



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24th September 2020

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th June 2020 (Quarter 1)

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR NORRIS)**

**AUTHOR: Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance and Improvement
Services (01443) 680609**

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first three months of this financial year (to the 30th June 2020).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1 Note the unprecedented circumstances Council Services are operating within as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revenue

2.2 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2020 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note the incorporation of confirmed and estimated Welsh Government COVID-19 funding into this position to support on-going service delivery.

Capital

2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2020 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th June 2020 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

- 2.5 Note the quarter 1 progress updates for the Council's agreed Corporate Plan priorities.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 30th June 2020 to enable elected Members and other stakeholders to scrutinise the performance of the Council.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report provides Members with the first update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31st March 2021.
- 4.2 The aim of the report is to bring together the Council's performance into an Executive Summary and make available more detailed information to the reader through electronic links. Information contained in the Executive Summary includes financial data (with exceptions highlighted within the detailed sections to ensure that elected Members and other readers are able to quickly identify the key issues) and progress updates against our Corporate Plan priorities.
- 4.3 Members will recall the Council's 2019/20 Year-End Performance Report was set in the context of Storm Dennis and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and noted the significant challenges these events were having and were expected to have on the delivery of Council services and its finances, now and into the future. Since this time, due to the unprecedented nature and impact of COVID-19, separate updates have been reported to Council, Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to keep Members and stakeholders informed of the action being taken by the Council.
- 4.4 The Quarter 1 Performance Report for 2020/21 continues to be set in the abovementioned context, and further information in this regard is included within the Executive Summary.

5.0 QUARTER 1 REPORT

- 5.1 The Quarter 1 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at quarter 1 (i.e. 30th June 2020);

- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed projected financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted;
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – f setting out capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3g covering Prudential Indicators;
- **Organisational Health** – includes information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks; and
- **Corporate Plan Priorities** - progress updates for the 3 priorities of People, Places and Prosperity.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council's Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for the first 3 months of 2020/21; as a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed required for the purposes of this report.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, this Report will be presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee for review, challenge and where deemed required, the scrutiny of specific areas in more detail.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

10.0 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The Corporate Plan progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "Making a Difference". With regard to the Well-being of Future Generations

Act (Wales) Act 2015, at the 4th March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

11.0 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 1 2020/21, that is, 30th June 2020.
- 11.2 The first quarter revenue budget position is projecting a £2.903M overspend. This is an early projection for the full year and reflects the impact of forecasted changes in demand through to year-end, with key pressures being primarily within Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The projected position is also set in the unprecedented context of COVID-19 and takes into account additional Welsh Government funding received for the first 3 months of the year, and that forecasted to be received for the remainder of the year, in respect of additional expenditure incurred and income loss as a result of the pandemic. Work will continue to closely monitor the Council's financial position, refresh financial forecasts for the full year as updated information becomes available and also engage with Welsh Government to highlight the importance of providing additional funding to meet on-going permanent cost pressures.
- 11.3 Capital investment as at 30th June 2020 is £7.7M, with projects across the programme recommencing during quarter 1, taking account of COVID-19 safety requirements, following the initial 3 week lockdown period from 23rd March. In addition, a number of schemes have been re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and also new external grant funding approvals received.
- 11.4 With regard to quarter 1 performance across Corporate Plan priorities, the Council and its partners have been focussed on providing essential support to residents and businesses to help counter the significant impact COVID-19 is having on local communities and, in parallel, recovery work is well underway across the Council to enable services to be reintroduced as lockdown measures ease and where deemed safe to do so.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Paul Griffiths

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Item: 8

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 1 2020/21
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services; and
- 2e Authority Wide Budgets.

Earmark reserve update – Section 2f provides a breakdown of expenditure against service areas.

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital programme budget – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 3a Chief Executive;
- 3b Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services;
- 3c Education and Inclusion Services;
- 3d Community and Children’s Services; and
- 3e Capital Programme Funding.

Prudential Indicators – a detailed breakdown is included in Section 3f.

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover;
- Sickness Absence;
- Organisation Health related investment areas; and
- Council Strategic Risks.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

- Corporate Plan priority progress updates for People, Places and Prosperity.

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

The 2019/20 Year-End Performance Report and Executive Summary set the context around the circumstances that Council services were operating within in terms of Storm Dennis and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

This Executive Summary, bringing together and summarising the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th June 2020, continues to be set within the above mentioned context. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on communities across the County Borough, with the Council needing to change the way it provides services to help meet the needs of residents and businesses. From the Council's perspective this has included the requirement for Council Services to operate with reduced resources; quickly put in place arrangements to provide new and different levels of provision; and in some cases temporarily suspend services. Where appropriate, service specific information has been included within this Executive Summary to provide the reader with a full as picture as possible in this regard.

In addition, throughout the Executive Summary electronic links have been included that enable the reader to access more detailed information, as required.

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance

	2020/21 – as at 30th June 2020 (Quarter 1)		
Service Area	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 1 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	192.627	192.781	0.154
Community & Children's Services (2b)	162.681	165.536	2.855
Chief Executive (2c)	27.039	26.901	(0.138)
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (2d)	55.928	56.143	0.215
Sub Total	438.275	441.361	3.086
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	70.472	70.289	(0.183)
Grand Total	508.747	511.650	2.903

Welsh Government COVID-19 funding incorporated within the full year projected position at Quarter 1

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 30th June 2020, is a £2.903M overspend. This forecasted position assumes that additional costs and income losses will be offset by additional funding being made available by Welsh Government to all local authorities in Wales. Specific financial assistance is being provided to local authorities for additional expenditure incurred as a result of COVID-19 (for example, additional costs incurred in respect of housing / homelessness, free school meal payments, Adult Social Services and staff cover due to absence / shielding) and also income loss where there has been a need to temporarily suspend or reduce service provision (for example, Leisure Centres and the provision of school meals). Funding has also been announced for additional costs associated with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, initially for quarter 1.

The Table below sets out the total forecasted full-year additional costs and income losses assumed to be recoverable.

Full Year Projection of Additional Costs and Income Losses Associated with Covid 19 and Assumed to be Fully Funded by Welsh Government

Service Area	£'000
Education & Inclusion Services	-5,515
Community & Children's Services	-11,519
Chief Executive	-1,845
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	-4,697
Authority Wide	-3,682
TOTAL	-27,258

The forecasted costs and income losses are subject to ongoing review in light of the national easing of restrictions and the associated impact on Council Services.

