

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-17

**FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

13th JUNE 2016

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider a draft version of the 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' in accordance with Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1. Consider the overall conclusions drawn from the Scrutiny Working Group process following its review of draft 2015/16 performance evaluations and draft 2016/17 priority action plans;

2.2. Based on the Scrutiny Working Group conclusions and from reviewing the draft 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' (**Appendix D**), form a view on the extent to which the draft 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' sets out:

- A balanced assessment of performance and progress for 2015/16; and
- The Council's ambitions for 2016/17 in an understandable way that will enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised

2.3 Approve a final draft version of the 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17', subject to any amendments deemed necessary, for reporting to full Council on the 22nd June 2016.

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; and
- 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. At the Council meeting on 24th June 2015, six priorities were agreed for 2015/16 with progress being reported and monitored for each as part of quarterly performance reporting arrangements during the year. The approved priorities were (in no specific order):

- Public health and protection;
- Education;
- Children and family centred services;
- Maintaining people's independence;
- Improving our communities; and
- Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and green.

3.3 During 2015/16 the Council also reviewed its overall direction for the coming four years the outcome of which informed revisions to its vision, purpose and ambition. This up date was set out in a document called 'Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020', was approved by Council on the 24th February 2016, following pre-scrutiny and public consultation processes, and contained the following priorities:

- Economy - Building a strong economy;
- People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone; and
- Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

3.4 To help ensure the Council effectively discharges its legal duty, Scrutiny Working Groups met between March and May 2016 to review and challenge the progress made by the six priorities for 2015/16 and also considered the adequacy of the draft priority action plans compiled for 2016/17 to deliver the 'Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020'.

3.5 The outcome of each Scrutiny Working Group's review was used to inform the compilation of the draft 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17'.

4. REVIEW AND CHALLENGE BY SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS

4.1 Three Scrutiny Working Groups were established and Table 1 below sets out the priority areas designated to each.

Table 1 – Priority areas designated to Scrutiny Working Groups

	2015/16 priority areas	2016/17 priority areas
Scrutiny Working Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour; and • Streetcare services and the natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.
Scrutiny Working Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving our communities; and • Providing a top quality education for all – every school a great school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy - Building a strong economy.
Scrutiny Working Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently; and • Keeping all children and young people safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.

4.2 Each Scrutiny Working Group met on two occasions: the first meeting to consider the 2015/16 draft performance evaluations and form a view on the extent to which they set out a balanced picture of progress and a second meeting to consider the draft 2016/17 priority action plans and to form a view on the extent to which they are understandable and will enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised.

4.3 The conclusions drawn by the Scrutiny Working Groups were that:

- 2015/16 draft performance evaluations - overall, the draft evaluations set out a balanced picture of performance; however, a number of amendments are required to improve their meaningfulness; and
- 2016/17 draft priority action plans – overall, the draft priority action plans provide a sound basis for progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised throughout 2016/17. Again, Scrutiny Working Groups identified a number of amendments to be reflected within priority action plans to further improve their meaningfulness.

4.4 For Members consideration, the amendments made to the draft 2015/16 performance evaluations and draft 2016/17 priority action plans are set out at Appendices A and B respectively, and Appendix C provides links to the up dated versions of each document.

5. **THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT 'CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17'**

- 5.1 The draft 2015/16 performance evaluations and draft 2016/17 priority action plans have provided the core evidence to enable officers to compile a draft 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17'. The Report aims to set out in an easily understandable way how the Council has performed against its priorities in 2015/16 and what it plans to deliver in 2016/17, and is included at **Appendix D**.
- 5.2 It is intended for the Report to be an important document in communicating, both internally and externally, the Council's ambition and plans for the future, and will also enable the Council to meet its legal duty under Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.
- 5.3 The Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the draft 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' alongside the conclusions drawn by the Scrutiny Working Group process and form a judgement on the extent to which it sets out:
- A balanced assessment of performance and progress for 2015/16?; and
 - The Council's ambitions for 2016/17 in an understandable way that will enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised?
- 5.4 The judgement(s) formed by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, alongside any amendments it deems necessary, will be incorporated into the up date reported to full Council on the 22nd June 2016.
- 5.5 Further to a version of the 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' being approved by Council, it will be made available on the Council's internet site to meet the statutory reporting requirements, including Welsh Language. Thereafter, a small number of hard copies will be produced and made available at public facing Council buildings.

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 It is proposed that Rhondda Cynon Taf discharges this responsibility through the compilation of a 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17'. The detailed information that has informed the drafting of the Report has been subject to review by Scrutiny Working Groups and revisions made in line with Scrutiny Working Group feedback, where deemed appropriate.

- 6.3 It is the role of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to form a judgement on the extent to which the 'Corporate Performance Report 2016/17' provides a balanced assessment of performance and progress for 2015/16 and also the extent to which it sets out the Council's ambition in an understandable way that will enable progress and impact to be measured and scrutinised. The judgement(s) of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee will be included in the up date reported to Council on the 22nd June 2016.

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**DRAFT 2015/16 PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS - SUMMARY OF THE MAIN
AMENDMENTS IDENTIFIED BY SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS**

Draft 2015/16 Performance Evaluation	Amendments identified for action
General	The requirement to include full year performance information within each evaluation (the versions reported to Scrutiny Working Groups being based on performance as at December 2015).
Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the reason(s) why work / resources are being targeted on first time offender aged 18 – 25 and also misuse of substances; • Add in contextual information that shows the number of antisocial behaviour incidents or calls; • Reflect the results of the review undertaken by ‘SafeLives’ into Domestic Abuse Services; • Reflect, if available, the impact to date of the ‘Joint Care Management Programme’ that aims to help vulnerable and inactive residents to improve their overall health; • Include details of what is included for residents within the free healthy home pack (as part of the ‘Housing and Health Action Area’ initiative in Tylorstown); and • Add in specific information on the number of empty properties brought back into use.
Streetcare services and the natural environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include feedback received from residents as part of the food waste recycling campaign carried out.
Improving our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include examples of the types of areas that accredited qualifications have been achieved in for 2015/16; • Include the results / impact to date from the delivery of ‘Your Future First’ programme for 2015/16; • Include more information on the new 24 hour supported accommodation for single homeless men at the former Martins Close housing scheme e.g. level of occupancy; • Identify if up to date Town Centre footfall / vacant retail property information is available and include where possible; and • Make reference to how the Council supports small and medium sized enterprises through buying goods and services locally (linked to the updates considered by the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in December 2015, February 2016 and March 2016).
Providing a top quality education for all – every school a great school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make reference to the Estyn Inspection undertaken in 2015/16 of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.

Draft 2015/16 Performance Evaluation	Amendments identified for action
Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect that the CSSIW identified the MASH as an area where progress has been made and the importance of greater collaboration with partners to optimise its impact; • Up date the timescales for developing a new strategy and operating model for social care, reflecting that there have been delays from the original timetable; • Add in the CSSIW's assessment (2014/15) that the Council has good reablement services and also the regulator's view that performance for the Delayed Transfers of Care required improvement; • Reference the work of Community Coordinators as part of the network of community support workers in place (in line with the up date provided to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 22nd February 2016); and • Up date the revised timescale for completing the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy (noting the delay from the original timescale and the reason for this).
Keeping all children and young people safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly reflect the post title of suitable skilled workers (who are not social work qualified) i.e. Assessor Care Managers, when setting out the staffing arrangements for supporting vulnerable children (supported by the up date to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 18th January 2016); • Reflect the CSSIW view that the Council needs to improve the timeliness of up dating Personal Education Plans for looked after children; • Add in reference to earlier intervention work with families, building on the Team Around the Family approach and new service model introduced in 2015/16, and show trend in performance; • Provide a more balanced picture around the lower number of children placed for adoption by reflecting that there has been an increase in Special Guardianship Orders; and • Reflect performance around core assessments completed during the year to provide a full picture of performance (as performance in respect of initial assessment has been included within the performance evaluation).

**DRAFT 2016/17 PRIORITY ACTION PLANS - SUMMARY OF THE MAIN AMENDMENTS
IDENTIFIED BY SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS**

Draft 2016/17 Priority Action Plans	Amendments identified for action
Economy - Building a strong economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 2 (<i>schools will be amongst the best in the country...</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider including a performance indicator that shows looked after children attainment at key stage 4; and ○ Include 2016/17 targets for ‘% difference in the attendance of FSM / non FSM pupils’ in primary and secondary schools. • Priority 3 (<i>there will be a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages</i>) – include targets for ‘% 16 year olds (Yr 11) leaving school who are known not to be in education, training or employment’ and % ‘18 year olds (Yr 11) leaving school who are known not to be in education, training or employment’ as previous years trend information is available.
People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 2 (<i>Redesigned local services - integrated and efficient</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include target completion dates for actions relating to substance misuse and tackling poverty.
Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1 (<i>RCT will be amongst the safest places in Wales...</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include the 2016/17 target for ‘% [& No.] of vulnerable repeat victims of anti-social behaviour that feel safer as a result of intervention’ as previous years trend information is available. • Priority 4 (<i>Rhondda Cynon Taf’s local environment will be clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include the 2016/17 target for ‘The percentage of principal (A) roads, non-principal (B) roads and non-principal (C) roads that are in overall poor condition’ as previous years trend information is available.

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**LINKS TO UP DATED DRAFT 2015/16 PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS AND DRAFT
2016/17 PRIORITY ACTION PLANS**

Links to 2015/16 Performance Evaluations	Links to 2016/17 draft priority action plans
<u>Protecting people from harm and tackling antisocial behaviour</u>	<u>Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.</u>
<u>Streetcare services and the natural environment</u>	
<u>Improving our communities</u>	<u>Economy - Building a strong economy.</u>
<u>Providing a top quality education for all – every school a great school</u>	
<u>Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently</u>	<u>People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.</u>
<u>Keeping all children and young people safe</u>	

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The Council's draft Corporate Performance Report 2016-17

*This document is available in other languages and formats on request
All data included in this working draft will be subject to final checks prior to publication*







Planning the Way Ahead

This is the Council's Corporate Performance Report. It sets out our priorities for 2016/17 and how we performed in 2015/16.

Let us know what you think of this report, our plans to focus on priorities and also how you have been affected by our work to improve services in 2015/16.

You can get in touch by

	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit
Twitter	@rctcouncil or @cwmtafconsult
Facebook	www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil
	Improvement@rctcbc.gov.uk
	(01443) 680723
	Performance Team, Ty Bronwydd, Porth, CF39 9DL
Email the Consultation Team	consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk
Join the Citizens' Panel	Citizen's Panel
Cwm Taf Engagement Hub	Cwm Taf Engagement Hub
RCT "Help us Improve" Scheme	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback
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

Message from Cllr Andrew Morgan – the Council’s Leader

To be completed when data more finalised

WORKING DRAFT

Delivering our Priorities in 2015/16

In June 2015 the Council agreed six improvement priorities 2015-16 after people told us they would make the biggest difference to their lives. These are

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

Making RCT Safer

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

Making RCT Healthier

- Providing a top quality education - 'Every School a Great School'.
- Improving our communities.

Making RCT more Prosperous

These priorities and the details of what we planned to do were set out in our Corporate Performance Report for 2015-16.

Since then, we have been working to deliver the plans that the Council put in place to tackle these priorities. Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors every 3 months and at the same time, reports have been put on the Council's website so that everyone can see the progress for themselves. We are now coming to the end of the reporting year, so this report contains an assessment of how we think we have performed in these six priorities over the past year and the difference our work has made to the people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This report also tells you what we are going to do in 2016-17.

