flickering lights - www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Streetlighting;
- At One4aLL Centres, we promoted the use of appointments for more complex enquires including Transport 'permits' (Bus Pass and Blue Badges) and Council Tax/Housing Benefit enquiries, to increase convenience for our customers and make the best use of staff time. As at December 2014, 10% of advice visits were via booked appointments;
- With decreasing budgets, gaining and using external funding has become increasingly important and we have worked to secure external funding to support key Council projects;
- Training was provided to relevant staff to help them secure and manage the best value contracts for goods and services. 'Best practice' guides are also being produced although their introduction has been delayed slightly so they can link with a new IT system.

We said we would ensure that effective workforce planning arrangements were put in place and that services would receive the necessary support and guidance to secure best value from their staff resources

In our 2014 Corporate Plan we did not include performance indicators to gauge our performance in this area; instead we concentrated on the delivery of key actions.

We continued to focus on our workforce planning arrangements to further improve the flexibility of the workforce to meet the changing needs of those who use Council services and in managing changes to services as a result of significant reductions in funding. During 2014/15 we have used our workforce planning arrangements to:

- Support a series of service changes, in consultation with staff and Trade Union representatives, that has enabled officers to be re-trained to move into other jobs where their old job was no longer required;
- Provide opportunities for officers to leave under the Council's Voluntary Redundancy or Voluntary Early Retirement Schemes where affordable and in the best interest of the service and individual concerned;

- Recruited 17 new Council apprenticeships and appointed 4 new graduate officers as part of our strategy to 'grow our own' employees, particularly in difficult to appoint to jobs. Our performance in previous years' has shown positive results: 94% of apprentices meeting the required standards at the end of their courses and 100% of graduates completing the programme and also finding employment within a year after the programme ended. We hope that our 2014 cohorts will also achieve similar positive outcomes;
- Provide targeted support to children leaving care through a 'Step in the right direction' programme. During 2014/15 this has enabled 3 young people access this programme that aims to provide a solid foundation for their future development.

We also continued our work to improve the skills of the workforce through 'on the job' training, external courses and mentoring arrangements, and also worked with schools and local colleges to create 'temporary' placements and 'gap year' placements. Whilst the impact from our placement work may not be apparent in the short term, it is intended that these opportunities will encourage young people nearing working age to strive to work for the Council in the future.

The health of our workforce and their attendance at work was also a high priority for us. We delivered a range of occupational health initiatives to help improve this by supporting staff to make healthy lifestyle choices such as through the cycle to work scheme, and providing targeted support to help individuals recover from illness and injury. 'Fast tracking' for external medical diagnosis was extended to additional conditions including mental health, enabling officers to access support and treatment more quickly. Injection therapy as a targeted early intervention treatment for Musculoskeletal Disorders was introduced in May 2014, with guided injection therapy under ultrasound. This has significantly reduced the number of physiotherapy appointments required per person and reduced recovery times.

Case study - injection therapy

"S" presented to the OHU with a four week history of insidious onset, right elbow pain with gradual deterioration. The pain was described as an underlying "ache" which became "sharp" with certain aggravating activities such as gripping, lifting and tasks involving fine motor skills. S reported increasing difficulty with normal working activities, to the point that she felt a period of sickness absence may well have been imminent. A provisional diagnosis of chronic lateral epicondylitis (tennis elbow) was confirmed via an ultrasound scan performed by the Occupational Health Physiotherapist. Following screening to check for any contraindications a corticosteroid injection was administered under ultrasound guidance. S was given a patient information leaflet detailing appropriate after-care advice and treatment record detailing medication used, dosage and injection site.

S was reassessed approximately 10 days later. At this time she was asymptomatic, exhibiting a full range of motion, strength and normal function, and was discharged from the OHU. As a result of the treatment S did not require any time off work due to the condition.

Prior to the introduction of injection therapy and ultrasound scanning, lateral epicondylitis was, on average, accounting for six physiotherapy appointments per episode of care. The introduction of injection therapy and ultrasound scanning has seen this average reduced to two appointments per episode of care.

An ear irrigation service (primarily for employees with manual based roles) was introduced in October 2014 to help accelerate treatment required following hearing tests. Flu vaccinations were offered to all staff and over 1,500 vaccinations were administered. Over 500 case reviews were held for employees on long-term sick to ensure that appropriate support was being provided to help them return to the workplace.

A revised sickness absence policy and maximising attendance strategy is currently being consulted on with Trade Unions and senior management, and is anticipated to be in place in the early part of 2015/16. It will include areas such as policy changes, early interventions and fast tracking treatments.