Key Revenue Budget variances at Quarter 1

1. Community and Children's Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.114M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£0.500M overspend);
- Provider Services (£1.143M overspend); and
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.891M underspend).

CHILDREN SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£2.297M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.278M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.084M underspend); and
- Intensive Intervention (£0.422M underspend).

2. Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Transportation (£0.232M underspend);
- Street Cleansing (£0.093 underspend);
- Facilities Cleaning (£0.090M underspend);
- Waste Services (£0.566M overspend); and
- Fleet Management (£0.161M underspend).

3. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.050M underspend); and
- Legal Services (£0.074 underspend).

4. Authority Wide Budgets

- Miscellaneous (£0.173M underspend).

Earmark Reserve Update

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at Section 2f by clicking [here](#).

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Following the immediate steps taken by the Council to comply with the COVID-19 lockdown requirement from 23rd March 2020, appropriate arrangements have been put in place during quarter 1, through working in partnership with contractors and suppliers, to enable works to re-commence and projects progressed.

Capital Programme Budget

Service Area	2020/21 - as at 30 th June 2020	
	Capital Budget £M	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	2.413	0.141
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (3b)	79.180	5.335
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	35.299	2.012
Community & Children's Services (3d)	8.631	0.207
Total	125.523	7.695

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 1

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: Welsh Government (WG) Valleys Taskforce RCT+ Empty Homes Grant Phase 1 and Phase 2 (£4.5M); WG Local Transport Fund (£2.165M); WG Local Transport Network Fund (£0.735M); and WG Resilient Roads Fund (£3.110M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see section 3e by clicking [here](#).

Prudential Indicators

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see section 3f by clicking [here](#).

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover

Service Area	2020/21		2019/20		2019/20	
	As at 30 th June 2020		As at 30 th June 2019		As at 31 st March 2020	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	10,630	1.03	10,543	1.97	10,670	9.85
Community & Children's Services	2,909	1.17	2,847	2.39	2,883	8.50
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	949	0.74	958	1.57	964	8.40
Education & Inclusion Services	1,277	0.47	1,260	1.98	1,265	8.14
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,820</u>	<u>1.16</u>	<u>4,797</u>	<u>1.71</u>	<u>4,855</u>	<u>11.64</u>
Primary	3,040	1.09	3,068	1.79	3,066	9.95
Secondary	1,780	1.29	1,729	1.56	1,789	14.53
Chief Executive's Division	675	0.89	681	2.64	703	8.11

- Sickness Absence

With specific regard to Covid-19 and the recording of sickness absence, where staff have been unavailable for work due to self-isolating; being part of the shielded list; have underlying conditions that places an individual at risk, such as being pregnant; or lives in the same household as someone that needs to be shielded, these occurrences have not been categorised as 'sickness absence' and as such are excluded from the analysis below.

Service Area	2020/21	2019/20	
	As at 30 th June 2020 %	As at 30 th June 2019 %	As at 31 st March 2020 %
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	3.29	4.14	4.16
Community & Children's Services	5.59	5.25	5.59
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	4.06	3.76	4.74
Education & Inclusion Services	2.47	3.65	3.70
<u>Schools</u>	<u>2.21</u>	<u>3.89</u>	<u>3.56</u>
Primary	2.39	4.16	3.79
Secondary	1.90	3.42	3.16
Chief Executive's Division	1.47	2.73	2.39

For a more detailed breakdown of Quarter 1 2020/21 sickness absence information, click [here](#).

Organisation Health related investment areas

There will be a continued focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example, IT infrastructure and invest to save energy efficiency schemes, with projects being delivered operationally within services across the Council.

- **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's Quarter 1 Strategic Risk Register can be viewed by clicking [here](#), with updates setting out the implications to date of COVID-19 and the work being undertaken / planned to mitigate the impact as much as possible.

In addition, the following specific updates have been incorporated into the quarter 1 Risk Register since the 2019/20 Year-end Performance Report, as a direct impact of COVID-19:

- Revision to an existing Risk Score - Risk Number 11 i.e. If projects aimed at regenerating the local communities through the Council's investment programme are not planned, procured and managed effectively by the Council, then delivery could be severely compromised and the benefits lost.

The Risk Score has been increased from 12 to 16 to reflect the ability to deliver schemes on time and budget.

- New Risk incorporated within the Register to reflect its strategic importance to the Council - Risk Number 25 i.e. The impact of the global Covid 19 pandemic arising from coronavirus is continuing to principally effect the health and economic well-being of the County Borough. The Council reconfigured services to deliver essential support to vulnerable people during the early lockdown phases and is now making good progress in implementing Recovery Plans to open up other services, safely, within Welsh Government guidelines. Covid-19 is still with us and will be until such time as an effective vaccine is available. There are three separate but connected risks.

All strategic risks will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis and, where appropriate, revisions made to the Strategic Risk Register.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

During quarter one Council services have compiled Service Recovery Plans to support the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities, taking into account the significant and widespread impact COVID-19 has and is likely to have on local communities and also the Council itself.

With regard to the Service Recovery Plans, their content has purposely been action focussed rather than driven by performance indicators to enable the story to be told of the Council's work to recover, and support communities and businesses in their recovery, from this unprecedented event.

In line with this, for quarter 1, Corporate Plan priority progress updates are set out below in narrative form for the three priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, and are accompanied by investment updates for each priority (for information, future Performance Reports this year will include specific action plan updates for each Corporate Plan priority).

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Priority(s)

- **Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life; and**
- **Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs.**

We have continued to assess and prioritise cases, based on need and risk in a way that safeguards people and involves them and their families in decision making. As lockdown measures ease, demand for care and support has returned to pre-covid-19 levels across adult services. Single Point of Access (SPA), social work and occupational therapy teams have been operational throughout the pandemic and have continued to assess need in line with our 2014 Act duties. We have also commissioned additional external support to increase care and support capacity to reduce review and assessment backlogs that have increased during Covid-19. Whilst successful use has been made of telephone triage and information gathering to allow decisions to be taken and services offered without a need for a visit, face-to-face assessments, where needed, are being completed with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and social distancing following risk assessment.

We have continued to undertake welfare calls for people on care and support waiting lists and for those whose service has been changed due to Covid-19 to ensure appropriate actions are taken to avoid escalation of risk. However, the need for these calls are reducing as we work with care providers to reintroduce day and respite services and home care calls that were suspended at the request of the service user or in order to prioritise provider resources on those with greatest needs.