Our priorities for 2016/17 are:

- **ECONOMY** *Building a strong economy*
- **PEOPLE** *Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*
- **PLACE** *Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work*

Setting our Priorities

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

There have also been a number of changes to the way we work so that we continue to get better at providing services and better able to respond to change quickly, for example:

- We have changed the way that committees are structured so that Councillors are better able to challenge and check progress and focus on improving outcomes for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- We have put in place a smaller more focused structure in the Council, with fewer managers.
- We put in place a set of new priorities for Rhondda Cynon Taf, which residents and staff have told us matters most to them and took account of the progress we made last year. How we will deliver these new priorities:
 - **Economy** - Building a strong economy
 - **People** - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone
 - **Place** - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

has been challenged and examined by Councillors before being set out in the Council's new Corporate Plan, 'The Way Ahead' which was agreed by Council on 24 February 2016. This new Plan will give us the direction for everything we need to do in the Council and with others between now and 2020. The Corporate Plan also sets out the key principles we will follow, which are:

- Providing essential services well;
- Helping people and communities to help themselves;
- Building a sustainable County Borough;
- Living within our means.

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

As part of the new Corporate Planning arrangements, at its meeting on 10 March 2016, the Council also agreed to target £21million to make sure that we can deliver these priorities. <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Council/2016/03/10/Reports/CouncilCorporatePlanInvestmentPriorities.pdf>

- Every single service honestly assessed how it was doing, by answering three main questions that helped us to consider the difference that our services make to the lives of our residents:
 - **How well are we doing?**
 - **How do we know?**
 - **How can we improve things further?**

The answers to these questions helped to confirm and shape our new priorities. We also looked at if, and [how, services need to change](#). By looking at and challenging what we know about our services and the likely needs of our residents and communities, now and in the future, we can better understand how and what we need to change to focus on improving what matters most.

- We are also considering the long term effect of what we do so that we are not only meet the needs of residents now but also make sure that the needs of future generations can be met.

How are we performing?

Our data is telling us that that overall the Council has improved over the past two years and during that time it was also the fourth most improved council in Wales. However, despite these improvements, there are some services where we are amongst the worst in Wales and we need to do better.

Comparing our performance with the rest of Wales:

We compared our 2015/16 performance against 2014/15 data across Wales, which is the latest available. This shows that for our 41 indicators:

We are among the best in Wales (Top Quartile) for:	We need to improve (Bottom Quartile):
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making sure that children in our care had less than 3 placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives 2. Visiting children in our care, in line with regulations 3. Pupils leaving school with qualifications 4. Pupils in our care leaving school with qualifications 5. Pupils assessed at Key Stage 3 in Welsh (first language) 6. Assessing the needs of Carers of adults 7. The number of adults over 60 holding a bus pass 8. The high numbers of our residents that we support in the community 9. Delivering disabled facilities grants quickly, so helping people to maintain their independence 10. Adult protection referrals where the risk has been managed 11. The cleanliness of our highways that are inspected 12. The amount of waste we reuse or recycle 13. Removing reported fly tipping within 5 working days 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of visits to our public libraries 2. The number of visits to our leisure centres 3. Additional affordable housing units provided 4. Food establishments that are broadly compliant with food hygiene standards 5. The length of time it takes for us to help people leave hospital and return to their home or care home 6. The high numbers of our residents that we support in care homes 7. We are in the bottom quartile for Issuing statements of special education need within timescales but doesn't show that we provide a serve without the need for a statement

In summary:

- We were among the top quartile Wales for 13 indicators
- We were among the bottom quartile in Wales for 7 indicators
- We met 21 of own performance targets, although for 1 of these indicators our performance was among the bottom quartile in Wales.
- We improved our performance in 29 of the indicators.
- Our performance fell for 8 of the indicators.

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

Throughout this report, where we have compared our 2015/16 performance with other councils in Wales, we have used the latest all Wales information relating to 2014/15, unless we say otherwise. When the *The Way Ahead – The Council's Corporate Plan*

2015/16 all Wales information becomes available we will provide an up to date comparison to Councillors as part of our regular performance reports and also put this on our website in September.

WORKING DRAFT

Focusing on last year's priorities

SAFETY

Protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour

We are making good progress overall. Our early work with young perpetrators of domestic violence has started and we have received funding from the Police that will mean that we can extend our work across Rhondda Cynon Taf. We are also working with women in the criminal justice system as well as identifying women who are vulnerable or are victims of domestic abuse and need help. We have also been working with Merthyr Council to support high risk perpetrators of domestic abuse to challenge their behaviour and reduce risk to victims.

We also know that more victims of anti social behaviour feel safer as a result of our work. We have made full use of the new powers and tools under the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which allows us to deal with issues more robustly to protect people from harm.

In 2016/17 we will work to put Rhondda Cynon Taf amongst the safest places in Wales, where people get along together and residents feel safe.

Since last year

- More of the victims of antisocial behaviour that we work with feel safer because of our help
- Fewer people that we work with are committing antisocial behaviour
- More people that we work with are reducing their substance misuse
- More clients experiencing Domestic Abuse felt safer because of our help, but not as many as we thought

We did better than we expected

- 85% of victims of anti-social behaviour we work with feel safer as a result of our work, an improvement since last year and more than the 80% we expected
- 76% of people we work with are no longer committing anti social behaviour, a small improvement from 73% last year and more than the 75% we expected
- 68% of the people we work with said that indicate that they were reducing their substance misuse which is better than the 67% we expected .
- Although more clients experiencing domestic abuse felt safer as a result of our work at 82%, we didn't do as well as we planned and didn't achieve our target of 85%. This was an ambitious target, especially when there are so many factors that affect people's feeling of safety.
- We have helped to bring 144 empty privately owned residential houses back into occupation which is significantly more than our target of 75.

How have we used information to help keep vulnerable people in our communities safe?

By targeting our work in the places and with the groups that can make the most difference, working in partnership with the police, including

- Targeting first time offenders aged 18-21 so that we can provide them with early help that will to stop them reoffending
- Starting to working with 18-25 year olds to help them reduce offending and re-offending.
- Helping women who are repeat offenders by getting involved and supporting them as early as possible.
- Delivering services from the Oasis Centre

- Collecting and using information that tells us if and how out work is making a difference

One of our projects to help reduce the number of women from reoffending started in April, later than we planned, but we are confident that once this is in place it will provide more help to keep women from offending and reoffending.

By supporting vulnerable and repeat victims of Anti- Social Behaviour and tackling that behaviour.

We have changed the way we assess victims. Each individual now has their own unique plan to keep them safe and these changes have resulted in more vulnerable/repeat victims saying that they felt safer as a result of our help.

Supporting High Risk/Vulnerable Victims of Anti Social Behaviour

For 6 months, X as a victim of anti social behaviour and had been experiencing a number of issues including damage to her property and alleged harassment from her ex partner who lived in a flat in the same block. An Anti Social Behaviour Victim Officer was called to make an assessment of the woman's case when the problems started to get worse. Some of the incidents were very serious and so evidence was collected and the ex partner was served with a restraining order not to make any contact at all in any way with X until August 2016.

As a result of the support received from the Council's ASB Victim Officer X's home was made safe and for greater peace of mind she received help to move house. X's new house has also had window and door alarms fitted and personal alarms and a security pack provided.

X has since told us that she has not had any further problems with her ex partner.

By making sure that Domestic Violence services in Cwm Taf meet the needs of our service users in 'Project Drive'

Together with Merthyr Council we are challenging the behaviour of people that commit domestic abuse.

Project Drive is a new approach which will tackle the root cause of Domestic Abuse by holding perpetrators to account and helping them to change their behaviour so that victims, children and families are at less risk of harm.

This will build upon the success of our work that we started last year.

By reducing the risk of harm from the misuse of substances. We now have a Harm Reduction Co-ordinator whose job it is to develop, record and monitor information about substance misuse poisonings across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr, some of which lead to the death of users. This gives us the information we need to be clear about what is happening in the area so that we can improve what we do to reduce the number of deaths in the future.

By providing vulnerable and inactive residents more opportunities to get exercising. As part of a 'Joint Care Management Programme' designed to promote healthier lifestyles and avoid unnecessary joint pain, we have been providing gentle exercise to people who need operations to improve their health and avoid the need for other medical care..

Feedback from client who completed Joint Care Management Programme at Sobell's Leisure Centre:

"I found the Community Joint Care Programme really invaluable. It came as a life saver to me last year when I was very depressed and unable to even know where to start.

..... I can really recommend this programme for anyone who needs encouragement to change their life for the better. As well as improvement in my physical well-being, it has also had a big impact on my mental health.

We have also worked with Public Health Wales to deliver programmes that focus on providing support and information to our residents who are 50+ to improve their health and wellbeing. This included piloting a 10 week 'Falls Awareness' course with 'RCT Homes' which included presentations from dieticians, physiotherapists, Age Cymru as well as information sessions with Drink Wise Age Well, RNIB, RNID Cymru, Age Connects Morgannwg and Vision Products. Feedback from this pilot was positive with residents saying they were "happy with the course", "learnt a lot" and "enjoyed the learning".

How did we target support addressing the specific needs of the communities?

By looking at the Housing and Health needs of Tylorstown residents including

- Launching the first Housing & Health Action Area in Rhondda Cynon Taf and carrying out in depth surveys to find out the housing and health needs of the people in that area.
- Using what residents have told us to inform how we will invest in housing over the next two years so that we can help to remedy damp homes for asthma sufferers or deal with hazards in the homes of older people so that they have fewer falls.

By using Welsh Govt funding for 'Vibrant and Viable Places' programme to put in place improvements

As part of the funding we received, we aimed to put in place a housing project in Pontypridd that would bring accommodation above shops back to use. This is called the 'Homes Above Retail Premises' scheme (HARP). We have not completed as many as we originally planned as the costs were higher than the estimate. However, the first six flats have been completed and are already let, with twelve more flats being made available during 2016.

We planned to deliver a 'Heat & Save' scheme which makes energy efficient measures available free of charge to householders. Not as many people as we thought were interested in 'Heat and Save' so in December 2015 we agreed with the Welsh Government to introduce a replacement boiler scheme instead. There have already been 170 expressions of interest from households, from which 107 homes in Pontypridd have benefitted. The boiler replacement scheme will continue in 2016/17.

United Welsh Housing Association has been awarded the contract to bring 24 empty properties back into use as affordable housing throughout 2016/17. This is part of the 'Homestep Plus' project, which is a low cost ownership scheme designed so that empty houses can be renovated and made available for residents to buy at below market price. The first property to be purchased and refurbished as part of this scheme to support first-time buyers, boost the housing market and deal with the issue of empty homes, is now on the market. First time buyers have the chance to snap up the home in Doddington Place, Trallwyn, for less than £57,000.

By responding effectively to the new powers within the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

We continually work with partners including the South Wales Police to help keep people safe by managing and reducing anti social behaviour. A new law 'Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014' has been introduced. As part of meeting the requirements of this law, we have worked with our partners to develop the **South Wales Community Trigger**. The **Community Trigger** is a way for victims of ongoing anti-social behaviour, who have reported incidents to one or more organisation, to request a review of their case where they feel the actions taken have not been adequate.

When a resident activates the **Community Trigger**, organisations get together to share information, review what they have done and take steps that will, hopefully, stop these incidents happening.

In 2015/16, there were no Community Triggers activated. We feel this is a positive result, as it suggests that victims, residents and our Councillors are satisfied that their complaints have been responded to and did not feel the need to take further action by activating a Community Trigger.

By improving services aimed at returning long term empty properties to use. We have focused on bringing properties that have been empty for a long time, back into use. Councillors have looked at this in depth as part of their work programme and have put in place a range of ways to help tackle this problem, during 2016/17. This includes, better communication with property owners, letting people know more about the problems caused in the community as a result of properties being left empty, putting in place a new Empty Property Strategy and also reviewing Council Tax discounts that are currently applied to empty properties.

You can see more detailed information about our progress in *Protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour* in our performance evaluation

Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'.