Despite these interventions, during 2014/15 the percentage of days/shifts lost to sickness absence was 4.93%, compared 4.34% in 2013/14. The number of days / shifts lost to sickness absence per employee (based on headcount) was 11.89, higher than the 10.7 in 2013/14. The main reasons for sickness absence were similar to previous years, with mental health issues accounting for 28% of all absences (an increase from 27% in 2013/14), and musculoskeletal problems the second highest reason for absence (26% compared to 25% in 2013/14). It is anticipated that the introduction of the new sickness absence policy, maximising attendance strategy and measures such as fast tracking external diagnosis will have a positive impact on future performance.

We produced a strategy to tackle Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf. A Hate Crime is any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender. In 2014 there were 491 reported incidents of Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Reported offences involving the protected characteristics of race and disability have gradually increased since 2006, with reported levels for other types of Hate Crime appearing to remain similar year on year. Our local strategy focuses on supporting victims and reducing repeat victimisation; improving confidence in our communities to report hate crime; and taking action against the perpetrators of hate crime and reducing reoffending. It also contributes to a number of higher level regional and national plans¹⁰. We are already actively working to support the victims of hate crime, and this work will continue and form part of the 'Protecting People from Harm' plan for 2015/16.

Case Study - Supporting Victims of Hate Crime

A 17 year old victim with both physical and learning disabilities was being made fun of by local youths when playing in a park near her address. The incidents then escalated and the youths would attend her address shouting abuse and throwing items at the property. Both of the girl's parents also have learning disabilities.

Social workers, teachers, housing officers and the Hate Crime Officer jointly met with the family to discuss how they could support them. A number of actions were agreed including providing counselling for the victim in school due the emotional impact of the incidents; installation of CCTV to identify the offenders; providing a referral to victim support and implementing an action plan to safeguard the victim; and, following the family's decision to move, to provide support for their new housing application.

While the family were waiting for appropriate housing to become available in the specific areas they wished to move to, local neighbourhood officers patrolled the area and weekly reassurance visits were carried out. A follow up visit confirmed that no further incidents had occurred and the parents expressed they were much happier and their daughter was receiving ongoing support. Since this visit, new housing has been found for the family.

The findings of Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE) project on Gender pay equality were evaluated and a number of themes were identified. These included barriers to women in casual or temporary jobs increasing their working hours and/or progressing to permanent employment, and a lack of women within senior management roles.

¹⁰ The Rhondda Cynon Taf Hate Crime Strategy links to the delivery of the Welsh Government Strategy - Tackling Hate Crime and Incidents: A Framework for Action, and the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan 2014-16 as well as 'Delivering Change', the Single Integrated plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf

Recommendations included undertaking a skills audit of employees in part time roles to explore their aspirations and perceived barriers to progress; and investigating alternatives to multiple job holding, where employees make up their hours from a number of part time or casual roles. To start to address these areas, the Council has produced an action plan for delivery in 2015/16.

We said we would improve the efficiency of our buildings through reduction of carbon emissions and improved property management processes

40 energy saving projects were undertaken during 2013/14 and with all the schemes fully operational a review was undertaken to determine their impact. This showed that the energy savings would equate to approximately the same amount of energy as is needed to run 190 typical domestic households for a year.

21 Invest to save energy projects were delivered during 2014/15, including installation of voltage optimisers, internal and external LED lighting schemes and the installation of solar panels on Council buildings to generate renewable energy. Each scheme was carefully considered to ensure that energy savings would be achieved, both lowering our CO2 emissions and providing cost savings.

Case Study – Troedyrhiw Home for the Elderly

In 2013/14, three energy saving initiatives were installed at Troedyrhiw Home for the Elderly. A new hydrogen fuel cell which contributed to heating the building as well generating electricity is the first of its kind in Wales. An LED lighting upgrade improved the interior environment of the home and a 20kW solar panel array further reduced the electricity consumption of this building. These changes should reduce running costs by over £10,000 per year.

We have continued with work to assess the viability of renewable energy projects on Council land. To date, the estimated pay back periods have all been in excess of 10 years for the locations examined and as a result feasibility work will be undertaken at other locations during 2015/16 to identify the possibility of more viable options.

Carbon dioxide emissions from all the Council's buildings decreased by 6.20% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. Due to the complexity of this data, up to date information on emissions for 2014/15 will be reported later in the year.

New legislation required the expansion of Display Energy Certificates (DECs) to eligible buildings over 250m². DECs show the actual energy use of a building and help the public see the energy efficiency of a building. An additional 67 DECs were required, 66 of these were completed during the year with the final one completed in April 2015.

As a result of service changes implemented during the year, 29 properties were no longer required by us for their previous purpose and were carefully reviewed to determine future use:

- 24 of the properties were owned outright by us:
 - 4 properties have been leased to community organisations, namely Beddau, Penrhiwceiber and Ynyshir Libraries and Pontyclun day centre;
 - 6 leases have been offered to interested Community groups;

- 8 properties have been sold and 1 further property is scheduled to go to auction in 2015/16;
- 5 properties are being put to alternative uses within the Council.
- 5 of the properties were leased from an external party, 4 of which have been surrendered and alternative uses within the Council are currently being considered for the remaining 1.