We have continued to work with NHS Partners to ensure people are discharged safely and timely from hospital and supported in the community with appropriate health and social care support. Throughout Covid-19, Adult Services through our social work teams and our commissioned provider services, have continued to prioritise assessments and support discharge planning from hospital. Usual reporting procedures for delayed transfers of care has remained suspended since March 2020 and is currently not available at a Rhondda

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Cynon Taf level from the Health Board. We are starting to experience an increase in hospital discharges and whilst we continue to meet demand, home care capacity is expected to reduce over the summer school holiday period which may potentially cause some delays as in previous years. However, the availability of care home beds, in particular dementia and nursing care remains low and some discharges are taking longer to complete. Work is underway to review current discharge pathways, in preparation for winter pressures, to ensure they are effective and offer good practice in line with Welsh Government guidance.

Construction of Cwrt yr Orsaf Extra Care in Pontypridd has continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Good progress has been made with the main roof area and is due to be completed by August 2020 and the overall project is planned to be completed in Summer 2021. Development options for Porth Extra Care continue to be considered with Linc Cymru, pending ongoing site investigations, which have been delayed due to Covid-19.

We have continued to work in partnership with housing providers to deliver modern additional supported housing accommodation for vulnerable people, and the refurbishment of Crown Avenue (Treorchy) and Oxford Street (Mountain Ash) properties, whilst initially delayed due to Covid-19, are now progressing well. Crown Avenue is planned to be completed in Autumn 2020 and Oxford Street in Spring 2021. An open day for Crown Avenue is being planned for September 2020 and we will start assessments for new tenants with the commissioned care provider.

We have continued to ensure that care homes and other care providers receive appropriate ongoing operational and financial support as the situation continues to evolve in line with Welsh Government guidance. Communication and information remain a fundamental element of the support given to our commissioned care providers; this includes at present timely briefings and government guidance being issued to support safe working practises. The Council has also continued to support care home and other commissioned care providers through local adult services commissioning and, where applicable, Public Health support and engagement, including regular calls with care providers. Support has also been given to our commissioned care providers in terms of ongoing funding (via the Welsh Government Hardship fund and existing contracts) and access to PPE.

In order to ensure market oversight and to understand the pressures for our commissioned care providers, local intelligence systems have been developed to collate key data about the stability of the market. This includes staff sickness/self-isolating absence levels, availability of PPE, number of individuals affected by the virus and those who have passed away. This information is analysed by adult service commissioners and senior managers in order to provide a greater understanding of key pressure points and, where appropriate, respond accordingly. Feedback from our commissioned care providers continues to be positive in that they have found this supportive and reinforcing long-established relationships.

Since 16th June 2020, outdoor visits to care homes have been allowed. Across Rhondda Cynon Taf, care homes have facilitated socially distanced visits in outside areas where possible, to reconnect residents and their families and these have been welcomed. In addition, Adult Services as both a provider and commissioner of care homes will review recently issued Welsh Government guidance to support phased risk assessed indoor visits to care homes by professionals, family and friends, where it is safe to do so from 29th August

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2020.

We have reviewed options for phased opening of day and respite services in line with demand and social distancing guidelines. Due to increases in need and demand, from 3rd August 2020 we increased the number of available places at Llwynypia and Gadlys Learning Curve Centres (which have remained open during the Covid-19 pandemic) and reopened Talbot Green Day Learning Curve Centre. Abercynon Day Centre opened from 24th August 2020. All other Learning Curve Centres and work-based projects remain closed, but we will continue to review the need to open the remaining Centres based on demand and guidance. Older Person Day Centres have been closed during the Covid-19 pandemic in line with guidance and available resources to protect people. In line with increased demand, from 3rd August 2020, Tonyrefail Day Centre and Trecynon Day Centre reopened. We will continue to review the need to open the remaining older people centres based on demand and guidance. We have maintained a prioritised learning disability respite service through the pandemic at our in-house Beach Cottage in Aberaman and at Drive's Brynsadler House in Pontyclun. Due to an increase in demand, from 3rd August 2020, we re-opened our in-house respite accommodation at Ystradfechan Bungalow in Treorchy and Clwydwen in Miskin / Pontyclun, and will continue to review the need and provision based on demand and guidance. Across adult day and respite services, we continue to target support at people with the greatest need, and we are in contact with people to discuss their ongoing needs and the support we will be able to offer.

We have managed the phased reopening of regional equipment services and demand continues to grow as health and social care partners across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region return to their new normal. In response, Vision Products has introduced a range of measures to support more staff in work in line with social distancing guidance and to meet increased demand. Whilst responses continue to be prioritised on need, all services were operational from August 2020, including: equipment deliveries and collections; equipment refurbishment, repairs and replacement; specialist children's equipment service; and out of hours service.

However, both Vision Products shops at Pontyclun and Aberdare remain closed and sales are currently being managed via the telephone or email. In addition, our Assistive Technology and Specialist Servicing functions have resumed full service provision across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, based on on-going risk, need and demand. The windows manufacture service remains closed in response to social distancing and staff shielding guidance. Vision Products, through working with its contracted customers, have agreed a plan to resume windows manufacturing and installation from September 2020. Staff from this area have been repurposed to the Community Equipment Service to meet demand and help reduce backlogs.

As lockdown restrictions have eased, the Regional Health and Social Care Transformation Projects restarted in July. Assistive Technology (New Lifeline+ Service) was initially implemented in January 2020; however, full implementation has been delayed due to Covid-19. Whilst the mobile responder element of the service has continued to operate flexibly throughout this period and provided a level of resilience and reassurance to residents, the proactive calling element has been delayed, but is now progressing. To plan for the changes for people in the shielding group from 16th August 2020, we have contacted them to offer on-

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going support through the New Lifeline+ Service, along with wider marketing of the service to all Rhondda Cynon Taf residents.

Stay well@ Home 2 was initially implemented in January 2020 and continued during Covid-19, although demand for support changed and the service offered reduced operationally to reflect this. Rhondda Cynon Taf restarted full operation of the Service (7 days a week, including out of hours) from 6th July 2020 and this was extended to Merthyr Tydfil from 20th July 2020. Adult Services and our partners are working on winter plans, with the occurrence of Covid-19 representing an unprecedented position for health and social care - Stay Well @Home 2 will be key to reducing Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST) attendance and conveyance and admission to and stays in hospital, supporting people to remain safely at home.