Overall we made good progress in this priority. By working with residents in areas where recycling was low, raising awareness through our campaigns and improving the recycling facilities that are available to our residents, we achieved our best ever recycling result and are on target to meet the Welsh Government recycling target of 64% by 2018. Despite changes to services, the streets of RCT continue to be amongst the cleanest in Wales and we are continuing to tackle litter, graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting. Maintaining our highways so that we keep traffic moving is a high priority for residents and last year we invested more in these services. As a result of a wide ranging programme of work we improved and repaired roads, bridges and pavements; tackled potholes and replaced street lights so that they are more energy efficient.

In 2016/17 we will continue to keep Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill.

Since last year

- With the help of our residents, we recycled 60% of our waste
- Our streets have remained among the cleanest in Wales, with independent inspectors judging 78% of our streets to be a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness.
- 100% of our streets were returned to Grade A standard within 1 working day
- Fewer of our roads were described as being in poor condition, 8.6% which is better than 9.3% last year.

How did we increase the amount of Waste recycled to 60%?

By raising awareness and working closely with residents in communities where information showed us that recycling was lowest including

- Raising awareness and encouraging residents to reuse and recycle
- Helping more residents to recycle their waste in six areas where we knew that recycling was low, Cae Fardre, Penrhys, Cilfynydd, Rhydyfelin, Llanharry and Abercwmboi and Penrhys.
- Raising awareness of recycling where other communal collection points are located, e.g. Dan y Cribbyn and Buarth y Capel Ynysybwll.
- Working with residents where recycling is already high, e.g. Talbot Green, to make sure they are recycling everything they can e.g. batteries and polystyrene.
- Using funding from 'Waste Awareness Wales' to run food waste campaigns in Cynon Valley and Taf areas where wheelie bins are used.
- Placing stickers on all household refuse bins in RCT to remind residents that they should place only non-recyclable materials in these bins.
- Continuing our 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaigns

By providing up to date information for residents on our recycling schemes, and how to dispose of waste responsibly including

- continually updating the Council's website with information e.g. to let people holiday collection arrangements and additional recycling collections e.g. Christmas trees
- Publicising progress towards our national recycling targets
- Holding town centre events in Aberdare, Pontypridd and Tonypany
- Holding three supermarket events: Asda, Aberdare; Tesco Upper Boat & Co-op Treorchy, distributing recycling bags, promoting Christmas related recycling and telling residents about the changes to the collection days over the Christmas holidays.

- Opening a new Community Recycling Centre Llantrisant.

By raising awareness on environmental issues with schools, residents and community groups including

- Holding 79 educational sessions and receiving 857 visitors in the Bryn Pica Visitor Centre where we transfer much of our recycling
- Holding the 2015 'Love Where You Live' Awards showcasing some of the excellent work being done within the community to improve our local environment.
- Promoting 2016 'Love Where You Live' awards.
- Collecting 3 tonnes of Christmas Cards and 1 tonne of Easter Egg packaging part of school challenges.

Developing a waste treatment facilities for food and residual waste

In October, by working with Merthyr Tydfil and Newport Councils, we opened a food waste treatment plant in Aberdare. This plant can recycle 22,500 tonnes of food waste and generate renewable energy electricity to over 1,500 homes as well as fertiliser for farmland.

RCT has lead negotiations with three other Councils to put in a place a 25 year contract to collect waste that cannot be recycled or composted. The contractor, 'Viridor' started to collect this residual waste from RCT which is processed for recycling in Cardiff, in April 2016. This contract means that even more of our waste recycled and less waste is created.

How did we endeavour to keep our streets clean all year round and work to prevent littering, graffiti, fly tipping, fly posting and non-compliance of recycling and waste collections?

By continuing to beat our targets for keeping our streets clean and comparing well with the rest of Wales and continuing to keep tackling dog fouling, litter – including smoking related waste, fly-posting, fly-tipping, graffiti and other waste, a high priority.

By undertaking targeted cleansing operations in problem areas including

- Working with the University of South Wales to tackle waste and recycling issues as a result of the student community in Treforest
- Putting in place a Community 'Green Team' to work with communities and schools on projects e.g. bird hides and planted areas in schools where pupils can learn about environmental topics and transforming derelict land into allotments, with the community taking over the ongoing maintenance.
- Working more closely with Pontypridd Town Council to keep Pontypridd clean and tidy

However, during their inspections last year, 'Keep Wales Tidy' found that that dog fouling had increased. Residents have also identified this as an issue. To help tackle this we have

- Employing 19 Enforcement and Awareness Officers who actively tackle those responsible for environmental crimes such as littering and allowing dog fouling and issue a £75 Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to those who are suspected of committing offences.
- Installed more dog fouling bins, there are now 1,100 bins across the County Borough
- Put in place additional signs in key locations and more enforcement patrols to raise awareness about being a responsible dog owner
- Introduced a campaign '**Who Done it?**' and a supporting '**Who's watching you?**' video to identify people suspected of environmental crimes, highlighting another form of anti social behaviour.
- Increasing the number of our surveillance cameras in fly tipping hot spots in remote areas from which we have been able to issue fixed penalty notices.

- Continuing to work with 'Keep Wales Tidy' and 'Fly Tipping Action Wales' on clean ups in the local area

How did we ensure that our highways network is well maintained and well managed?

By strengthening and maintaining highways structures to ensure safety and reduce hazards including

- Investing £1.9 to make our Bridges safe.
- We have completed repairs on the Upper Boat Bridge and the Royal Oak Bridge, Abercynon but progress has been slower on the Aberaman and Fiddler's Elbow Bridges because the work clashed with utility supplier work, and other road schemes outside of RCT
- Replacing the bridge a Rhiwsaesson and the access bridge to Barry Sidings Country Park in Hopkinstown.

By improving the Council's highways infrastructure utilising appropriate recycling techniques including **energy efficient tarmac and sustainable road surface treatments**, including

- Tackling pot holes and winter road damage, repairs to streetlighting, safety fencing, drainage, highway accessibility improvements, car parks and structures with investment of £6.703M
- Improving more than 80 streets
- Resurfacing Rhigos Mountain Road and the A4054 Gyratory, Treforest
- Renewing footways including Dean Street, Aberdare, Bute Street, Treorchy and Brynau Road, Taffs Well.
- Reducing the energy costs and overall carbon emissions of our street lights
- Converting 4,000 street lights to energy efficient units

By delivering traffic management schemes that contribute to making the use of our roads safer and less congested including

- Improved the Upper Boat Gyratory, to manage the queues that build up onto the A470, and improve bus and journey times and reliability
- Put in place 'Safe Routes in the Community' works in Maerdy with the installation of two new pedestrian crossings; 20 mph zones and traffic calming measures
- Made junction improvements at an accident black spot in Nantygwyddon Road, Gelli, to improve road safety.

You can see more detailed information about our progress in *Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'* in our performance evaluation

In 2016/17, we will continue our work to create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work. How we will do this is set out in our PLACE plan which also shows how RCT will contribute to a Wales where communities live happily together in a globally responsible Wales.

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

Among other things, we will

- Involve local communities in developing our library service.
- Work with local community groups to support them in running buildings and providing services for the local community, including continuing our work with the Muni Arts Centre and Cynon Valley Museum.

You will know if we have made a difference because

- What local people and community groups tell us

So that Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, where people get along together and residents feel safe (Also linked to PEOPLE)

Among other things, we will

- Reduce antisocial behaviour caused by alcohol misuse through delivering the Community Alcohol Partnership programme for Porth and targeting underage sales
- Work with partners to increase awareness of and reporting of hate crime

You will know if we have made a difference because

- Repeat victims of anti-social behaviour will feel safer as a result of our support
- People we have trained will be more confident in how to identify and report hate crime
- Residents will feel safer (Compass Survey)

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

Among other things, we will

- Invest over £17 million to improve the condition of roads and highway infrastructure, transport infrastructure, drainage improvements and waste management
- Work with residents to further increase recycling by targeting areas of low participation
- Target 'hot spot' areas to reduce littering and dog fouling

You will know if we have made a difference because

- We will recycle 62% of our waste
- We will stay among the best in Wales for clearing fly tipping

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

Among other things, we will

- Keep park users informed of pitch condition and maintenance works through communicating with sports clubs and via social media

- Continue to invest in our play areas and 3G sports pitches

You will know if we have made a difference because

No local satisfaction data currently available need Residents Survey

- Residents will be satisfied with our parks and open spaces for leisure, enjoyment and sport

You can see how we will be progressing this work in 2016/17 in our new Place Plan

WORKING DRAFT

HEALTH

Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently.

In the majority of areas our performance improved but we didn't achieve everything we set out to do mostly because of the amount of work that needs to be done, including preparing for the a new law , the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act which came into force from April 2016.

In 2016/17 we will continue to make sure Health, Social Care services are personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes

Since last year

- 100% of adult protection referrals had their risk managed. This is better than we planned and amongst the best performance in Wales.
- At the end of the reablement packages we put in place 77% of people needed no further services, which is better than last year and more than we planned
- 95.6% of people who received a reablement package and provided us with feedback felt that we helped them remain living independently which is better than last year and more than we planned.
- 100% of carers were offered an assessment which is better than last year and is better than the all Wales average
- We haven't supported as many people aged 65+ in the community as we planned, at 81.26 per thousand population being supported in the community. This is less than the 2014/15 Welsh Average of 82.2
- There are still too many residents in our care homes (23.1 per thousand population) and we are also below the Welsh Average
- In its most recent Performance Evaluation Report (2014/15) the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) identified areas where we had made progress including the development of an Extra Care facility, development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the quality of our domiciliary care/reablement service. It also identified areas where we need to do better including reducing delayed transfers of care, increasing the number of people's care plans that we review, how we monitor adult safeguarding and improving integration of services with partners in Health. Progress in these areas and our plans for 2016/17 is set out below.

How did we safeguard adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable?

By making sure that we have the right governance arrangements in place for safeguarding adults

including

- Launching the Cwm Taf Safeguarding website www.cwmtafsafeguarding.org so that that people can access the information that they need to be able to get help for themselves and for others
- Strengthening the way we monitor and report how we safeguard adults

By continuing to work with our partners to implement the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) across the Cwm Taf region including

- Formally launching the 'MASH'. Based in Pontypridd Police Station, the MASH allows social care professionals, health, probation and the police to all work together better to help to keep people safe.
- As well as responding to concerns about adults and children, the MASH is also dealing with concerns about people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems.

How is MASH making a difference?

The Way Ahead – The Council's Corporate Plan

MASH received information that a female, X, aged 30, with a significant learning disability, who lives with an aunt, has attended her respite care home with bruising to her arms and chest and a black eye and saying that her 'aunty did it'

Information was quickly gathered from her social worker and the respite care home which showed that there have been previous incidents of unexplained bruising and concerns about the quality of care X receives from her aunt, but the situation is not straight forward as X's behaviour can be challenging.

Following discussions between Safeguarding Officer and Police colleagues in MASH, specialist police speak to X, which lead to the arrest of her aunt. X was taken into the care of the Council while further investigations took place.

The involvement of MASH meant that people from different organisations could work together closely and quickly to protect X and identify a potential criminal offence.

How did we give adults and older people who need support a greater choice and control; within available resources, through prevention and greater integration with health?

By developing a new strategy and operating model to improve the way in which adult social care is arranged and provided, in line with the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act. We are making progress in planning the changes to the way Social Services will be delivered in RCT in line with the new law. We are now at the point of consulting with people about our plans for the changes and by the end of June we will have an agreed way forward.

By continuing to expand current intermediate care and reablement services to support more timely discharge from hospital and help more people live including

- Continuing to target resources to give people the practical help and confidence to help them to themselves
- Working with hospitals to get people home, safely and with support although we recognise that this is an area that we must continue to improve
- Working with Merthyr Tydfil Council and the Local Health Board, to make it easier for people to get all the services they need when they leave hospital from one service, we already do this in RCT but the new arrangements will be across the whole Cwm Taf area.