Case Study - Former Ynyshir Library

Following the closure of this facility, two local artists presented a Business Plan in support of their proposals to reopen the premises as a "Workers Gallery". This was supported by the Council and a formal lease has been granted to enable the project to open. The space was renovated by volunteers from the local community and the proprietors added new fittings and fixtures to provide a professional art exhibition space. The gallery offers a free art reference library, pick up point for recycling bags, display area for local news and events plus a space to show and see local art. One of the proprietors commented "With the support of local people and the local council we have been able to retain this unique building for the local community and visitors to the area." This is an example of new and innovative methods of delivering services in partnership with other organisations.

As additional transfers of community assets have taken place, we have recognised the need to provide more structured advice and support to organisations and community groups wishing to deliver Council services or take over Council assets. With this in mind, we have established a Voluntary sector liaison committee to assist in co-ordinating the approach, consisting of representatives from across the Council, as well as partners such as Interlink and Wales Co-operative Centre. A launch event for 'RCT Together' was held on 25th March 2015 to inform local community groups and inspire them to get involved. A £100,000 Enabling Fund for Community Led services has also been established, providing one off grants to support communities in establishing alternative community based delivery for traditionally Council led services.

We said we would strengthen local public service leadership to tackle service delivery challenges from a citizen perspective by working in partnership

Our Annual Review of the Single Integrated Plan was undertaken in June 2014, and confirmed that our current priorities of Safety, Health and Prosperity would continue. This Annual Review for 2013/14 summarises all of the work done by partners towards achieving our priorities and can be viewed at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan

In line with the Annual review of the Single Integrated Plan we continued to review our partnership arrangements. Traditionally, partnership working has been directed through strategic partnership boards but, more and more, partners are working together directly, as a team, to achieve better outcomes for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf. We decided that now these good relationships and ways of working were established that partnership boards were no longer the most effective way of co-ordinating our work. Instead, frontline staff will continue to work together to deliver the priorities of 'Delivering Change'. '*Delivering Change*' will still be at the heart of our organisational plans and continue to be monitored by the LSB. In addition, there will be a focus on the key issue of 'Skills and Jobs', with geographically focussed task and finish groups targeting resources where they are needed most and working with local communities to improve outcomes for local people.

The Cwm Taf Data Observatory (<http://cwmtaf.infobasecymru.net>), a local information system for Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, is now being used to report our progress against the population measures within 'Delivering Change', making data much more accessible and timely and

less resource intensive to produce. This means we can get the information we need more easily and act on it more quickly.

The planned introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill will require us to focus on long term and sustainable solutions in our decisions. The Bill will require all public organisations in Wales to work towards national wellbeing goals, taking a preventative approach to reduce the impact on communities in the future. It requires us to work closely with local people and communities in setting our own local goals. We are involved in a local research project which is looking at how prepared organisations are to implement the Bill and we are liaising with the Welsh Government on their plans for the future to make sure that the changes they propose will help us to deliver lasting and sustainable change for local people. Due to these changes we are postponing a review of the LSB scrutiny arrangements, as the role of scrutiny is likely to be influenced by the Future Generations Bill.

Partner organisations are working closely together on joint projects to improve the health and wellbeing of people within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Working with partners to lower rates of smoking, we progressed the introduction of smoke free outdoor spaces. This included development of policies for smoke free grounds for the premises of partner organisations and developing a campaign for smoke free play areas. We have established Stop Smoking Groups across a number of offices and depots, as well as developing a brief intervention and referral pathway, to provide the best possible support for staff who want to quit smoking. We have also begun work with schools to develop 'Smoke Free Zones' around school gates.

As part of lowering the rates of obesity, we are promoting healthy environments which maximise the opportunities for physical activity by making it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle. Sustrans, Four Point Mapping and Local Transport projects are supporting us to identify and assess current routes.

Working towards lowering the rates of suicide in Rhondda Cynon Taf, partners organised a suicide and self harm prevention conference in July 2014, identifying key priorities such as data and information sharing, training and awareness training, communication and signposting and prevention and intervention.

A Welsh government European Social Fund project was undertaken to bring together Communities First, Flying Start, Families First and the Integrated Family Support Project across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil to better meet the needs of local children, young people, families and communities. This brought together practitioners and encouraged them to work in partnership to deliver shared outcomes. As a result of this work, the projects supporting families are now more closely aligned so people are more able to access the support they need.