We have continued to support NHS shielded patients and liaise with Test, Track & Trace colleagues to provide support to residents diagnosed with Covid-19 and required to shield for 2 weeks. NHS shielded patients who have been in receipt of Welsh Government food boxes are currently being contacted to assess the level of on-going support they will require now that shielding has been paused and the Welsh Government Food Box Scheme is scheduled to end (on 16th August). The emphasis is now on offering support for them to transition out of lockdown and the vast majority of those contacted have indicated that they do not need support to do their shopping, get prescriptions, post letters, walk their dogs etc. The highest identified on-going requirement has been the continuation of a regular friendly phone call which will be met through volunteers and/or community partners. Welsh Government have sent letters to all patients on the NHS shielded list and included the Council's Contact Centre details for those who may be in need of additional support so that there is assurance that anyone who is vulnerable will be able to access support. In terms of Test, Trace & Protect, a system has been established to ensure that those who have been identified as having been in contact with a confirmed coronavirus case can access support through the Council's Community Resilience Centres (CRCs) including access to food and prescriptions.

Seven CRCs were established in April supported by a wide range of partner organisations who provided virtual support to each centre. Council staff whose services were no longer operational due to the lockdown were transferred over to support the CRCs. A Core Community Support Steering Group was established and chaired by the Council to coordinate the support offered to all those who were vulnerable or in need. This Group included representatives from all the Registered Social Landlords, Age Connect Morgannwg, Homestart, Interlink, Citizen's Advice, Department for Work and Pensions as well as a wide range of Council services. Processes and procedures were agreed and the Council's Contact Centre was identified as the contact for dealing with requests for help and support as well as offers of help from volunteers. Significant work was undertaken by a range of services to establish these and identify the best way to capture and record the information. In addition to the phone calls to assess the support needs of 11,200 people on the shielded list, 3,089 individual residents have been supported between 23rd March and the beginning of August that included help with shopping, picking up prescriptions, friendly phone calls, dog walking and employment and benefits advice. In order to further support residents who are vulnerable, a Food Distribution Centre (FDC) was established to prepare food parcels and, later, to deliver food boxes on behalf of Welsh Government as well as providing additional

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supplies for Food Banks who were experiencing difficulties to meet demand. The number of food boxes provided by the FDC between 13 April and 7 August was 4,804.

The @homelibrary service from Rock Grounds was re-instated on 24th June and was welcomed by residents. Some additional customers have been added to the list e.g. people who are vulnerable and/or on the NHS shielded list.

We are currently delivering the Contact, Track and Trace Service for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider region as part of the Regional Agreement for the Council to host the service and as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Response (to control the prevalence of Coronavirus in the community). The Service is evolving and developing quickly into a more sustainable service and targeted interventions are ongoing to increase awareness in settings e.g. care homes, factories and to provide support where required. Reactive work is also being undertaken with confirmed cases and their contacts.

Many staff have been redeployed into the service area and as part of the Council becoming the single host for the Regional Service, a recruitment process is underway for a number of roles within the service. This will entail the return of existing staff to their substantive roles and the appointment of new staff, and the Contact, Track & Trace Service will need to constantly evolve to meet the demands of disease control.

Priority

Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing

We have utilised technology to support more people to exercise at home or minimise face-to-face contact. Classes are available via the 'Leisure For Life' APP and are posted on our Facebook pages. These have been in existence since the end of March 2020 and to date have received over 12,000 views.

Online video and written information is being developed and distributed to vulnerable clients who are exercising at home, through the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) and Community Joint Care Scheme (CJC) programmes. This is supported by regular telephone contact.

We have also introduced some open air classes, utilising our parks and 3G pitches to allow customers to exercise in a safe manner outdoors. Classes started on 20th July with sessions taking place at 5 open air locations in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Customers are able to book and pay for classes on-line and via the APP, and systems have been implemented to ensure social distancing and 2 staff members being present at every class.

We continue to develop and improve our digital communications and services to sports organisations and residents, especially the promotion of "essential exercise" for physical and mental health benefits. Independent and now small group outdoor activities are promoted on all social media platforms and through the 'Leisure For Life' APP, along with key "benefits of regular activity" messages e.g. information to enable local walking, cycling and family

Priority

Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing

activities. We are also supporting sports clubs and organisations to access the Sport Wales Be Active Fund.

As of 10th August, gym facilities re-opened at all sites with reduced capacity to enable 2 metre social distancing with the exception of Llantwit Fardre, which unfortunately does not currently meet Covid-19 regulations. Indoor fitness classes and swimming pools re-opened from Monday 24th August.

We have delivered safe and socially distanced exercise opportunities where services are being delivered (e.g. summer HUB schools) and Sports Development have led on 2 summer HUB schools with Leisure Services providing 12 delivery staff.

A programme of digital performances and workshops have been provided for all residents such as storytelling with Artists in Residence Flossy and Boo, Welsh language song and rhyme with Falala, light entertainment with Lee Gilbert, Ieuan Rhys and Phyl Harries, and weekly dance workshops with Dimensions. Working with community organisations, we have provided daily sing-a-long with the Hapi Project and radio plays with Rhondda Radio. Young people continue to be supported through the Families First commissioned provision via online activity supporting their wellbeing, skill development and creative expression. Adult learning programmes and some well-being activities have been provided through Garth Olwg Life Long Learning Centre's Facebook pages. This was offered throughout the lockdown period, with initially just a small number of participants, which increased substantially by the summer term. Tutors have continued to support learners to complete their portfolios in order to meet the accreditation requirements of Awarding Bodies and all tutors have been provided with the necessary equipment to enable them to deliver their courses through digital platforms utilising recent investment provided by Welsh Government through its Digital Strategy 2030. There has been an increase in the number of courses delivered remotely in the summer term and an online registration process has been finalised. The programme for the Autumn Term has been developed and will be promoted online. The service has established a partnership with the Digital College in order to offer access to more than 70 additional employability and other courses to improve learning opportunities for residents.

Priority

Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

Provision for our most vulnerable learners has remained in place throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, initially as part of our school hubs and then at their own school following reopening. We have also provided four and a half weeks of holiday provision across 7 school sites during the summer. Revised safeguarding procedures have been put in place to ensure that appropriate levels of contact are maintained with our most vulnerable learners and any concerns swiftly acted on.

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service continues to offer a virtual programme of activities. At least 5 videos are posted per week, offering young people a variety of open access sessions to engage with throughout the summer period. In addition, virtual youth clubs, Instagram live Q&A sessions and WICID 1:1 chat services are running each week and will continue to be offered as part of the Service's legacy plan.

Priority

Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

We have ensured robust safeguarding arrangements working with partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board, establishing Covid-19 operating arrangements following a Gold/Silver/Bronze structure which worked effectively on a multi-agency basis. The Executive Board and Operational Committee have now resumed meeting, to ensure the Board delivers its statutory functions.

