



The Council's Corporate Performance Report 2020-21

All data included in this report will be subject to final checks

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

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

No	Sections	Page
	Contents	
1	Introduction and Contacts	3
2	The Leader's message	4
3	Continuing to deliver our priorities in 2019-20	7
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy – Building a Strong Economy 	11
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf 	21
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work 	29
7	What we achieved in our Corporate Plan between 2016-20	37
8	How are we performing compared to the rest of Wales?	41
9	Making a Difference – The Council's new Corporate Plan	44
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People 	47
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places 	49
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	51
13	Delivering for the Future	53
14	Making the best of our Budget	55
15	Working now for the Well-being of Future Generations	57
16	Equalities – A fair and equal County Borough	63
17	Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice	69
18	Biodiversity	74
19	Involving people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf	78
20	Giving Back	81
Appx1	Well-being of Future Generations Act - Goals Matrix – Appendix	82

Introduction and Contacts

This is the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report. It tells you about how we performed in 2019-20 and our new priorities for 2020 - 21.

We welcome your views on this report, our plans for the future and how we did last year. We would also like to know how you, your family and your community have been affected by our work to improve services.

You can get in touch

Via the web	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Reportit
Via Twitter	@rctcouncil or @cwmtafconsult
Via Facebook	www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil
Via The Leader's Blog	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/TheLeadersBlog
Help us to improve by providing your comments, compliments and complaints	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback
Join the Citizens' Panel	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/jointhepanel
Get involved in our consultations	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/GetInvolved
Consultation Team	Email: consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk
Cwm Taf Engagement Hub	www.ourcwmtaf.wales
Your Councillor	Find the contact details of your local Councillor www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors
If you are interested in taking over the running of a Council run building or service	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether

A message from the Leader of the Council – Councillor Andrew Morgan

Welcome to the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2020. This report brings together information from across the Council about how well we delivered our priorities in 2019/20 and our plans to deliver our ambitions in 2020/21. This report helps us to meet many of the Council's legal reporting requirements, but more importantly, it has also been designed so that you, the Council's residents, partners and other interested organisations can judge how we are delivering upon the commitments we have previously made. We want to show where we are doing well, where we can do better, and be honest about the challenges ahead.

However, this report is being produced at a time when the Council is continuing to tackle unprecedented local, national and global challenges. Following storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020 our focus was on working with communities and redirecting staff to make sure we were supporting those residents and businesses that were so badly affected. At the same time, a virus was spreading across the world and in March 2020, RCT faced the new challenge of helping to keep every single resident and member of staff safe and well. Working with community groups and volunteers to provide help and essential supplies directly to those who needed it, keeping essential services going, working with health partners to help stop the spread of the virus and at the same time making sure that we followed the Welsh Government guidelines to keep people safe. The last few months have been a time like no other. The virus is still with us and with the visible impacts of climate change, there is no doubt we will be facing more severe weather events for the foreseeable future. However, the Council remains positive and ambitious and as our services restart safely, we continue to be focused on making RCT the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.

The Corporate Performance Report contains many examples of how the Council is working to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It also shows what the Council's Independent Auditors have said about our work and progress.

For those readers that would like to see more in depth information, the report includes many links to detailed reports and data. In whatever way you choose to read this report, I hope it helps you to understand and challenge what we are doing, and encourages you to get involved in feeding back your views so that the Council can provide you with the best possible services.

The data and information we collect, check and compare, shows that overall we are continuing to improve and that our residents are receiving a number of services that, our most recent data shows, are amongst the best in Wales. This includes

- helping to prevent homelessness
- the condition of our non-principal (C) roads
- maintaining high levels of cleanliness of our highways
- making timely decisions on planning applications and getting those decisions right so they are not overturned at appeal

At the same time as looking at where we are making good progress and compare well with others, there are areas where we know we need to do better. This includes

- continuing to improve the condition of our roads - so we are continuing to invest in our roads and bridge repairs.
- improving school attendance at both primary and secondary schools - so we continue to work with schools to help to jointly tackle the problems that can lead to children and young people not going to school.
- continuing to invest in our leisure centres and encouraging people to look after their health and fitness.