We have worked in collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil CBC to improve the IT Infrastructure in schools, to provide pupils and teachers access to the latest technology and information to enhance teaching and learning. 123 of our 132 schools now have increased broadband capacity and wireless technology, with the remainder due to be completed by March 2015.

We said we would improve the Council's Governance arrangements to support the delivery of efficient and effective services

The major risks which could prevent the Council delivering its priorities, including reduction in Welsh Government funding, delivery of the 21st Century schools project and changing demographics placing increased challenges on social services, were set out in a Strategic Risk Register and reported

to the Audit Committee on 30th October 2014. These risks were also included within the Council's priority plans for the first time, so that risks and performance could be considered together on a quarterly basis. Alongside this work, targeted training was carried out to improve managers' understanding of risk management and a manager's guide produced, to ensure risks are fully taken into account when planning and delivering services.

The Council's key documents demonstrating performance and progress (the 'Corporate Plan' and 'Annual Delivery Report') were made more user friendly in 2014/15. Documents were made shorter, simpler language was used to allow the public to engage more with the information and links were provided to more detailed information. In addition, there was more involvement of Councillors in scrutinising the information included.

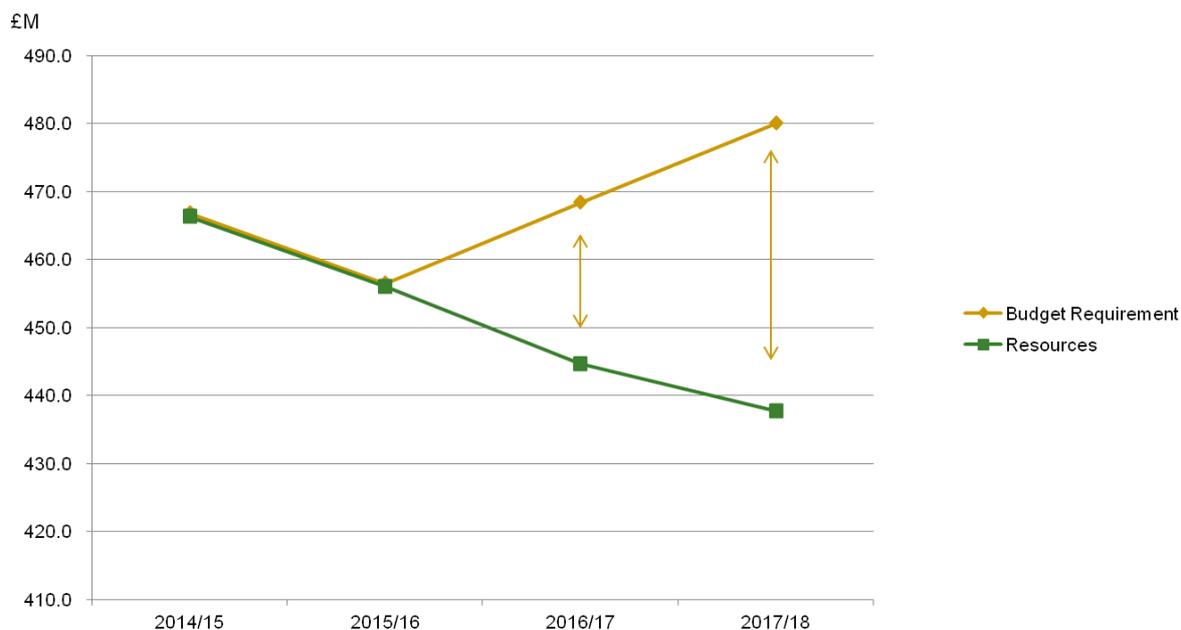
Lessons learned from 2014/15 are informing the approach for 2015/16 through further simplifying our planning by combining a review of performance in the last year and our plans for the future into a single document. This will make information on our performance available to people much more quickly and we hope will be more informative and easier to understand.

We continue to improve information management practices. To make sure that personal information is kept safe but at the same time staff can access information they need to do their jobs, we have developed a number of agreements which set out how and when we will share certain information with other organisations (Information sharing protocol or ISP). These agreements are now in place with RCT Homes and Cwm Taf Youth Offending Team.

Meeting the future financial challenge

Medium Term Service Planning will remain the single most important programme of work within the Council with up dates being provided to Cabinet and Members during the year, and this built into all areas of the Council's work. Based on this, it is considered a priority action plan for 2015/16 setting out the Medium Term Service Planning framework that is already well embedded will add little value to the Council's existing arrangements. Therefore, it is proposed that the Medium Term Service Planning priority area, for the statutory purposes of the Local Government Measure, no longer applies.

Our latest work in this area shows that the need for the Council to continue to make significant financial savings remains. The graph below estimates a saving requirement in 2016/17 of £23.7million and a further £18.6million in 2017/18: this means we will need to find over £42million of savings in the next 2 years.