By continuing to shift more of our investment from traditional services to services that promote independence and support individuals and communities to find solutions for themselves including

- Helping people to use direct payments to pay for the care they need rather than have the Council organise care for them. Making Direct payments does not suit everyone who is receiving care and there are fewer people receiving these payments than we thought. However, they can provide greater flexibility to those that use them.
- Continuing to work with others to support networks and wellbeing services outside the Council to help people and communities to help themselves.
- Working with others to provide an advice service and directing them to services, activities and groups to support their independence.
- Developing the first dementia-friendly village in Rhondda Cynon Taf in Maerdy. This means that people with dementia are understood, respected, supported, and confident they can contribute to community life.

Maerdy – A Dementia Friendly Village

Through the Community Capacity Fund, partners have launched services for people affected by dementia in the Maerdy area. Some of the services include:

- a Singing Group, called ‘Singing for the Brain®’, designed specifically for people with dementia,
- a cafe group which will have activities to help people with dementia to stay as well as they can, keep their independence and stay connected to their local community,
- providing specific help for Carers of people with dementia.

There will also be a Dementia Friends, an Alzheimer’s Society programme which aims to change people’s views of Dementia by raising awareness of the condition and the small ways that people and the local community can become Dementia Friendly.

By developing a new commissioning model for home care that is reablement focused to ensure that people are helped to regain and retain their independence throughout the time they require care services. What this means is we have set out how we will work together with Merthyr to make sure that when we renew contracts for Home Care Service there is a greater focus on helping people to live as independently as possible at home. These new contract arrangements will be in place by September 2016.

By developing and implementing a model to provide information, advice and assistance to help people know what support is available to them and to help assist them make informed decisions about their future care and support needs. What this means is we have looked at the information, advice and assistance services and also asked people how they can be improved so that we can provide better information to people when they are making decisions about their future care and support needs.

By working with Partners to increase the supply of alternative accommodation and support models for vulnerable people to remain in their own homes for longer and reduce number of people in long term residential care. This includes working with Hafod Housing to develop the first Extra Care facility in Rhondda Cynon Taf in Talbot Green which will help people to live independently and has built-in flexibility to adapt to changing needs as people grow older and their health deteriorates. Although we have made good progress the opening has been delayed from April to July 2016.

Ty Heulog Extra Care Facility - A show apartment is now available for viewing

Ty Heulog has 40 self-contained apartments (16 one bedroom and 24 two bedroom apartments). Each apartment is designed to be accessible to people with disabilities or wheelchair users and helps people to live independently with their own front door. Telecare technology is in place so that people can live safely and with confidence and, where necessary, care staff will be able to monitor people who have dementia or other health problems. By putting in place 24-hour care and support services Ty Heulog provides long term housing and reduces the need for residential care. By putting in place two bedroom apartments, couples who may otherwise have been separated because of the care needs of one partner to stay together. The on-site staff care team will in these cases complement the support that the couple provide to each other.

Ty Heulog has areas for laundry, assisted bathing, treatment and day care which will serve the needs of the people living there and also be available to other people from the local community. It also has other facilities for leisure activities, hairdressing, health visiting, information technology and information about other services will also be available. There is also a restaurant and spaces where people can socialise.

More public spaces are away from residents' apartments, so that they can continue to feel safe and secure in their homes.

We also said we would develop an accommodation strategy for vulnerable adults together with an implementation plan. We haven't made the progress we would have wanted to complete this work which is now carried forward into our 2016/17 plans.

By developing and implementing a common eligibility criteria for access to care and support that will be applied to vulnerable adults in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. What this means is all adults at risk will be treated and assessed in the same way no matter where in Wales they live. All staff are being trained to make sure that they are clear about what they have to do.

By ensuring people's needs are assessed in a timely manner and the care provided is appropriate including

- Improving the way we review Care Plans has meant that we now review them more quickly than we did last year, we are no longer among the worst in Wales is now in line with the Welsh Average
- Offering more carers an assessment of their needs and
- Providing almost all Carers who have had an assessment of their own needs, with a service, a massive improvement from last year.

By redesigning the model for commissioning learning disabilities services, in order to support greater focus on personal independence and more effective use of resources. What this means is that we have put in place arrangements that will provide better services for children and adults with a Learning Disability. These arrangements will focus on helping people to be independence, especially children that are moving into adult services

However, we have continued to provide individual support to support personal independence.

Supporting people with learning disabilities into employment

M, an adult with a learning disability was brought up in a family with parents who were very heavy drinkers but wasn't known to social services. When his parents passed away, M tried to live at home but he became homeless living on the streets and abusing alcohol. A member of the community rang social services. M was moved into supported living away from the area he had lived all his life to give him a fresh start. M agreed to counselling and adjusted to a new way of living.

As a result of this and other help M received from our Transition Team, he started voluntary work which helped him to complete training and gain certificates. He works well alongside other workers and his confidence has grown. M no longer drinks alcohol and has turned his life around, he is now a contented person who no longer needs support from the Transition Team.

You can see more detailed information about our progress in *Supporting vulnerable adults and older people to live independently* in our [performance evaluation](#)

Keeping all children and young people safe

Performance overall is improving, but the pace of change needs to be maintained if outcomes for children are to be further improved. Although we have seen a slight decrease in demand for some of our services, demand for Children's Services is still high with 3,765 referrals in 2015/16 compared to 3102 in 2014/15. The number of children looked after remains high as does the number of children on the child protection register.

In 2016/17 we will make sure Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people receive a great start in life...

Since last year

- More children were seen by a social worker than in last year, at 81.7% this is better than we expected and better than the Welsh average
- We carried out more initial assessments within 7 days. Although at 70.7%, we are still below the Welsh average of 76%
- In its most recent Performance Evaluation Report (2014/15) the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) identified areas where we had made progress including reducing our numbers of looked after children, improving our reviews and visits to our in house foster carers, our assessments of young carers and the creation of a post to oversee prevention and early intervention. It also identified areas for us to improve including further improvements to the timeliness of our initial assessments, reviewing our use of unqualified workers for looked after children and improving the impact of prevention and early intervention to reduce need for statutory intervention. More detail is available in the pages below.

How did we ensure that children safely remain within families when it is in the child's best interest?

There is an increasing demand for services to keep children safe in RCT and we are improving our data so we have more accurate information available to help us. Despite the increase in demand and the number of referrals the number of children looked after by the Council is falling. There were 222 children in our care in 2015/16, which is slightly more than our target of 218 but continues the trend of falling numbers.

Owing to national and local shortages of qualified Social Workers, we monitor the number of qualified Social Workers and unqualified but suitably skilled Care Managers we employ and during 2015/16 we recruited more qualified Social Workers. However, despite these shortages, we made sure that as far as possible where children were at most risk or in greatest need, they were allocated a Social Worker e.g. in Child Protection cases 99.4% of cases were allocated to a Social Worker. All our Looked after Children had support although only 69.2% were allocated to a Social Worker, which is fewer than the 80% we planned. Although we missed our target, those looked after children that were allocated to suitably skilled Assessor Care Manager were in long term stable placements and were assessed as very low risk of harm.

By ensuring that interventions are proportionate and timely including using the 'MASH' to receive safeguarding concerns about children from professionals such as teachers and doctors as well as members of the public and family members via our contact centre. In the same way as we have been able to keep adults safer, we are also able to build up a fuller picture more quickly, to help keep children safe. We will continue our early work to check how the 'MASH' is making a difference from the information so far it appears that children are better protected as a result of the way professionals are working more closely and sharing information more quickly.

Helping to keep Children Safe - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub 'MASH'

Family: Twin A, Twin B and Sibling C

Hospital staff told 'MASH' that they had concerns about injuries that they found to Twin A. MASH looked at ways to keep the children safe but when they found the second twin also had injuries, they immediately started Child protection arrangements.

All three children were placed in foster care, the twins were placed together and their sibling was placed nearby so that the children they could keep in contact.

'MASH' helped because

The referral from the hospital came to 'MASH' within 24 hours of the children being seen

All relevant information regarding the family gathered quickly by 'MASH'.

Next steps agreed within 2 hours with all 'MASH' professionals kept informed and involved
'MASH' arranged for all 3 children to attend hospital for a medical.

Outcomes for Children:

All 3 children were initially placed in foster care. The twins were placed together and the sibling in a placement nearby which allowed the family to maintain a good level of contact. Longer term the children were placed with their grandmother.

We also provided more intense support to families in high risk situations through the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) which also provides support for families where there are concerns about domestic abuse.

Case Study - Integrated Family Support Team (IFST)

M was referred to MASH following concerns raised in Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference about domestic abuse in her marriage to husband C. C had been charged with common assault against their 2 year old son and M told her social worker that there was a history of domestic violence in their relationship. M's son was placed on the Child Protection Register.

When M was referred to IFST, she had separated from C and didn't want to resume the relationship. M was assessed as being able to provide good basic care for her son. However, there were concerns about her ability to cope with stressful situations owing to her history of mental health problems including self harm. Professionals were concerned that at times of stress, M may struggle to protect her son.

IFST started to work with M to help her tackle her fluctuating mood, increased anxiety and low self esteem. M is coping well with treatment and support from IFST and as a result

- Appears to understand her current problems
- Has more awareness of how her problems develop and how they come out
- Has more compassion for her own situation
- Is more in control of her anxiety and finds it easier to manage panic attacks
- Is slightly more confident
- Has joined groups where she takes her son more regularly and is getting more involved in these groups
- Is spending more time focusing on her son and less time worrying
- Has improved moods herself and her son appears more stable and settled

By strengthening Safeguarding arrangements across all RCT services including

- Setting out what must be done by all staff and Councillors if they see a child, or adult at risk, being abused
- Training all staff and Councillors so that they know what to do if they see a child, or adult at risk, being abused

By creating more cost effective placements, such as adoptive parents and Special Guardianship Orders.

The Council is now part of the National Adoption Service in Wales. By being part of this national service, we hope to improve how we recruit and support adoptive placements and to get children into these placements more quickly. It is too early to say if this new service is working, but we do know that this year there are fewer children placed for adoption, not more and we need to find out for sure why. But, we do know that Courts are putting in place Special Guardianship Orders and kinship carers.

A Special Guardianship is a formal court order which allows parental control over a child by people other than the parents. This could be a grandparent, close relative or even a family friend. Kinship care and Special Guardianship can provide stability for a child without legally separating them from their parents, giving them chance to build a firm foundation for a lifelong permanent relationship and providing them with the opportunity to remain within their extended family.

How did we ensure that our statutory assessment and care planning duties were delivered in accordance with legislative requirements and prescribed targets?

There are currently 458 children on the child protection register which is more than last year. This means that as well as more referrals to the Council, we have more initial assessments to complete so that we know what a child needs to keep them safe. We have kept up with the demand for services and have completed more of the assessments more quickly. However, despite our improvements we are still below the Welsh average and we know we have to do more to improve further.

Although there were more detailed assessments needed, we completed more of them within the national timescales of 35 days, and performed better than the Welsh average. We also took less time to deal with those more detailed assessments where we didn't meet the national time scales. We dealt with these with 59 days which again is better performance than the Welsh Average.

By agreeing an operating model and staffing structure that is effective in achieving the outcomes required to deliver the vision for Children's Services and meet the requirements of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, what this means is we are changing the way Children's Services are delivered so that

- Children, young people and families are able to get the right help as early as possible.
- We stop problems from getting worse so they don't rely on high cost, specialist support services to put right.
- Children, young people and their families are supported to help themselves to achieve their full potential and improve their well-being and quality of life.

You can see more detailed information about our progress in *Keeping all children and young people safe* in our [performance evaluation](#).