We have been developing a safe, sustainable service delivery model to provide Children's Services statutory responsibilities in line with the recently published Welsh Government statutory guidance. Subject to risk assessment and physical distancing requirements, we have been adapting methods of service delivery as necessary. Plans are in place to begin delivering hybrid Child Protection Conferences from September. However uncertainty about the accommodation available to Children's Services and accompanying facilities accessible by service users are likely to impact on progress and is currently being considered.

We have improved the availability of sustainable quality accommodation options for children and young people with complex needs. Carn Igli Children's Home was registered with Care Inspectorate Wales in 2019/20 and is now open. There have been some positive outcomes for the young people who have moved on to lower dependency provisions from Carn Igli. An example of one young person's experience is:

"I feel like this is the first time I can breathe properly in ages, I feel safe here"

" before I came here, I didn't do any school or work, I didn't have any friends...now I'm in training for mechanics, got a work placement and really good friends since I joined rugby, it's like my life is completely different"

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Leisure Centre Changing Rooms	0.088	This investment funding relates to works at Sobell Leisure Centre for changing room refurbishment. The refurbishment works were scheduled to commence in March 2020; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, works were paused and recommenced in June 2020, adhering to social distancing and working guidelines. These works are now scheduled to be completed during quarter 2.
Extracare Housing	6.974	Works at the former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site were completed in early 2020 and the first residents moved into the new facility in May 2020. Works commenced at the Pontypridd site in July 2019 and consideration of development proposals for Rhondda (Porth), Treorchy and Mountain Ash schemes are on-going.
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	This investment funding is to help address areas where there are high levels of poverty (including fuel poverty) to increase the disposable income of households, for example, by supporting households to reduce energy bills, helping to overcome barriers to find employment.
Total	7.362	

¹ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Priority

Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint

During the quarter, Waste Services have continued with appropriate safe working arrangements in place. The main focus has been on dealing with Covid-19 restrictions and prioritising waste/recycling collections (with other Streetcare Services deploying resources to support waste/recycling/green/nappy collections and the reopening of the Community Recycling Centres).

Most other services were suspended or reduced and operating on an 'emergency only' basis. As lockdown restrictions were eased resources were targeted where required most e.g. cleansing, grass cutting and enforcement. Most services are now returning to normal operations. Quarter 1 recycling performance is 65.33%, an increase when compared to the position reported at year-end for 2019/20 (64.71%). The overall quantum of kerbside waste remains higher than in previous years.

Due to the Community Recycling Centres being in high demand during the initial re-opening, Streetcare resources were redeployed to support Community Recycling Centre staff and restrictions were put in place at each site to ensure social distancing. Temporary sites were also set up in Abercynon and Tylorstown to take the pressure off the other sites where residents could take wood, metal, green waste and rubble.

Priority

Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality

Work has continued on the 2020/21 Highways Improvement Programme during Covid-19 with the resurfacing of roads and footway improvements being concentrated in non-urban environments and limiting contact with residents.

Work continues on our major infrastructure projects including:

- Construction of the Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link, with the opening of the bridge and highway targeted for late September.
- Progressing the required design work for the Cynon Gateway North (Aberdare Bypass), Llanharan Bypass and A4119 dualling.
- Works to the highways and parks structures in the capital programme with St Albans, Station Street (Treherbert) and Castle Ifor all progressing on site, and Clydach Vale footbridges and Abercwmboui RFC retaining wall complete.
- Alleviation of the Storm Dennis damage continues with repairs to structures and culverts completed (e.g. Sion Street, Hopkinstown Road) with works ongoing on a large number of other structures (both design and on-site).
- Flood alleviation work and design continue to be progressed with a number of schemes commenced on-site, including Bryn Ifor (Mt Ash) and Oxford St (Nantgarw), and Plantation Road (Abercynon) recently completed.

Priority

Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality

Civil parking enforcement is now back to planned pre-Covid-19 levels. During the pandemic, officers were redeployed to help in the Council's response to the outbreak. Officers have been present at Community Recycling Centres since re-opening to support the enforcement of restrictions on-site and the required social distancing measures. As these measures have been relaxed and traffic on our roads has increased, 'normal' patrols with the required social distancing has been implemented.

The Council's Transportation Service has been working to existing delivery plan priorities, reacting to requests and delivering passenger transport. This work has been impacted by Covid-19 and focussed on agreeing and communicating foundation timetables for local bus services, responding to associated enquiries and putting in place transport for vulnerable children to attend the various Childcare Hubs.

With the re-opening of schools from 29 June 2020, as part of '[Check in, Catch up Prepare for summer and September](#)', the service has turned its attention to putting in place safe and effective transport arrangements in preparation for this and the September return to school. Working closely with education colleagues, this has included:

- Identifying reduced capacities in line with social distancing;
- Prioritising seats on transport for vulnerable learners and those travelling the furthest who have no travel alternative;
- Preparing guidance for schools, parents/carers and young people to support the safe transportation of learners to and from schools;
- Ensuring that operators, and their drivers and escorts, are provided with appropriate advice and in particular guidance on cleaning and PPE; and
- Providing timely information to remind parents and pupils to adhere to social distancing on their way to school.

Air quality monitoring was suspended during the Covid-19 lockdown and recommenced on 29th June. The laboratory testing service that supports this process commenced its analysis in July 2020. As there has been a substantial break in the continuity of monitoring and testing, further research over a longer time period will need to be agreed/arranged in order to establish a true trend in nitrogen oxide (NOx) reductions.

Priority

Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have continued to support those in need in our communities, within Welsh Government Guidelines.

- Substance Misuse – Clients are being supported by service providers with appointments being undertaken by telephone and/or virtually, based on service user choice. Face-to-face appointments have taken place with clients when it has been deemed necessary. Client risk assessments have been completed by BAROD and those at high risk are being closely monitored. Service User Involvement Groups have recommenced meeting outdoors to comply with COVID restrictions, and have been well received by those attending.
- Domestic Abuse – The Oasis Centre remains closed at present and clients needing help and support have attended face-to-face meetings at other premises, including police stations, and 'drop-in' support has been made available over the telephone. We are currently working toward reopening the Oasis Centre for staff on a rota basis from the 10th September, and the [Drive](#) Project Case Managers from the 14th September on a rota basis (only 1 present at any time). We are aiming for partner agencies and service users to return week commencing 21st September but this is subject to risk assessment and office space changes to ensure compliance with COVID requirements.