The sheer size of the challenge will mean we can no longer meet the majority of savings from efficiencies, or put another way, from making savings in areas that do not affect front line services. Instead, we will need to continue to review everything we do to:

- Deliver further efficiency savings that do not affect front line services. This will include:
 - Further streamlining of support services and how managers and staff are organised, merging of internal functions, more forensically examining our expenditure to identify what can be reduced or stopped; and enable more 'mobile working' for our staff where appropriate to do so;
 - Make better use of our buildings and vehicles through maximising their use, investing in new technology such as energy efficient measures to save money in the future and taking opportunities to share these assets with other organisations;
 - Get better rates on the contracts we let by working more collaboratively with others and the business we contract with.
- Deliver more services in partnership with health, other local authorities, the third sector and local community groups so that we can share resources and expertise;
- Review the level of subsidy we provide for certain services and if deemed reasonable following an assessment, increase some of our charges;
- Set out options for service changes to front line services that will reduce the level of service and costs. We will only do this where absolutely unavoidable.

We will also promote RCT Together, our approach to engaging with residents and communities about how they can work together to explore alternative delivery models, which could maintain services and facilities in the future.

Important Themes that underpin our work

Our values as a Council continue to shape the behaviour of the people that deliver services to you and the way we determine our priorities. What this means is we will:

- Act with integrity;
- Put service users at the centre of what do;
- Make sure we tell you how we are doing;
- Constantly try to make things better;
- Work with partners where it will improve what we do;
- Respect others.

Cross cutting themes that shape how we work

Everyone in the Council works hard to make sure that people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are treated equally, fairly, with respect and offered a service in the language of their choice. These principles are in line with what we call our "cross cutting themes" of **Equalities, Welsh Language and Sustainable Development**. What this means for our residents is that we value each other's differences and target resources to better meet their needs now, but also take decisions that will benefit future generations growing up in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Equalities

We want Rhondda Cynon Taf to be a place where people can live and work in communities where difference is accepted and everyone is able to live their lives with tolerance and respect without harassment

As we set out in our 2014-17 Equality Report at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/StrategicEqualityPlan2014-17, in the last year we focused much of our work on

- Hate Crime and Addressing Negative Attitudes and Behaviours
- Developing more robust monitoring arrangements
- Gender Pay.

We have made good progress in two of these areas both as a Council and in partnership. We haven't made as much progress on our monitoring arrangements as you will see below.

Hate Crime and Addressing Negative Attitudes and Behaviours

There are many different forms of Hate Crime and we have worked with the South Wales Police to develop and deliver Hate Crime Awareness sessions to over 400 Council staff. Although it is too early to say with any certainty that this work has led to more incidents of hate crime being reported, we have anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is the case. Our Social Workers and Support Workers are working more closely with our Anti Social Behaviour Team, the Police, Housing providers and other agencies to tackle disability hate crime and better support the victims. Early feedback from vulnerable people and / or their parents that have been involved in cases of disability hate crime suggest that incidents had stopped and that they and the victims felt happier when these agencies work together. But it is early days and we know that there is much more to do.

As a result of the success of the Hate Crime awareness raising sessions we were asked by Communities First staff to provide them with Dignity and Respect training to help them to better understand how negative attitudes and behaviours can impact on both individuals and the communities they support. Behaviour change is difficult to measure in the short term; however, we will be revisiting the staff involved to establish how their work has been affected by this training.

We have also worked with our partners to tackle cases of 'mate crime'. 'Mate crime' is where people make friends with people that are vulnerable and then take advantage of them by taking their money or medication, damaging their property or even being physically violent. This can also leave the victim feeling upset and confused about friendships as well as being in debt or having their health and wellbeing affected. It is too early to give firm evidence about how people who have been made aware of 'mate crime' are responding. We know that there was an initial 'spike' in reported 'mate crime' as a result of raising awareness. These reports were mostly from concerned carers of vulnerable people. We are continuing to tackle 'mate crime' and we are working with partners to obtain more representative data in the future.

Our mental health affects the way we think and feel about ourselves and others, and how we deal with life. This shame and secrecy makes it hard for people to speak about mental health, but can also lead us to ignore people or treat them in negative ways. Rhondda Cynon Taf has a high level of mental illness and so we have also worked in partnership with Cwm Taf University Health Board and Merthyr Tydfil Council and signed the 'Time to Change Wales' Pledge to address the shame and secrecy around mental health problems.

We continued our work with schools to help children grow up with a better understanding of differences in our communities, for example:

- Alongside our partners in the Multi Agency Diversity Forum, we held the annual Primary schools Calendar competition. The theme this year was Cyber bullying. Primary and Special School children were asked to design pictures for a calendar that showed that cyber bullying is unacceptable. The calendar has been distributed to all primary and special schools throughout the County Borough as well as to our partners.
- We have also worked with South Wales Police and schools to deliver a Holocaust Memorial Day event that linked past and present prejudices and Hate Crimes.