In 2016/17, we will continue our work to promote independence and positive lives for everyone. How we will do this is set out in more detail in our PEOPLE plan which also shows how RCT will contribute to a resilient and healthier Wales

To make sure Health, Social Care services are personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes

Among other things, we will

- Implement the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 requirements and complete planned changes to adult services including arrangements for information, advice and assistance.
- Work with partners to continue to develop new arrangements for home care, accommodation with support and day services, continuing to focus on reablement and intermediate care services as well working with other to develop community networks of support.
- Work with partners to put in place new arrangements for services for people with learning disabilities, (complex needs and autism) and their families and also develop arrangements that keep people safe, builds community support, focuses on early intervention and prevention and helps people to live fulfilling lives in their own homes.
- Continue to respond effectively to adults at risk

You will know if we have made a difference because

- More adult protection enquiries will be completed more quickly
- Adults who have received information, advice & assistance will get the help they need
- Adults who complete a period of reablement will need less support 6 months later
- Fewer people assessed by adult social care will require help directly from the Council
- Fewer people will be admitted to residential or nursing care;
- More people will be using a direct payment to manage their own care arrangements

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

Among other things, we will

- Implement the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and complete the changes planned for the children's services
- Work with children and young people who need care and support so that they reach their full potential
- Continue to improve how we respond when we first receive requests for assistance
- With partners, make sure that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is working as it should
- Provide an Information, Advice & Assistance Service so that children, young people and families have access to the right support at the right time with the right people
- Where safe, keep children within their families and reduce the number of children who need to be looked after
- Make sure that children that cannot live with their parents live in suitable accommodation within RCT

You will know if we have made a difference because

- Families will be supported so that fewer children & young people will need statutory Children's services support
- More children & young people whose names are removed from the child protection register will no longer need further support from statutory Children services.
- The number of children and young people becoming 'looked after' will continue to fall
- Those children and young people that are 'looked after' will spend less time in our care

To redesign Local Services so that they are integrated and efficient

Among other things, we will

- Ensure that the move to adult social care is improved and enables young people to have increased control over their lives
- Make substance misuse services easier to access across Cwm Taf
- Minimise the impact of poverty by reviewing our approach to Tackling Poverty
- Continue to improve housing by delivering the Housing and Health Action Area in Tylorstown and Penrhys
- Continue to install energy efficient insulation measures to homes across RCT to help residents reduce their increasing energy bills and reduce fuel poverty

You will know if we have made a difference because

- More people we work with will reduce their substance misuse

So that Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, where people get along together and residents feel safe (Also linked to PLACE)

Among other things, we will

- Work together with partners to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

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

- Experience no abuse
- Report that they feel safer
- Report their quality of life is better
- Be confident about accessing support in the future

You can see how we will be progressing this work in 2016/17 in our new People Plan

PROSPERITY

Providing a top quality education - *"Every School a Great School"*.

Overall, we made good progress in the last year. Key Stage 4 results were the best ever achieved in Rhondda Cynon Taf, with improved results in the majority of schools. We continued to reduce the gap with the Wales average in many of our qualifications such as the number of pupils achieving A*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent in English/Welsh, Maths and Science). We completed the new Aberdare Community school and improved facilities at many others to provide the best possible learning environments for our pupils. However, although the majority of our schools performed well, not as many schools as we had wanted achieved the highest standards in Estyn inspections.

Support for our most vulnerable pupils ensured that fewer young people are now not in Education, training or employment. However, there is still a gap in achievement between pupils receiving free school meals and those who do not.

We set ambitious targets for qualifications and although we didn't quite meet them all, these targets have driven significant improvements

Since last year

- Primary and Secondary School attendance have both improved. In Secondary Schools to 93.7% and Primary to 94.8%.
- More of our 7 year olds (86.3%) achieved outcome 5 in the foundation phase and we closed the gap with the Welsh Average
- More of our 11 year olds achieved the Core Subject Indicator (85.8%) although this is still below Welsh average
- More of our 14 year olds (81.6%) achieved level 5 or above in the Core Subject Indicator, closing the gaps with the Welsh Average, and improving our ranking from 21st to 14th in Wales
- Our 16 year olds improved the average point score by 9.1 points, now better than the Welsh average
- More of our 16 year olds achieved GCSE grades A* - C or equivalent in English/Welsh and Mathematics, at 54.6% this was a significant improvement over last year and narrowed the gap with the Wales average (57.9%)
- More of our 16 year olds on Free School Meals achieved GCSE grades A* - C or equivalent, however this was below the Wales average and results for Free School Meals pupils are still generally lower than for other students in RCT (comparative position Wales 31.6, Non-FSM in RCT 54.6)
- School Inspectors findings
 - 57.6% of schools are 'Good' or 'excellent' for current performance, which is better than our target but below the Wales
 - 68.2% of our schools have prospects for improvement that are at least 'good', this is less than last year but still above the Wales average.

To deliver much of this work we worked in partnership with the Central South Consortium (CSC), which also provides support and challenge to schools on behalf of four other local authorities Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, and is held to account through stringent governance arrangements. The Central South Consortium was inspected by Estyn in February 2016. Leadership and management, improving quality and partnership working were judged to be good. Support for school improvement and resource management were both judged to be adequate. There was no local authority Estyn inspection for Rhondda Cynon Taf during 2015/16, but inspections of individual schools can be viewed on the Estyn website www.estyn.gov.wales.

How did we build great school leadership?

By working with Central South Consortium to provide leadership development and support and challenge schools, including

- Supporting Headteachers from our primary and secondary schools to develop their leadership skills through an Executive Headship programme, with two of these heads going on to support schools in crisis
- Newly appointed Headteachers participating in a new headship programme
- Sixteen teachers attending the Transforming Leadership Programme. Teachers that have participated in the past have helped to strengthen leadership in schools experiencing difficulties.
- Setting challenging targets for the quality of current leadership and the potential for future leadership
- Putting place the right level of support and challenge in schools to help them improve
- More school to school support
- More focus on classroom and school based support
- CSC organising support or intervention in those schools that need to make more progress more quickly
- For those schools needing the highest level of support, regular meetings between the Head teacher and Chair of Governors and the Director of Education and school improvement officers to make sure the schools are making the progress they need at the pace required
- Providing School Governors with the information they need to carry out their roles effectively

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

By supporting schools to work together to become self-improving and develop standards of teaching, including

- Making better use of the skills and knowledge of teachers within schools to improve standards in their own schools
- Developing school to school working so that schools can support and challenge each other to raise standards
- Having six of our schools providing specific support to schools that are facing challenging circumstances.
- Having seven of our schools which are recognised as being excellent in particular areas, providing professional development programmes to support other schools across the region.
- Using various training programmes to improve teaching and learning in schools e.g. 'Teach first' graduate scheme to fast track high achieving graduates into teaching and the 'Improving Teacher Programme' to improve teaching in identified schools.
- Working with Welsh Government to improve the reliability of teacher assessment so that more accurate comparisons can be made between schools.

By providing challenge and support to primary Schools to raise standards, especially in schools that need to improve the most

Challenging and Supporting Cilfynydd Primary

In Autumn 2012, Cilfynydd Primary was categorised by Inspectors as one of our schools most in need of improvement, with below average results and, attendance levels that were lower than most. By the following autumn, the situation in the school had not improved and there were problems with senior management and pupil behaviour was very poor. Standards were low compared to other schools, there were no successful systems in place and staff appeared demoralised.

Various steps were put in place to help the school to improve including

- A new acting headteacher
- Programmes to improve teaching and learning
- A consistent approach to assessment for learning across the school
- A better system to set and monitor more ambitious individual targets for pupil progress.
- Regular meetings with staff to discuss progress and any support or intervention needed.

A further Estyn inspection took place, nine months after the 'acting' headteacher started, and deemed the school to be 'Adequate' and in need of monitoring. The Inspectors made further recommendations, which were accepted by the school.

When Estyn revisited the school in June 2015, the Inspectors found that as a result of the steps the school had put in place,

1. Pupil behaviour across the school had improved dramatically.
2. Behaviour strategies were consistent across the school with three clear rules which were known and understood by all
3. Attendance had improved and
4. Pupil standards had increased at the end of KS2.

As a result of the hard work of all the school staff, school governors, the consortium and the Council, in autumn 2015, Inspectors found that Cilfynydd Primary School was Self Improving, which means the school is effective with good outcomes for learners, and school leaders take action to address areas that need improvement.

By providing challenge and support for secondary schools to raise standards and to meet the demands of the new GCSE and GCE examinations in particular in English, Welsh, Mathematics and Science.

By increasing opportunities for more able young people across RCT to reach their potential, this included

- Supporting more able and talented young people in applying to Oxford and Cambridge. In 2015/16, 8 RCT pupils secured Oxbridge places, 4 more than in 2013/14 and 2 more than 14/15. This compares well with national averages.
- Putting in place a specialist programme of tutorials and events for 200 of our most able Year 12 students. We are also helping with the practicalities e.g. admissions processes, arranging visits to Universities and providing information on university finances. We will be tracking these 200 pupils to see how they progress.
- Putting on a More Able and Talented Conference for most able Year 9 students before they started Key Stage 4, to show them that university is open to them, giving them encouragement to succeed.

By improving Academic Results in 2014/15 including

- More pupils having achieved the foundation phase indicator over the last four years. This resulted in RCT now being ranked 14th in Wales compared to 21st in 2014.
- Improving Key Stage 2 performance in the Core Subject Indicator over the last six years, but we are still below the Wales average and ranked 19th in Wales so we still have more work to do.
- Making significant improvements in Key Stage 3 performance in the Core Subject indicator over the last 5 years (59.2 to 81.6), with the level of improvement in RCT greater than the Wales average. Despite this improvement, there are still too many children not making sufficient progress and we will continue to focus to make sure that all pupils who can, are able to achieve Level 5 at the end of year 9 as well as increasing the numbers of pupils achieving level 6 and above.
- Achieving the best ever key stage 4 results for secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The number of pupils aged 16 achieving the level 1 and level 2 thresholds has improved and both results are now above the Wales average.
- Improving performance against the Core Subject Indicator (5 GCSEs A* to C including English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science), although this is still below the Wales average.
- Nine of our schools no longer being monitored by School Inspectors because of the improvements they had made. Although one fell short and now needs significant improvement.

Despite these improvements, our results are generally still below the Wales average. Whilst not an acceptable excuse, social deprivation still has a significant impact on Educational outcomes, and Rhondda Cynon Taf has the third highest level of pupils eligible for Free school meals in Wales.

How did we promote wellbeing and engagement of all learners, ensure pupils attend school regularly and provide a learning environment that meets the needs of all learners?

By continuing to work with schools to support young people to overcome barriers to attendance, wellbeing and engagement including

- Developing strong partnerships between Ysgol Hen Felin and Coleg Y Cymoedd and establishing on-site provision for 2 classes of post 16 learners from Ysgol Hen Felin. This has provided enhanced opportunities for special school learners to access the college campus and to plan for their seamless transition into the college at post 19. As a consequence 22 students successfully integrated into the college in 2015 and 14 will be transitioning into college courses in 2016.

- Improving the delivery of Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) provision by restructuring the individual and group tuition service, strengthening partnerships with schools and tracking learners outcomes more robustly.
- Putting in place new and improved arrangements for our secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) so that it is better equipped to deliver a wide range of curriculum and vocational options. Relocation to the former Aberdare High School in July 2016 will ensure that the facilities available are fit for purpose and that outcomes will continue to improve.
- Putting in place arrangements for a wider review of all special school provision across RCT in September 2016.

By reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training through better use of information and early intervention including

- Identifying and targeting all young people most at risk of disengaging with education, employment or training, and providing them with targeted services to support them in continuing their education or finding work.
- Adapting these methods to help identify and prevent children from becoming Looked After and by working with them earlier.
- Working with partners to help vulnerable learners who are starting college e.g. providing learning coaches.