Our community cohesion and engagement work has been limited during the first quarter with the majority of our resources redeployed to the [Test, Trace Protect Project](#) until the end of August 2020. We can report that our Syrian re-settlement Programme is progressing as planned and from September will be working with Welsh Government for the next phased roll-out. To progress the UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy, online 'Prevent'² training is being developed for schools who do not wish to have officers attending in person and, similarly, in preparation for '[Hate Crime Awareness Week](#)' on 10th-17th October 2020, an online model is being developed to maintain engagement with communities and individuals.

We have continued to work with our partners to ensure that RCT residents are safe throughout the pandemic, whilst operating in a different way.

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) – South Wales Police (SWP) are dealing with incidents, submitting referrals and followed up with letters or telephone calls from staff. Warning meetings have moved to telephone delivery or some physical meetings in Police stations.
- Rogue Traders - new contacts with local SWP Intelligence Officers has resulted in receipt of new intelligence, leading to target hardening activities in Ynysybwl and Porth. Rapid responses have occurred in conjunction with the police, leading to sufficient information gathering for criminal investigation progression, and interviews are being conducted at Police stations.
- Scams - increased media activity and proactive contact of vulnerable clients was made during the early stages of the pandemic. TrueCall units are still being monitored, although no new installations are being made at the present time. We are currently exploring partnership work with Carmarthenshire Trading Standards to install and fund additional TrueCall units which will be installed by a 3rd party. The legal aspects of this arrangement are currently being reviewed.

² Prevent is about safeguarding individuals from being drawn into terrorism, ensuring those vulnerable to extremist and terrorist narratives are given appropriate advice and support at an early stage.

Priority

Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces.

To increase biodiversity across Rhondda Cynon Taf, the Council's Cabinet has [approved](#) the [Wild Flower/ Grass Management Policy](#) presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in January 2020, which will direct work / activities moving forward. There has also been an increase in the green sites managed for biodiversity which has been positively received by the public. In addition, we have also been successful in obtaining a Welsh Government grant to purchase a second 'cut and collect' machine which will allow smaller areas to be included in future biodiversity managed areas. A tree planting programme for public open spaces is being progressed for the Autumn/Winter of 2020.

We continue to manage the impact of flood damage in our Parks and open spaces. Initial clear up work as a result of Storm Dennis was completed in June 2020. Renovation work on Pontypridd Lido is progressing well and is on target for a Spring 2021 reopening. The tennis courts, bowling greens and children's' play area at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park are now available for residents use, whilst adhering to Welsh Government guidelines.

We continue to invest in RCT playgrounds, pitches and green spaces for physical activity. This includes:

- The 2020/21 Parks and Play Area Programme is now underway after a delayed start;
- The redevelopment of Dare Valley Country Park play area has been completed and is open for the school Summer holidays; and
- All grass pitches have been made available for training purposes in line with Welsh Government guidelines.

To progress the Council's actions on climate change, arrangements are being made for the next Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group meeting. It is planned that this meeting will, amongst other things, consider a revised work programme to take forward the work that will contribute to the Council's approach to Net Zero, including the approach to single use plastics, low carbon energy sources and local procurement of goods.

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	8.624	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2020/21 and 2022/23.
Play Areas	0.662	During 2020/21 there are 28 schemes which form the planned programme of works. As at 30 th June, 3 had been completed, 1 remains under construction, 10 had been designed, costed and scheduled and 14 are to be designed.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.184	The 2020/21 planned programme consists of 4 schemes that have been developed to undertake various works including rebuilding and line marking. As at 30 th June 2020, 2 were under construction and 2 are to be designed.
Cynon Gateway South – Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link	4.750	During the quarter, bridge, carriageway and footway works were completed and drainage works were on-going. Over the summer, a 4 week road closure is scheduled to complete road junction realignment works.
Structures: St Albans Bridge and Brook Street Footbridge	2.574	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Alban's Bridge – works were temporary paused due to Covid-19 and recommenced during quarter 1; and • Brook St. Footbridge – detailed design options completed, tenders received for construction stage and an Active Travel funding bid has been made for 2020/21.
Structures	2.791	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemes on-going - Castle lfor (Hopkinstown) works and Williamstown Footbridge; and • New schemes – include repairs and strengthening works to Bodringallt bridge (Ystrad) and Station Street bridge (Treherbert); repairs to walls at Gwawr Street (Aberaman), B4273 Ynysybwll/Glyncoch and Station Street (Treherbert); and culvert strengthening at Rhydyfelin.
Parks Structures	1.335	The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks. Projects scheduled to commence in quarter 2 include bridge deck and parapet replacement of Maesyfelin Footbridge (Pontylcun); bridge replacement of Nant Lonydd Bridge (Upper Boat); and works to Station Street River Wall (Treherbert). Various inspections and surveys also continued to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.

³ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES

Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Parks and Green Spaces	1.000	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites, with 85 schemes planned for 2020/21.
Cemeteries	0.088	This investment funding has been allocated to deliver works at 4 cemetery locations (Trealaw; Maes Yr Arian, Mountain Ash; Byn Yr Gaer, Hirwaun; and Glyntaff Cemetery). Works involve decoration of shelter, new doors, drainage works, new gates and fencing, repair of damaged palisade and the introduction of security measures, materials and decoration of South Chapel (Glyntaff).
Llanharan Bypass	2.000	This investment funding is supporting preliminary design work, additional surveys and the design / tender of ground investigation work. Cabinet agreed the route on 24 th September 2019 after taking into consideration the feedback received during the public consultation.
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	6.000	This investment funding is supporting the dualling of this section of the highway. Preliminary designs have been completed and Cabinet agreed to progress with a number of key elements of the scheme on 18 th July 2019. These include detail design of the dual carriageway together with a footbridge for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the A4119, and advanced works such as site clearance and public utility diversions. The purchase of land has commenced.
Community Hubs	0.401	This investment funding relates to supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porth Plaza – following temporary delays due to Covid-19, works were completed on 8th June 2020; and • Treorchy – works to be undertaken to improve the proposed site of Treorchy Community Hub at Treorchy Library (cladding and new windows).
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.400	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Feasibility and preliminary design options are ongoing.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Bypass	2.000	This investment funding relates to the preliminary design for a bypass continuation from A4059 Aberdare to Hirwaun. Ground investigation has been completed and ecology, preliminary design and procurement is ongoing.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.400	This investment funding is to support enabling works, planning and ecology for the development of an Eco Park at the Waste Management Facility. The RIBA Stage 2 report has been approved and work to progress the design development of RIBA Stages 3 and 4 is underway.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES

Investment Area	Investment Value³ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Dinas Community Recycling Centre	0.250	This investment funding relates to the provision of a new office building and improvements on the site of Dinas Community Recycling Centre since the demolition of the previous site building. All external remedial works to accommodate the new office building have been completed to enable its installation later this year. Other works will also be undertaken to install CCTV and lighting.
Land Drainage	0.750	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works. The ongoing programme includes works at Porth, Cwmbach and Abercynon.
Total	35.209	

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Priority

Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise

Cabinet report outlining the protocols to apply social distancing initiatives in town centres with application of key measures with the provision of advice, stickers and posters. Working with Pontypridd and Aberdare BIDS to facilitate a consistent approach to properly licensed outdoor trading opportunities. In addition to this, proposals to refocus the existing business support grant schemes and to establish three further schemes – the Town Centre COVID 19 Recovery Grant, the Major Projects Investment Fund and the Flood Resilience Grant have been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team with a report scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in September for consideration.

Working with Treorchy, Aberdare and Pontypridd BIDs to continue to develop approaches for businesses to plan for Covid-19 recovery. Plans for business grant portfolio being reviewed for Covid-19 recovery and The Means engaged to recommend actions for town centre businesses to be more resilient in recovery.

Project pipeline and programme of target developments now in place with good progress being made on the delivery of all schemes e.g. Black Lion (Aberdare), Mountain Ash Town Hall and Oxford buildings. Welsh Government sources of funding including Transforming Towns now available to support delivery.

£400,000 was allocated to support the development of a cultural hub based around the Park and Dare theatre and Treorchy library, including refurbishment of the theatre foyer area, external renovation of the library and highways work to the wall and roadway. External work to the library may take place by December. However, highways work to the wall cannot begin until Spring 2021 due to river flow restrictions. A Stage 1 application for funding of £120,000 is being prepared for submission to MALD by 15th September. If successful we will be invited to submit a Stage 2 Business Plan. The internal reconfiguration of the foyer area is currently being planned and costed. Funding has been secured from the Jerwood Weston Foundation to offer a creative apprenticeship and be involved in an organisational development programme focussed on inclusivity and how to better engage with all groups in the community which will support the development of a cultural hub.

Priority

Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough

Despite the restrictions placed on the construction sector during lockdown and which are still continuing as lockdown eases, good progress has been maintained across the range of major regeneration schemes which are in delivery phase.

These include Llys Cadwyn which is programmed to complete this year with the footbridge to the Park open to the public and also Building C which houses the new library facility also open. The significant improvements at Dare Valley Country Park as part of the Welsh Government supported Valleys Regional Park initiative are progressing well with the new Adventure Play area open to the public. The delivery of the 30,000 square foot modern business unit at Coedely Business Park, the first development on the site, is well advanced. The construction contract is expected to be fully completed before the end of this financial year.

At the Porth Transport Hub site, demolition of the day centre, former Barclays Bank and former Doctors Surgery are now complete. On site and design development taken forward to the start of RIBA Stage 3 in conjunction with Transport for Wales.

Works on the Transport for Wales new rolling stock depot site at Taffs Well (on the site of the former Garth Works Industrial Estate) is well underway. Phase 1 of the works (Core Valley Lines integrated Control Centre) has commenced and a detailed submission has recently been received for Phase 2 (detailed highway works/improvements).

Priority

Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all RCT schools delivered the majority of learning remotely. 2,868 devices, with suitable connectivity provided where necessary, were issued to digitally excluded pupils to enable them to access remote learning. School improvement services supported schools to develop best practice for distance learning and the local authority developed guidance on synchronous and asynchronous learning. Regular communication took place with headteachers, governors and parents/carers, including comprehensive guidance documents for schools and governors, and information for parents/carers on a range of issues. These were provided via the Council website, social media messages and direct communication with stakeholders.

On June 29th all pupils returned to RCT schools to 'check in, catch up and prepare'. Schools were provided with RCT guidance, in line with Welsh Government guidance, to ensure a safe environment, it ensured that risk assessments were in place and statutory compliance checks including legionella and fire alarm testing were up-to-date. Close working between services and schools ensured that learner cohorts were aligned to pupil groupings on transport routes to limit numbers of contacts for each child.

Due to the circumstances, parents/carers were not fined for non-school attendance, but the Attendance & Wellbeing Service supported vulnerable learners and their families to re-engage with education, using alternative methods of contact where possible to avoid face-to-face home visits. Guidance was developed to ensure that robust processes and procedures were put in

Priority

Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education

place to support and re-engage vulnerable learners.

Schools were supported to ensure appropriate provision was provided for learners with special educational needs and to ensure that they were well supported when accessing childcare provision and returning to school. Wellbeing packs were produced for schools by the Educational Psychology Service, with information on supporting staff, families and pupils during the lockdown period and at the transition back into school. An action plan is in place to provide enhanced counselling support for children and young people to allow additional support for any young people experiencing challenging circumstances during the pandemic.

Six family engagement officers are being appointed who will each work with one of our secondary schools which have been identified as having specific challenges with attendance or exclusions, providing support to young people and their families to help them remain engaged in education. To support the return to education of disengaged young people, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be adopting cluster-based models of delivering support for schools and families in the autumn term.

The Education Directorate is working in close partnership with secondary schools to establish step 4 alternative provision to meet the needs of learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. By enhancing the capacity of schools to meet the needs of more vulnerable children in their communities through effective early intervention and prevention, the demand for more costly specialist pupil referral unit or special school provision will be diminished and exclusion and attendance rates improved.

In accordance with Welsh Government guidance, there will be a phased return to school in September, with all pupils in school by the 10th of September. Local authority guidance has been issued to support schools and parents/carers to plan for the safe return of all pupils. PPE, sanitiser, signage and enhanced cleaning has been provided for schools to ensure safe learning environments for learners.

Following decisions by Welsh Government, all A level and GCSE results were awarded on the basis of centre assessed grades this year, unless higher grades were previously awarded using the statistical model developed by the WJEC/Qualifications Wales. Provisional data from WJEC exam board suggests that overall the examination data for RCT is improved from the previous year.

Extensive improvements have been made to information management systems within the Education Directorate and effective use is now made of data to inform service improvements and developments. Comprehensive data reports are now produced for schools and for service areas to inform transformation and improvements, and to evaluate the impact of strategic developments.