We have continued our commitment to making improvements in the way Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people are treated within the Community and the Council. We attended Cardiff Pride and talked to people from Rhondda Cynon Taf about how they felt the Council helps LGBT people in the community. What they told us included that we needed to raise more awareness of the problems faced by young LGBT people in schools. As a result of this feedback, together with 'Stonewall' which is an organisation that works with a whole range of agencies to address the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people in the wider community, RCT is part of an 'Education Champions Programme' to tackle homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools so that all pupils feel safe in schools.

We have also signed up to the 'Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme' which is helping us to make RCT Council the best workplace it can be for LGTB people. As part of our work we set up an LGBT network and are raising awareness of LGBT issues with all staff in various ways. As a result of everything we are doing, much of which is described in this section, over one year, we improved our position in the Workplace Equality Index, from 338 to 133rd place.

Developing more robust monitoring arrangements

In the last year our work has focused on getting things done and we have made good progress with many new projects. However, we haven't made as much progress as we had hoped in our monitoring arrangements. Now that we have many more projects in place, we need to get better at measuring and monitoring what we do to make sure we can show that our work is making a real difference to the people and communities of RCT.

Gender Pay.

We are making sure that everyone who works for the Council is treated equally by working with Cardiff University on a project to find out if there are any differences between the way that men and women are paid. This is part of a national project called WAVE, (Women Adding Value to the Economy) which is funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government www.wavewales.co.uk/gender-pay

We have also been making sure that the same people are not repeatedly affected by the choices that the Council is making as a result of service changes being made. This work is recorded in what we call Equality Impact Assessments and these are completed when proposals for service change are made. You can see these assessments included within the reports that are presented to relevant Cabinet meetings, you can see an example at *****. We know that it is important for the Council to live within its means but at the same time, we need to make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

What are we going to do next year?

Our work programme for 2014/17 is set out in our Strategic Equality Plan www.rctcbc.gov.uk/StrategicEqualityPlan2014-17 but we are currently updating it, in the meantime we will continue to

- work with the South Wales Police and Community Safety partnership to raise awareness of Hate Crime and 'Mate' crime with staff, schools and the people that use our services
- improve our monitoring arrangements by collecting better information so that we can check the progress and results of our work.
- work with partners to deliver on the 'Time to Change Wales' pledge, to tackle the shame and secrecy around mental health.
- work within the WAVE project to check that men and women who work for the Council are treated equally.

You can see more detail about our work and progress in our Annual Equality Report which was presented to a meeting of the Cabinet on 19 March. www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Cabinet-19-Mar-AER-2013to2014

Sustainable Development

We want to make sure that we are acting now in the best interests of future generations in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Sustainable development is about improving how we can achieve long-term cultural, economic, social and environmental wellbeing by taking action together, with people, communities and other public bodies.

In the services we provide, we take into account the long term wellbeing of our communities. We look to prevent problems from occurring and try to take a joined-up, common sense approach. These principles are set in everything we do as part of our day to day business.

In the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf - the Council is currently seen as the Community Leader by planning and helping public and third sector organisations work together better for the benefit of the people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf -now and in the future.

The work we have already described in this report and other work is helping us to contribute to economic, social, environmental and cultural well being by for example

Economic wellbeing

- building new schools that are better equipped for the 21st century
- helping more unemployed people to get into training or jobs
- installing more new energy efficient insulation measures in homes across Rhondda Cynon Taf
- continuing to support businesses to create jobs

Social well being

- Preventing more people from becoming homeless
- Supporting more older people to live in their own homes for longer
- Giving older people the confidence to resist door step crime
- Helping children, young people and families early so that their problems don't get any worse

Environmental wellbeing

- Making sure our streets are clean
- Reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill
- Helping to minimise the risk of flooding to homes and businesses
- Completing 21 new energy saving projects within the Council including installing solar panels on our buildings to generate renewable energy

Cultural wellbeing

- Supporting community organisations to take over the running of Council buildings to provide cultural spaces for the community, such as the Workers Gallery in Ynyshir
- Involving local people in the renovation of Pontypridd Lido through learning traditional construction skills, capturing local history and producing artwork inspired by the site

But we have also set out that we have a lot more to do, especially where data shows that currently we aren't making the progress we planned or performance isn't as good as the rest of Wales, for example: .