By working with schools and the Central South Consortium to narrow the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils including

- Focusing on improving the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged or living in poverty by sharing good practice between schools; further developing the role of the Looked After Children's Co-ordinator to make sure schools have policies in place to support Looked After Children; and setting targets for schools specifically for improving outcomes for this group of pupils.
- Introducing a project in which 10 Primary schools within valley communities in RCT work together to find ways to work with and help pupils living in deprivation. We will be better able to check what difference this project has made to pupils who need this extra help in 2017.
- Testing new ways to help pupils that most need it in three of our schools, Ferndale, Treorchy and Ysgol Gyfun Cymer. These new ways will then be introduced across RCT with the three schools used provide training and support to others.

Ferndale Community School - Closing the Gap

Ferndale is the smallest comprehensive secondary school in RCT with 670 pupils, located in a valley with high levels of unemployment. 38% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, the highest in RCT.

Some of these pupils are disadvantaged in a number of ways, e.g. they may not be able to do their homework because there is no electricity at home, parents believe that education can make no difference and so pupils lack confidence. Many of the pupils entitled to free school meals also have special educational needs.

As a result of work in the school specifically to 'close the gap' between the achievement of young people eligible for free school meals and those not eligible, there have been improvements in numeracy and literacy scores, more pupils achieved the Level 2 threshold at KS 4 and the school has been the most improved school in the area for the last two years.

The School achieved this by

- Setting targets to stretch pupils
- Working with children in small groups
- Encouraging competition through a house system and sport
- Regular testing so that pupils become less fearful and better prepared for exams
- Giving all children access to the same sort of experiences that children with less deprived backgrounds enjoy, such as going to the seaside and visiting museums
- Using different approaches to meet the different reasons that affect school attendance and lateness
- Better supporting the teachers to deal with the difficulties faced by children because of their backgrounds

Overall outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals in RCT are not improving as quickly as those pupils not eligible. The gap in achievement is still too wide at the Foundation phase and Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Work to address these gaps remains a priority for the Council and the Central South Consortium.

However, attendance levels for eFSM pupils have risen over the past 5 years and it is hoped that this will have an impact on future attainment levels.

How did we provide a learning environment fit for the 21st Century, providing the best possible facilities to inspire children to learn?

Although we met our target to reduce the number of surplus places in Primary Schools, we missed our target for secondary schools. This is because one of our schools had more than 25% unfilled places compared to last year, when it was 22%. This is because of a combination of parental choice of schools which we can't accurately predict as well as a slight fall in the number of secondary school pupils. The number of pupils is projected to rise and as project in our 21st Century school building programme are completed, the number of surplus places will fall.

By delivering modern learning facilities and the best possible breadth and depth of curriculum for all our students, including

- Completing Aberdare Community School, the first school jointly funded through Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and RCT Education programme.
- Creating 'through' schools from ages 3 - 16 and 3 – 19 and working hard to make sure that there are good links and improved change arrangements with other Primary schools by doing things like setting up clubs for year 5 and 6 pupils, so that those who will transfer to the 'through' school from another Primary schools are not disadvantaged.
- Progressing with plans and designs for our three new Middle, or 'through' schools at Tonyrefail, Porth and Tonypany where work will start by early 2017.
- Improving sixth form facilities at Treorchy Comprehensive, and expanding and remodelling Y Pant Comprehensive where work is underway.
- Completing an extension at Treorchy Primary school to accommodate pupils moving from Pentre Primary school, and remodelling work at Trerobert Primary school including internal alterations, a new classroom, assembly hall, toilets and external landscaping.
- Expanding Llwynocrwn Primary School, demolishing the school's junior block and replacing it with a new building to replace the out dated facilities.
- Improving the curriculum choices available to students. For example, making modern foreign languages and separate sciences accessible to all students.

- Making our schools more cost effective in the longer term, through better use of school buildings and savings in building maintenance and running costs by making school buildings more energy efficient.

Case Study - Aberdare Community School

The new Aberdare Community School, which replaced Aberdare Girls School, Aberdare High School for Boys and Blaengwawr Comprehensive, opened in September 2015. The school provides new leisure facilities for use by pupils and the community to replace the outdated Sobell Leisure centre, as well as new vehicle and pedestrian access to the site.

The new school can hold 1,620 pupils. The building has a light and open entrance with areas which can be used for independent learning away from the classrooms. The school uses the latest technology e.g. Wi-Fi and i-pad equipped classrooms which allows for learning in internet cafes. The school also has a science theatre, dance studio, recording studio and sound booths for recording oral work in English and Modern Foreign Languages.

The school is linked to the new Sobell Leisure Centre and positive outcomes for the Leisure Centre include 500 more gym members, including 30 junior members. There is also a new skate park and playground and all weather pitch, and the facilities are being used by local groups such as theatre, sports and church groups who are forming close partnerships with the school. The school is now more accessible with improved vehicle and pedestrian access and improvements to nearby roads.

This project cost £59 million which was funded by the Council and Welsh Government, saving the Council over a £1million every year in running costs, as well as the savings made on the maintenance of the previous school buildings. The number of surplus places has decreased from 1,085 to 295.

The first set of Key Stage 4 results for 2014/15, when the three schools combined but before the new school opened, showed that more pupils at the new Aberdare Community school achieved the Core Subject Indicator, than the combined results of the 3 previous schools in 2013/14. However, performance at other Key Stages was more mixed, with a slight fall in results in some areas. Whilst it is still too early to judge the impact of the new school on pupil outcomes, we are closely monitoring progress.

Early feedback suggests that staff, parents and pupils are very happy with the new facilities. We will monitor closely over a number of years to check progress and benefits for all.

The community has also benefited from the 21st Century Schools programme in other ways, for example, making sure that the building contractors took on apprentices has provided training and employment opportunities for young people in the area. Also by sharing facilities our school buildings are being used after the end of the school day for leisure. Sharing with other services e.g. basing police community support officers in schools is also allowing closer links to be made with the community.

You can see more detailed information about our progress in *Providing a top quality Education* in our performance evaluation

WORKING DRAFT

Improving our Communities.

We have made good progress on this Priority overall but we still have much to do.

We supported young people and working age adults to enter employment, education and training. With increased numbers of homeless presentations, too many families had to spend time in bed and breakfast accommodation. Agreement was reached to create a new 'Tackling Poverty Service' to address these complex issues, and improve the way we co-ordinate our support to achieve better outcomes and greatest impact to those most in need within our communities.

We have made good progress in our Town Centres. We completed the restoration of Grade II listed Pontypridd Lido in summer 2016, with traders reporting improved business as a result of the Lido opening. We also supported the development of a Business Improvement District in Pontypridd, which will generate additional funding through a rate levy to improve and promote the area. In Aberdare a town centre 'health check' was completed which can be used to attract future funding, and we have worked to improve the appearance of empty high street properties.

In partnership with 9 other local Councils we signed the Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal, which will attract £1.2bn in investment to the region to improve public transport and bring economic growth.

In 2016/17 we will work with partners to progress the delivery of major projects in the Cardiff City Deal, as well as focussing on developing Treforest Industrial Estate and working to bring empty properties back into use and deliver more affordable housing developments. We will also make sure that there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages.

How will we know if we have made a difference?

Since last year

- 479 people found work after being supported by a work and enterprise club in their community, which is fewer than last year and didn't meet our target of 521
- 2,048 qualifications were gained by people going to community learning programmes which is significantly more than we expected although marginally fewer than last year
- 92% of potentially homeless families will be prevented from becoming homeless. If we meet our target this will be better than the current all Wales average.
- We will support 40 town centre improvements to property in Aberdare and Pontypridd.
- We were able to support more people than we planned through our Welfare rights advice service, with 3,719 people securing over £2,000k in additional income

How did we provide opportunities for young people and working age adults to enter employment, education and training?

By providing community based opportunities to support skills development and improve employment opportunities in a number of different ways including

- Replacing job clubs with more community focused work/enterprise clubs, although it is too early to evidence the effect of these changes
- Helping to get unemployed adults with low skills back into work using different support programmes.
- Holding Job & Career Fairs, giving people the opportunity to speak directly to potential employers and gain helpful advice and support on how to progress their chosen career path. Over 1,000 people, including year 10 pupils attended the events.

People told us *'the event was helpful' "interesting" and "it has given me confidence to move on in my job search".* There was also positive outcomes from participants including being offered an interview, *'brilliant, thank you'*, getting involved in volunteering, being invited to induction programmes.

However, others told us that the event was *'a waste of money and effort'* and *'boring'* and that *'Job Centres had forced attendance'*.

- Holding a Careers Fair during National Apprenticeship Week, to help raise awareness of Apprenticeships, Graduate programmes and other vacancies in leading Global, UK and local companies. We also provided information on the Apprenticeship posts will be available in the Council in 2016/17 i.e. 30 new Apprenticeships including posts in Administration, Finance, Mechanic (HGV), Housing Energy, ICT, Civil Engineering and Building Control.

By providing opportunities for young people to positively engage in education, employment and training to secure better future job outcomes and reach their potential including

- Recruiting 29 new apprentices to the Council's Apprenticeship scheme
- 6 young people taking up traineeship in Vision Products, Pontyclun, which provides employment for people with disabilities.
- Recruiting 8 young people leaving care into a training programme, providing them with placements in different parts of the Council
- Supporting 92 young people on a 13 week programme to improve their confidence, social skills and employability through *'Your Future First'*
-

'Your Future First' participants told us:

".....I am so glad I took part and received the support I did to improve my confidence and self esteem".

".....I have enjoyed this course a lot because it was fun and I got to do new things that I wouldn't have had chance to do. Now I am more confidence to do more things."

" I'm kind of going to miss waking up for the course, its been nice to meet new people. Everyone was helpful and great. I'm going to have to change my routine again. I loved this course thank you all"

By completing the review and redesign of specialist learning disability employment and training programmes to ensure more sustainable job outcomes and more effective use of resources

We have not yet completed our review and redesign of the learning disability employment and training service because we merged the review for RCT with wider work that now includes Merthyr, as part of the Cwm Taf region. This work to create greater range of employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities is continuing and the changes will be implemented in 2016/17.

An example of how we already support employment, education and skills for adults who have learning disabilities

Learning Curve helping adults with learning disabilities with employment, education and skills

The Horticultural and Catering Centre in Llwynypia forms part of the Rhondda Cynon Taf-wide 'Learning Curve'. Twenty six individuals receiving our services aged between 18 and 70, work at the centre, growing flowers and preparing hanging baskets which are used to decorate the community. The centre provides all the flowers for Llantrisant Town Council and decorates and landscapes RCT Homes' housing complexes also.

As well as securing essential work experience and skills, and enjoying social time with their peers, the individuals also work-towards qualifications and accreditations, including City and Guilds certificates, from Coleg y Cymoedd and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

The Centre also hosts a Catering section, where a further 16 individuals receiving services prepare up to 80 meals a day for others who use the day centre. They are also securing catering accreditation and qualifications through their work. One of the students, Mark has secured employment in the kitchen at Wetherspoons in Pontypridd thanks to the skills and experience he has secured through 'Learning Curve'.

How did we provide advice and information so that people better understand the financial choices that are available to them, and are able to improve their financial capability at earlier stages in their lives?

By ensuring that people needing help are supported to maximise their income and improve their ability to financially support themselves, including

Continuing to support RCT Citizen's Advice Bureau which provided around 3,791 people with debt, money and advice services through its Council funded Welfare Rights Service.

Helping people to obtain what they're entitled to

With help from the Welfare Rights Service in applying for a Personal Independence Payment, Ms C was awarded the enhanced daily living component and the enhanced mobility component.

By working with our Partners to tackle the causes and impact of poverty, exclusion and inequality in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Since we put in place a plan to tackle poverty last year, there have been changes to the way we tackle the causes and effects of poverty across RCT. The changes have brought together three separate schemes so that the Council better links residents with services helping them to gain the confidence they need to improve their lives and supporting communities to help themselves.