Construction work at the new Hirwaun primary school is progressing well and ahead of schedule. Work on the new learning hub at Ffynnon Taf primary school is also well underway. The outcome of the recent judicial review is currently under consideration and clearly has implications for the next steps to be taken for the Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme. Extensive maintenance works have been undertaken in schools over the summer holiday school closure period to improve learning environments across the County Borough.

Priority

Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents

Housing services have been maintained throughout the period and plans in place to resume face-to-face service delivery following risk assessments. We are working with a private landlord to increase our supply of temporary accommodation. An additional 2 units are due to come on line at the end of August with a further 2 units in the Autumn. Under Welsh Government Phase 2 we have secured funding arrangements to enable us to develop an in-house solution to increase our supply of private rented accommodation.

Registered Social Landlord Covid-19 recovery plans are complete and ongoing support offered to Registered Social Landlords through monthly meetings with CEO's and more regular meetings with operational staff. 14 Schemes in the Programme Delivery Plan, totalling a Social Housing Grant investment of just under £18 million. In addition to this, a further 9 Social Housing schemes requiring a further grant of £16M have been prepared, all with planning permission, and ready for development if additional grant funding is secured.

Priority

Helping people into work and better paid employment

We continue to provide a diverse range of opportunities within Council services to help young people develop their careers. 14 apprentices have been recruited and will start work with the Council on 14th September, and 6 former Children Looked After will also begin their Step-in-the-Right-Direction traineeships in September. Recruitment of 16 graduate trainees and 20 additional apprentices will take place shortly, with start dates in October 2020 and January 2021 respectively. We also continue to provide employment and training support to all our Children Looked After via the Care2work scheme, and are developing our partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd providing internships for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The majority of Communities for Work employment support staff were deployed to support the work of the Community Resilience Hubs during Quarter 1. Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) staff were also deployed on work supporting new Universal Credit claimants and their client commitment to job search when on benefits was turned off. As such all referrals from local Job Centre Plus into employment support ceased on 18th March. By the end of June referrals had restarted, albeit at a much lower level.

Employment support has continued to be delivered remotely to existing clients during this time but this has been limited. There will be a phased approach to returning employment support staff to their substantive roles in quarter 2 and turning the client commitment to job search back on.

Inspire 2 Work (I2W) have been delivering Digital College courses since June. Initially the Digital College brochure was shared with partners and referrers, this saw a limited number of new referrals, while I2W also contacted existing participants to invite them to complete courses. Feedback from participants was good in this initial period. To promote this further, I2W created sector related packages to promote to referrers, based on the 1-week sector related courses which I2W would usually physically deliver. Packages included a Retail and Hospitality course, Health and Social Care, Office work and Contact Centre packages, each package also included a Covid 19 Precautions course provided free of charge by the Digital College. 41 participants completed digital courses with I2W.

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ⁴ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Empty Property Grant	1.500	At present, all empty property grant applications are processed via the Welsh Government funded Valley Taskforce Scheme and this approach will continue until the Welsh Government scheme closes on 31 st March 2021.
Schools	0.836	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemes on-going include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ferndale Community School – works to the main swimming pool hall and construction of new retaining wall and entrance path completed. Further work to be undertaken to install new signage. ○ Gelli Primary - all internal refurbishment works and two classroom extension works complete. Works including fencing, additional replacement windows, resurfacing of soft play area and the renewal of fascia and soffit boards to the main school building are on-going and are scheduled to be completed in quarter 2. ○ Llanharan Primary – car park works complete and work to provide a 2 classroom extension including toilets is on-going and is scheduled to be completed in October. ○ Cymmer Primary – the contractor has been appointed for the asbestos/site clearance and demolition, and an amended bat licence has been granted by Natural Resources Wales (which will enable the demolition of the canteen to be progressed in quarter 2). Work to revise the carpark design and layout is progressing, in preparation for the submission of a Planning application.
Transport Infrastructure	2.500	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway network improvements - Bridge St roundabout (Pontypridd) and on the A4119 Strategic Corridor, and works are scheduled at A4046 Dyfodwg St / Illtyd St (Treorchy); • Traffic flow improvements to A473 Tonteg Rd (Upper Boat), A4059 Quarter Mile Junction (Abercynon) and A4059 (Mountain Ash); and • Capacity improvements at signals are being made at A4058 Llwynypia Rd (Tonypandy) and various bus corridor improvements and network assessments are also being undertaken.
Tonyrefail Roundabout	0.500	This investment funding relates to Tonyrefail Roundabout for feasibility and design to improve the congestion and compliment the strategic development at Coed Ely. Ground investigations are

⁴ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY

Investment Area	Investment Value ⁴ £M	Quarter 1 Update
		underway and the preliminary design stage is ongoing.
Taff Vale Development	2.024	<p>Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, progress has continued on site. During the period, fit-out of the library, One4All and Leisure facilities has continued and outstanding snagging on Buildings B and C undertaken. Work continues on finalising the public realm, highways works and Building A which includes the fit-out works for Transport for Wales. Positive negotiations also continue with prospective tenants of the remaining office accommodation and restaurant/cafe units.</p> <p>After initially closing their site at the start of the pandemic, the footbridge contractor re-commenced work on site in May and has since made substantial progress. All deck sections have been lifted into place with the remaining works focusing on the bridge handrails, lighting and landscaping. The bridge has since opened to the public on 15th August 2020.</p>
Park and Ride Programme	1.000	This investment funding is supporting the development work needed to create additional 'park and ride' car parking spaces at Pontyclun (feasibility / preliminary design is on-going) and Porth (Phase 2 is complete and design options are being considered for Phase 3).
Strategic Regeneration Investment	0.200	This funding has been approved for the Guto Square development (Mountain Ash) that will provide a bigger and improved area for public use in the heart of the town centre for community, event and business uses, and also additional car parking spaces for visitors to the town. It will comprise improvements to the existing area and also to a larger area through the Compulsory Purchase of the adjacent derelict parcel of land and acquisition of adjacent disused properties which will provide an improved interface with the Mountain Ash Workingmen's Club. Development is now at the detailed design stage with construction expected to begin in the Autumn.
Robertstown and Coed Ely ERDF Match Funding	4.200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robertstown – an OJEU tender process has been completed and subject to approval, the appointment of the principal contractor for the works will be made. Work is on-going with the Welsh European Funding Office in terms of the overall package of funding. • Coed Ely – Construction is on-going albeit there are some restrictions to ensure adherence to Covid-19 guidelines for the construction industry. Progress includes: Solar PV Panel installation on main warehouse roof and substructure work to offices completed and internal blockwork, external cladding and drainage works on-going.
Total	12.760	