- Recycling rates - We need to recycling more of the waste we collect as we narrowly missed our target and we don't compare well with the rest of Wales. We aim to improve this by learning from our communities who recycle lots of their waste and targeting help to those who don't
- We didn't assess as many Carers as other Councils. We need to make sure that we know the reasons for this and take action to improve
- Our school inspection results for the quality of leadership and management were not as high as we would like, with 42 out of 59 schools graded at least good, 16 schools graded adequate and 1 unsatisfactory and our work to make sure more schools improve their inspection results remains a priority for us.
- Supported accommodation for vulnerable young people in the Old Bakery and Ty Rhondda hasn't been completed, as we needed to concentrate on providing emergency accommodation for single homeless young people
- We don't always assess vulnerable children as quickly as other councils, nor are as many of our assessments undertaken by social workers and this remains one of our priorities
- Not as many of our Domestic Abuse clients felt safer as a result of our support, although the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor service dealt with 50% more cases than they did last year.
- We didn't continue with a hydroelectricity scheme in Dare Valley Country Park to produce green electricity as we found that the proposal was not cost effective.

You can see more details in our detailed evaluations for 2014/15 which you can see at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/AllPerformanceEvaluations2014to15

Along with our partner organisations, we are currently preparing for the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, which will come into force in 2016. This Act puts 'sustainable development' at the centre of everything public organisations do. In other words, we need to make sure that any decisions we make consider the impact they could have on people living in Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taf in the future.

The Act sets out what we want for future generations in Wales through seven wellbeing goals that we will work towards. These are:

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.

You can still get involved in the national conversation about the future in Wales at thewaleswewant.co.uk

Meeting the requirements of the new law will present us with some challenges and will make us more accountable to you. Inspectors will test that we are doing the right things. We think that the work we have already done through our partnerships and working sustainably means that Rhondda Cynon Taf is well placed to meet these new requirements although there is still time to prepare before it comes into force. You can see the Act at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/FutureGenerationsBill

Welsh Language: Accessing services in the language of your choice.

As a result of a law in Wales called the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, all Councils and public bodies in Wales must comply with a set of 176 standards about the way we use the Welsh Language in our organisations. The standards relate to different areas of our work but have conditions that we need to meet:

1. the Welsh language should be treated the same as the English language in Wales; and
2. people in Wales should be able to live their lives using the Welsh language if they choose to do so.

A Welsh Language Commissioner reports directly to the First Minister and makes sure all organisations covered by the Measure follow these requirements, including the standards. The Standards were agreed by Welsh Government on 23 March 2015. www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshLanguageStandardsRegulations2015 (*Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Ministers, County and County Borough Councils, and National Park Authorities) Regulations 2015*)

Over the last year, the Commissioner's representatives have been inspecting public bodies to identify the standards that could apply directly to them, depending on what arrangements for the Welsh Language were already in place. In September 2015, the Commissioner will impose those standards deemed necessary to meet the requirements of the Measure in a compliance notice.

Once we receive our compliance notice as a Council, we will work with the Welsh Language Commissioner for six months to agree a timetable to implement more challenging standards. We will also start work on a five year strategy to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of Welsh.

As a result of our own work, we recognised that we needed to do more to build on what we are doing to implement all of the new standards. However, we feel that the Council is well placed to meet the requirements of the Measure because we have:

- continued to work closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office and across Council services to prepare to meet the service standards;
- started to check what we currently do with what we will need to do;
- started to implement new standards that we had already identified as a gap e.g. making sure that we provide a member of staff to attend the reception area when a person attends and wishes to receive a Welsh-language service;
- preparing to implement other standards that we think may be imposed;
- started to introduce Welsh language technology e.g. Microsoft Welsh Language Interface Packs, in partnership with the Welsh Government, to support the implementation of the standards, across the Council and our schools; and
- put in place a Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Working Group that will set the strategic direction, introduce and monitor what we implement.

How we continue to engage with the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf

Over the last few years we have been changing the way we engage with you, as residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. But despite providing different ways for you to give us your views, we know there is room for improvement. In 2013, the Wales Audit Office told us that we needed to get better at making the information we provide less complicated, as we were not making it easy for people to understand what we were trying to do. This meant that people weren't always able to respond and give us their views.

Over the last year we have been working harder to make our information more accessible and to give people more time to give us their views. For example, we have provided more information in our reports, easy to read summary booklets with FAQs and a web page that focuses on the budget challenge www.rctcbc.gov.uk/budgetchallenge. More recently, we have refreshed our approach to involving residents and communities about the future delivery of services and facilities as part of the RCT Together approach (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether). This approach is about involving residents in a number of ways to help the Council and communities to work together to explore different ways of service delivery and managing buildings in the future. This approach will continue during 2015/16.

Over the last year, residents have been invited to:

- Nine drop in sessions with Cabinet members to discuss specific service change proposals e.g. Funding for Nursery Education and the Council funded Music Service.
- Three Leader engagement events - to discuss the General Budget Challenge.
- Use social media to get better and more up to date information about things that matter to them e.g. road closures, upcoming events and changes to bin collection arrangements. We also respond to residents when they ask a question, raise a concern or report a problem with a service.