The changes were put in place during April and May and so it is too early to establish progress but this work remains a priority for the Council and progress will be closely monitored. These changes have also meant

that our work with communities to prevent homelessness has also been delayed but work is in hand will and will continue during 2016/17.

By working with our Partners to mitigate the impact of changes to Universal Credit in Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of ongoing Welfare Reform

We planned to work with Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to develop a framework of support services to help people manage planned changes to Universal Credit. The guidance on Universal Credit and its implementation was issued by the DWP in late December 2015 which meant that the start of our work was delayed. There has also been a delay in agreeing a framework with DWP to ensure that those people impacted by the changes to universal credit from March 2016 are provided with the appropriate levels of support and assistance. This framework has now been implemented and an evaluation of its impact will be undertaken during 2016/17.

How did we prevent homelessness and provide services that meet the housing needs of individuals and families?

By expanding the supply of specialist accommodation and housing support to meet the needs of homeless and vulnerable people including

- Putting in place accommodation to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of single homeless men, in the former Martins Close housing scheme
- Completing a review of housing support to vulnerable people that will help to inform how we provide housing related support to vulnerable people

However, our work on the Old Bakery and Ty Rhondda schemes for homeless young people started later than anticipated and will be completed September 2016 and not March as we had anticipated.

By further developing the Council's approach to prevent and relieve homelessness in accordance with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 including

- Extending access to independent Housing Advice at the Council Housing Advice Centre to five days per week, from three days.
- Introducing practical ways to help prevent homelessness, e.g. helping to keep tenancies maintained for offenders in prison, assisting in the payment of rent arrears where specific criteria are met and paying court fees to suspend eviction proceedings or delay an eviction date.
- Helping to make more private rented sector accommodation available by introducing targeted incentives for private landlords including guaranteed rent, one off payments, furniture packs and bonds/rent in advance.
- Improving advertising of private rented sector properties in line social housing via the '[Homefinder RCT](#)' website.

Helping to Prevent Homelessness

Mrs J, has significant mental health needs. When she received a notice of eviction,

- the Council paid off her outstanding rent arrears, including her legal costs so she wasn't evicted
- with help, Mrs J applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) which covered the rent arrears that caused the eviction
- Mrs J agreed to receive help in relation to her mental health needs
- Mrs J was helped to move to an affordable smaller property in an area closer to her family for support. This has helped improve her mental health and general well being and provided her with long term tenancy sustainability.

How did we develop sustainable town centres which contribute to the economy of the County Borough?

Helping to generate new jobs in Pontypridd and Aberdare by implementing Pontypridd and Aberdare Townscape Enhancement Programmes (TEP) and the Aberdare Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) which has

- made the towns more attractive,
- encouraged private sector confidence in further investment,
- worked closely to support the private sector to improve business premises,
- brought vacant floor space back into use in order to create and accommodate jobs.

We assessed the impact of the programme of these improvements in Aberdare by using the results of an independent survey of visitors and businesses who were mostly pleased with the changes, for example "Lovely town, nice variety of shops". We will use all comments and suggestions to inform what we do in future developments.

By restoring and opening Pontypridd Lido as a regional visitor attraction that will help the economic growth of Pontypridd and the surrounding area. Since 'Lido Ponty' opened in August 2015, it has provided free swimming for all visitors which is continuing in 2016. From what the Traders in Pontypridd have told us, business has improved as a result of the Lido opening although we are closely monitoring progress to check that this is the case.

By officially launching Pontypridd as a Business Improvement District on 1 April 2016. This will help the development of the Pontypridd and the surrounding area

"The success we have collectively achieved in agreeing to become a Business Improvement District is very pleasing"

".....Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, Pontypridd Town Council and the Police, who have all been extremely supportive throughout the process, and gives us a real opportunity to work in unison for the benefit of Pontypridd in the future"

"Pontypridd can now look forward to the benefits associated with Business Improvement Districts and the future for the town looks bright!"

Jo Gamborini, co-owner of Princes Cafe and Vice Chair of the 'Your Pontypridd' Steering Group

By working with Traders and Partner Organisations in Aberdare and Porth to improve the Town Centre Environment and encourage trade including

The Way Ahead – The Council's Corporate Plan

- Completing a health check' for Aberdare, which can be used to attract future funding and to check future progress
- Developing a new online App for Aberdare and Porth town centres which allows businesses to promote themselves and attract visitors to the town centre using offers and deals
- Delivering a secure radio system for businesses and licensed premises in Aberdare to share information on anti-social behaviour, improving the town centre environment
- Improving the appearance of 2 vacant units and a 'gap site' in Canon Street, which has prompted positive feedback from visitors to Aberdare

And in June 2015, we adopted supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for flats which will further support the renovation of existing Town Centre buildings. Despite it being the first year of implementation, it is being used to bring about changes to planning applications that are making a positive impact and improvements to flat proposals e.g. changes from rear to main street access.

How did we encourage and facilitate investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf to strengthen the economy and create jobs, by working with business, developers, partners and funders, to help deliver initiatives which contribute to economic growth?

By supporting development within Rhondda Cynon Taf through enhancing the planning process on employment and skills for large developments was adopted in June 2015.

By helping Business to develop on Treforest Industrial Estate to support the development of Rhondda Cynon Taf as a location for investment and business growth by introducing innovative new planning initiatives. This means that it will be easier to set up or expand businesses because the area will have blanket planning permission already in place so there will be less red tape in place. Progress has been delayed as a result of complex flood modelling work that needs to be agreed by Natural Resources Wales before Cabinet and the WG can finally agree to make the necessary arrangements.

By reviewing the Local Development Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure it continues to meet the needs of residents and businesses in the future we are giving certainty to developers that RCT has a clear vision for its land use as well as keeping development away from areas of flood or environmental damage

By analysing the regional economy and targeting support to exploit gaps in development including

- Working with the nine other South East Wales Councils together we have secured a City Deal for the Cardiff Capital Region with Welsh Government and UK Government, securing an investment of £1.229bn to unlock significant economic growth across the Cardiff Capital Region. This will have a positive impact on the regional economy such as improvements to transport and digital infrastructure, skills development and business support.
- Leading on regional work to identify and guide support activities and programmes to develop e.g. manufacturing and tourism

By supporting the ICT sector in Rhondda Cynon Taf to develop and grow through bespoke support to ICT including

- Developing a regional focus group for business clusters within the ICT sector
- Helping local businesses understand, adopt and exploit superfast broadband to benefit their business.
- Helping to obtain grant support so that 178 businesses to become broadband connected.

By facilitating the Development of the Lady Windsor Colliery Site in Ynysybwl including

- Continuing to prepare the Lady Windsor site for future development by completing site investigations to understand future development work, ecology, traffic surveys
- Working on a masterplan so that we can obtain outline planning permission
- Consulting with local residents on a way forward

By encouraging Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to do business with the Council, and improve our ways of working with them including

- Improving how we advertise contracts so that we encourage small businesses to apply for small scale contracts
- Introducing e-trading to improve electronic ordering, invoicing and payments

You can see more detailed information about our progress *Improving our Communities* in our performance evaluation

WORKING DRAFT

In 2016/17, we will continue our work to Build a strong economy. How we will do this is set out in more detail in our ECONOMY plan which also shows how RCT will contribute to a prosperous Wales

So that Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools will be amongst the best in the country, and with all children achieving the best they can...

Among other things, we will

- Continue to develop excellent leadership and management in our schools
- Work with the Central South Consortium to develop ways of supporting disadvantaged children so they can achieve to the best of their ability and close the 'gap' with their classmates
- Support the wellbeing of children and young people in our schools, helping them to overcome barriers to attending school and participating in learning
- Continue to invest in improving school buildings and facilities to provide a learning environment fit for the 21st Century

You will know if we have made a difference because

- More pupils will achieve 5 GCSEs at grade A* to C including English/Welsh and Maths, including more of those pupils eligible for Free School Meals
- More pupils eligible for Free School Meals will achieve the expected outcome in the Foundation Phase Indicator, reducing the gap between them and their classmates

So that we provide a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages...

Among other things, we will

- Work with our partners like Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales and Coleg y Cymoedd to support people into work
- Target European funding to support those young people most in need to access support and training
- Organise and deliver courses for adults which improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills
- Organise a range of employability courses for learners in Communities First areas
- Provide a range of options within the Council to support young people to develop their careers, including apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate programme and work experience

You will know if we have made a difference because

- More young people leaving care will be in education, training and employment 12 months later
- Fewer young people will leave school and not enter education, training or employment

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

Among other things, we will

- work with other Council's to deliver a City Deal for South East Wales, bringing investment and jobs into the region
- work with businesses to continue to improve our town centres
- increase the number of empty houses being renovated to provide more good quality homes by raising awareness of loans and grants available

You will know if we have made a difference because - Add in key measure(s)

No local satisfaction data currently available need Residents Survey

- More people will visit our town centres and there will be fewer empty shops
- New affordable homes will be built and empty properties brought back into use

You can see how we will be progressing this work in 2016/17 in our new **Economy** Plan

WORKING DRAFT

Making best use of our budget.

In 2015/16 we had a budget of £456.5m, and had to make savings of £16.4m. We have less money to spend in 2016/17. This is how our budget of £454.8m for 2016/17 was shared out across the Council's services

- Schools: £145million - to pay for the running costs of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, for example, teaching and non-teaching staff, and building costs such as electricity, gas and repairs and maintenance;
- Education & Lifelong Learning: £30.8million - to pay for services such as libraries, Youth Service, the Council's Music Service and services that support children with additional learning needs;
- Community & Children's Services: £133.3million – to pay for services that look after the needs of vulnerable children and adults including employing social workers and also Trading Standards services and leisure centres;
- Frontline Services: £42.3million – to pay for the cost of rubbish/recycling collections and their disposal, cleaning streets and repairs and resurfacing of roads;
- Corporate Services & Chief Executive's Division: £29.3million - to pay for services such as council tax and housing benefit services, One4All centres and the Council's telephone contact centre and support service functions like finance, human resources and legal support; and
- Authority wide budgets: £74.1million – to pay for the cost of borrowing money to invest in Council assets such as buildings, schools, roads and bridges along with our contribution to the South Wales Fire Service and other important areas such as the payment of audit fees and bank charges.

We had some difficult decisions to make during 2015/16 to find £16.4m worth of savings. Where possible, we made savings that did not affect the services we provide directly to you, but this was unavoidable in some cases. We also know this will become more difficult in the years ahead as we continue to make the savings needed due to cuts made by the UK Government. Early signs are that we will need to find £43m worth of savings between 2017 and 2019.

If we are to make these reductions to our budget to meet the future cuts in funding from the UK Government, it will be important that the Council, residents and partners continue to work together to find solutions. Through 'RCT Together', we are involving residents and communities to explore different ways of delivering services and using land and buildings. By working together and using the RCT Together approach, a new Muni Working Group made up of Community Groups is working to make the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd grow as a thriving community hub. Visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether to find out more.

Despite these challenges, we cannot standstill, and last year we made some significant investment decisions amounting to over £21m which are being implemented during 2016/17. These include:

- £6.5m in our Highways, including bridge repairs, retaining walls, culverts and road resurfacing
- £4.6m in Transport Infrastructure, helping to improve accessibility, reduce congestion on our roads, encourage sustainable travel and improve road safety
- £2m to improve schools buildings
- £1.7m to help housing, regeneration and bringing empty properties back into use
- £1.5m for the Taff Vale Development in Pontypridd
- £1.4m in our Leisure Services e.g. improvements in Abercynon Leisure Centre, Rhondda Sports Centre and Bronwydd Swimming Pool

- £1m to make Council facilities more energy efficient, saving money in the long term.

Other investment priorities include apprenticeship and graduate schemes, waste recycling centres, town and village centres and green teams, play areas, flood alleviation and ICT infrastructure

We are working hard to make the best use of our budget and although we are continuing to make improvements, we are well placed to meet the challenges we face, but don't take our word for it, read what our independent regulator, the Wales Audit Office, said about us in its most recent report in October 2015. In summary.....

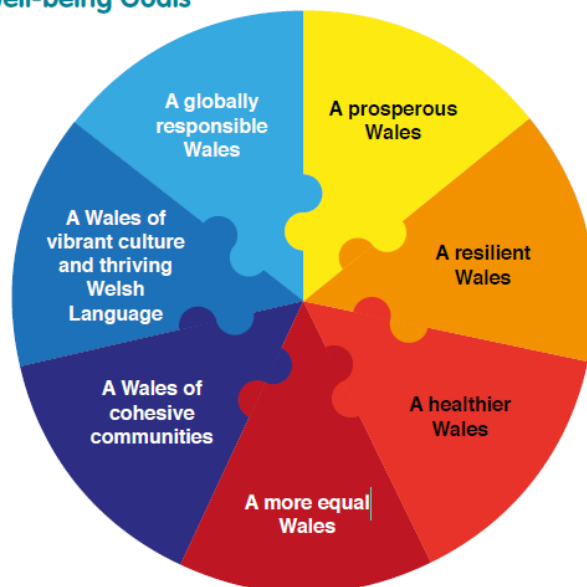
The Council has *“generally robust financial management arrangements and is strengthening its data quality arrangements but there is scope to further develop performance reporting and scrutiny arrangements, and strengthen links between service and financial planning”*

Important Themes that underpin our work

WORKING NOW FOR THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force in April 2016. This new law provides a common vision and sets seven well-being goals for all for public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Wales:

Well-being Goals



The Act means that these organisations, including the Council, need to show how they are working towards the goals and in turn, improving the social, environmental, cultural and economic wellbeing of Wales. This Council will set out how our services will do this for Rhondda Cynon Taf by April 2017.

The Act also sets out that the Council must be part of a partnership with other organisations in Cwm Taf (Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil). This partnership will bring organisations together to improve the well-being of people that live and work in Cwm Taf both, now and in the future. This partnership is called the Public Services Board, which has met for the first time in May 2016.

By May 2018, the Public Services Board must also publish a 'Well-being Plan', which shows how it aims to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Cwm Taf by working in partnership. Although RCT is already working in partnership as part of our Single Integrated Plan, this new Act means that working together is now in law and will mean a different way of working with each other and with communities.

Put simply, the Act means that every public organisation in Wales must show that it is working for the well-being of future generations. For the Council, this means we will continue to:

- consider the long-term effect of what we do, so that we balance what RCT needs now with what it is likely to need in future
- work with others where it can help us to meet our objectives;
- organise our services so that they prevent problems from getting worse or happening at all.
- Involve people in the way we plan, deliver and check our services are making a difference, recognising that the people delivering and receiving services often know best;

- consider how what we do effects other organisations and groups working in the communities we serve

This report contains many examples of where we are already meeting the requirements of the Act. During 2015-16, our Councillors and Officers have received training so that when they planned their services for 2016-17, they could show they contribute to the seven national well-being goals and how they can best arrange what they do to meet those goals.

But, we will need to continue to together to make sure that the Act runs through everything we do so that we can clearly show how we are contributing to the well-being of future generations.

You can find out more about the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and what it means for you by watching a short video produced by Welsh Government, search for the Act on <http://www.youtube.com> or *Megan & the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.*

EQUALITY

Addressing Negative Attitudes and Behaviours

We have started to roll out Dignity and Respect training to staff across the Council, ensuring they are aware of their responsibilities around their attitudes and behaviours to different groups in society. To date, we have trained staff in Vision Products, six of our residential care homes and in Communities First teams. Communities First staff have also committed to the *#NoBystanders* pledge to challenge negative attitudes within the community and workplace.

We continue to work with South Wales Police and the Community Safety partnership to raise awareness of Hate Crime and 'Mate' crime with staff, schools and the people that use our services.

In 2014, a Social Worker who had attended Hate Crime Awareness training, contacted the Police Hate Crime Officer. She was concerned that a family was experiencing antisocial behaviour because they all had physical and mental disabilities. The child had initially been targeted by youths in the local park, but this got worse when they went to her home and targeted the whole family by shouting abuse and throwing things. The situation got to the stage that the child was having nightmares and was convinced that they would get into the house.

By working together, the Police, Social Worker, the School and RCT homes made sure

- The child was offered ongoing counselling by the school
- The Police put in place a safeguarding plan
- RCT Homes installed CCTV, considered housing options and put in place a home safety kit
- The family were referred to other organisations that could help including victim support
- The family were also encouraged to report all incidents as they hadn't in the past

As a result of the help the family received, they remained at their address and did not experience any further issues until late 2015. During this time as part of the plan to support the family, they received weekly reassurance visits from the local PCSO and joint visits from the Hate Crime Officer and RCT Community Cohesion Coordinator.

In late 2015, the family had another experience. However, the police were able identify two young people who were subjecting the family to abuse. The two people were spoken to in relation to their

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



Delivering Time to Change Wales pledge

We continue to tackle the shame, secrecy and discrimination around mental health. We hold monthly 'Time to Talk' sessions across the Council to raise awareness of the need to discuss mental health. We have provided our managers with awareness raising training on mental health with a focus on being open and supportive when dealing with staff with mental health concerns. As a result of this work we have been highly commended in the GMB President's Leadership Awards for Equality 2016.

Gender Pay

We are continuing to make sure that everyone who works for the Council is treated equally through our ongoing work on the 'WAVE' project (Women Adding Value to the Economy) which is funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government <http://www.wavewales.co.uk/gender-pay/>

As part of this project, we have started to look at how we recruit and select people for jobs to check if there anything that we are doing, that we are unaware of, that could affect the decisions we make. We have also looked at working hours and patterns and are recommending changes that will provide more flexibility, from which all staff could benefit.

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

We have asked all our Managers to show how they are delivering equal and fair services to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf and we will do more to challenge this next year by analysing information from and about our service users. We have also strengthened our data collection and analysis and have more and better information about our workforce. This is really important information as our staff numbers fall and we need to make sure we have staff with the skills and experience to deliver services now and are being trained and developed to deliver services in the future. For example, we are not always clear about why people are leaving the Council, except where they are not leaving as part of service changes. We have started to interview everyone who leaves RCT so that we can find out why and consider any changes that may help to keep staff.

What are we going to do next year?

Our work programme for 2014/17 is set out in our [Strategic Equality Plan](#), which we are currently updating. In the meantime we will continue to

- Work with the newly formed Community Cohesion Group to raise awareness of hate crime and monitor crimes and incidents, as well as engage with the public on their experiences
- Continue to improve our monitoring arrangements by collecting better information so that we can check the progress and results of our work and the impact of our policies.
- Build on the ongoing work around mental health awareness and seek opportunities to include in HR policy and delivery
- Continue to implement the WAVE action plan to make sure that we do what we can to make sure that everyone in the Council is treated equally
- Carry out further work with service to establish how they are providing equal and fair services changes have affected the

You can see more detail about our work and progress in our [Annual Equality Report](#) which was presented to a meeting of the Cabinet in March 2016.

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, from 30 April 2016, all Councils in Wales must work to a set of standards about the way we use the Welsh Language both within in our organisations and in our communities. RCT has to comply with 171 standards from a list of 176.

The standards relate to different areas of our work but the main conditions that we need to meet are:

1. the Welsh language should be treated the same as the English language in Wales; and
2. people who deal with the Council, including those who work for us, have the legal right to do so in Welsh if they choose to do so.

There is a Welsh Language Commissioner in place who reports directly to the First Minister and makes sure that all organisations covered by Welsh Language Measure meet these conditions including working to the standards. There are several ways the Commissioner can make sure the Council does what it needs to do, including mystery shopping, asking for us to show what we do, turning up unannounced to see for themselves and even impose a penalty of up to £5,000 every time we don't do what we should do.

Last year the Commissioner's representatives inspected all Councils and other public bodies and in September 2015 issued us with a 'Compliance Notice' which set out which of the Welsh Language standards we have to meet by when. Since then, Council staff have been looking at what needs to be done to make sure we don't break the law and have made progress in

- Making Online payments accessible in Welsh;
- Making sure that the all our brochures, documents, publicity and signs are bilingual;
- Training reception staff in the eight main offices to learn some basic Welsh skills so that they can deal with Welsh language queries from the public or signpost then to an appropriate officer;
- Providing training and information to all staff so that they know what they need to do in order to meet the standards where they work;
- Making sure that that all of our recruitment procedures are available in Welsh e.g. for people who wish to apply for any Council vacancies in the medium of Welsh.

We recognise that we need to do more to implement all the new standards, and in the early part of 2016/17 we agreed an action plan which included identifying the Welsh language skills of Council staff as well as ensuring that all our staff have access to Welsh language support tools on their computers so that we can build on the way we offer services in Welsh for our customers. However, we know we can't do everything at once so in the summer months we will be asking residents what is most important to them so that we can see which of the standards we need to focus on first and at the same time put in place a longer term plan. In the meantime we will continue to

- Improve on-line access and social media in Welsh
- Train our staff to deal with customers in Welsh, in particular at libraries, leisure centres, arts centres and drop in centres.

How we are listening to the Residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf

Over the last year we have continued our work to make information easier to find and understand. By making sure that our information is clearer, more user friendly and easy to read we hope that everyone, whatever their age, can better understand the issues and challenges faced by the Council we and get involved with our consultations and surveys to give us their views.

We have included more information in our reports, provided easy to read summaries which also contain Frequently Asked Questions, made more use of social media and our online Engagement Hub www.cwmtafhub.com which makes it easier to see what residents are being asked about in surveys and road shows and other events. We have also made more use of the partnership engagement twitter account @cwmtafconsult, to make residents and other stakeholders aware of consultation and engagement activity, all are partners have in place, ranging from event listings to surveys.

More recently, we have refreshed our approach to involving residents and communities about the future delivery of services and facilities as part of 'RCT Together' (www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether). 'RCT Together' is about involving residents to help the Council and communities to work together to look at different ways of delivering services and managing buildings which would allow them to continue in the future. This approach will continue during 2016/17.

Over the last year, residents have been invited to:

- Thirteen drop in sessions with Cabinet members to discuss service change proposals e.g. Libraries and youth services.
- Three Town Centre 'Roadshows' and to take part in a new interactive budget simulator as part of the discussions on the Budget Challenges facing the Council.
- 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 have also been able to respond directly to residents when they ask a question, raise a concern or report a problem.

We are grateful to everyone who provides 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 you for 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. e.g. Because of what you told us, we didn't introduce single staffed libraries, nor did we reduce the number of Council subsidised local bus routes.

We ask people for their views in different ways, e.g. through on-line surveys, questionnaires and also talking about issues with established interest groups. We also take opportunities at Council events such as the 'Big Bite' and other events, such as the Town Centre Roadshows. As part of our commitment to ask and listen, we use your views 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. Your views have also helped to inform this Corporate Performance Report.

We are improving how we engage with young people, by setting up a Young Persons Forum across RCT. This Forum will be made up of young people representing their schools who in turn will in turn report back to their school Councils so that young people can be more involved in important issues that affect them. We are continuing to work with the five Older Persons Forums across RCT so that the views of older people are also known and taken into account.

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. We have introduced a consultation 'Hub' which helps residents to respond to our consultations on line as well as allowing to clearly see and report on these responses as well as check that we are taking action on the information they provide, see the Hub for yourself at www.cwmtafhub.co.uk.

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 2016 we have plans to

- Get more views from residents e.g. through Town Centre Roadshows and surveys
- Make it easier for residents to get involved in checking what the Council is doing and how well we are progressing
- Consult with residents on any new service change proposals.
- Make more use of Social Media as a way to communicate and consult with our residents.
- Develop the Young Persons Forums so that they have the opportunity to give us their views