We are grateful to everyone who has provided feedback to help us shape the services we deliver. We want you to continue to give us your views about our plans and our work so that we can better prioritise areas to change and/or improve. Please see our contact details to get in touch.

The Welsh Government sometimes tells us to consult with our residents, but mostly we ask your views because it is a fair and right thing to do. Getting your views and opinions help us to check what we are doing and how it is making a difference to the people that live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Listening and responding to you is important and we know that by involving you directly and more regularly, we get a better understanding of your needs and expectations. It also means that you get more information about the challenges and choices we face.

One of the best ways of consulting with residents remains our Citizens' Panel, which continues to provide a credible, representative public voice. This means that more local people on the Panel have an opportunity to influence how the Council works in a more focused and direct way. Our Citizens' Panel is made up of 1,000 Rhondda Cynon Taf residents who are representative of the population, interested in the work of the Council and are willing to be involved. Our Panel also joins with the Panel for Merthyr Tydfil Council to create a joint Citizens' Panel which is currently made up of 1,600 residents of both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. Partners such as the Health Board consult with this Joint Panel too. You can join our Citizens' Panel at www.rctcbc/citizenspanel.

As well as our Panel, we ask people for their views in different ways, through on-line surveys, questionnaires and also talking about issues with smaller established interest groups, as well as

opportunities in Council events. As part of our commitment to this area, we use the feedback we receive from people to help us check if what we do is making a difference to the lives of people that live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf and has been used to inform this Corporate Performance Report.

We have continued to work with our partners to coordinate, promote and develop consultation and engagement, making best use of the opportunities to consult with local people and the information they provide. In the last year, there have been 65 surveys on the Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub that we share with Merthyr Tydfil Council and Cwm Taf Health Board - this includes 26 that were specific to this Council. The Hub has allowed us to check our consultation and engagement activity is being acted upon, as it automatically reports to officers when consultations end, see the Hub for yourself at www.cwmtafhub.co.uk.

The Hub, and our work to put together our joint Citizens' Panel, was funded as part of the European Social Fund through Welsh Government for a joint consultation and engagement project with Merthyr Tydfil. The project aimed to provide an effective and efficient approach to consultation and engagement across all partners of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The funding came to an end in December 2014 but we will carry forward the lessons and key actions from this work into 2015/16.

At the end of the project we checked that we had achieved everything we set out to achieve through the project and we found that it had. This is because:

- The online Community Engagement Hub is now being used by a range of partners to promote and carry out consultation and engagement with our residents, as well as providing feedback to service users.
- Over 65 separate consultations were carried out in the Hub including RCT anti-social behaviour survey, South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan Consultation and a survey of people's shopping habits and how far they travel, to understand how this might change as a result of new housing in the County Borough.
- The Hub has been so successful as a way of consulting, the partners have agreed to carry on funding it when the ESF funding comes to an end.
- All the partners have worked together to agree a set of common standards for consulting with local people to which they will all work
- Over 70 staff from all partners have been trained in the best ways to get the views of local people
- We have asked the new joint Citizens' Panel for their views in 13 different surveys including the Council's 2015/16 Budget, service change proposals and survey on home ownership.
- Most of the people involved in the Hub told us that joint working has helped to improve links between partners and helped to provide consistent ways of working and less duplication
- People also told us that they thought that the Project had helped residents to give their views more easily and had reached a wider audience than previously.

We know we still have more to do and are continuing to look at ways we can improve how we involve residents in what we do and in 2015 we have plans to

- Hold more Leader Engagement Events.
- Improve residents involvement in Scrutiny arrangements.
- Carry out consultations for service change proposals.
- Make more use of Social Media as a way to communicate and consult with our residents.

- Make sure that our consultation with Older People meets the guidance set out by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.
- Develop a Young Persons version of our consultation Hub.

In the meantime there are lots of ways you can get involved, make suggestion to improve or tell us what you think

	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit
Twitter	@rctcouncil or www.twitter.com/rctcouncil
Facebook	www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil
	Improvement@rctcbc.gov.uk
	(01443) 680723
	Performance Team, Ty Bronwydd, Porth, CF39 9DL
For current surveys	consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk
Join the Citizens' Panel	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/citizenspanel
Cwm Taf Engagement Hub	www.cwmtafhub.co.uk
RCT "Help us Improve" Scheme	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback
Your ideas on Council Savings	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PublicSuggestionSurvey
Your Councillor	Find the contact details of you local Councillor www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors
If you are interested in taking over the running of a Council run building or service	For more information www.rctcbc.gov.uk/RCTTogether-CIP