The financial climate in which the Council and the public sector in Wales is currently operating is unprecedented. For the Council, our robust approach to financial management and planning is enabling the necessary support to be provided to residents and businesses, by partnership working and with support from Welsh Government.

We will continue to work closely with Welsh Government and our partners to make best use of all available resources and to secure the on-going additional funding needed to recover from unprecedented events. We are also changing how some services are delivered to ensure they continue to both meet the needs of our local communities and provide value-for-money and at same time ensuring the financial health and stability of the Council is maintained.

Overall, we think the Council is making good progress but our work never stands still, especially now as services are trying to respond to and plan for fast moving events over which they have no control. As well as talking about the last year, this report also tells you about our ambitions for the future and what we will do over the next year to improve in those priorities that you told us were most important to you and your communities, which we have set out in our new Corporate Plan. Looking ahead to 2020/21 we will be working hard to

- **ensure 'People' are independent, healthy and successful**
- **create 'Places' where people are proud to live, work and play**
- **enable 'Prosperity' by creating opportunities for people and businesses**

This report gives you more information about how we will do this, although when you read the report, more progress will have been made in the work it describes, particularly where our progress was affected by the impact of floods or lockdown conditions. We remain fully committed to keeping residents up to date with what is happening in the Council, on our progress and improvements, through our social media channels and on our website. I would encourage you to see for yourself the changes we are making. We will also continue to provide meaningful opportunities for residents to engage in our democratic processes. The benefits of some of our work can be seen now, other benefits will take longer to see, but we continue to put in place firm foundations that will support improvement and from which future generations can benefit and also build on.

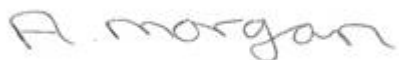
Finally, none of this work would happen without the continued commitment of staff, councillors and partners. The last few months in particular have shown the incredible commitment and hard work of Council staff to doing everything possible to support residents, communities and

businesses, throughout the most difficult of times, both professionally and personally. I would like to put on record, once again, my personal thanks and gratitude to everyone who continues to work so hard to make Rhondda Cynon Taf one of the most successful Councils in Wales so that our residents get the best possible services, despite the many challenges we continue to face. One of our most valued assets continues to be our local authority staff who transform our ambitions into reality.

I hope this Performance Report helps you to understand how the Council is approaching both the challenges and opportunities it faces now and how we are preparing for the future. Please let us know what you think of our progress, particularly as we continue to work through the pandemic, and our plans for the future. Tell us what matters to you and give us your ideas about what we can do to further improve the positive impact of the Council's work for you, your family and your community.

I would also like to place on record my thanks to all elected Members, particularly through our scrutiny processes, who all play an important role in ensuring this Council delivers upon the commitments and priorities we have set.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the Council.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Morgan".

Councillor Andrew Morgan

Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Continuing to deliver our priorities in 2019-20

The Council's [Corporate Plan for 2016-2020, 'The Way Ahead'](#) put residents at the centre of what we do. The plan was originally developed and shaped by residents, staff and partners who told us what mattered most to them. It set the direction for everything we have done since 2016 and set the firm foundations for our new [Corporate Plan for 2020-24, 'Making a Difference'](#), which was put in place from April 2020. In this annual report we will show you the progress we have made since 2016, with a focus on 2019/20 and also how we intend to progress our new priorities beyond 2020.

On 2016, 'The Way Ahead' set out a Vision for the future, for *a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all*, and it focused on three 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 .*

The Plan also set out the key principles we would follow to deliver these priorities, i.e.

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

Since then, we have put in place annual plans and reports to show our progress. The detailed plans that showed how we would deliver our priorities in 2019/20 were set out in our [Corporate Performance Report for 2019](#).

Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors every three months and at the same time, [Quarterly performance reports](#) have been put on the Council's website so that residents and other interested organisations can see our progress for themselves. We are now at the end of the 2019/20 reporting year, so this report contains the year end assessment of our progress and provides examples of where our work has made a difference to the lives of people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf, and also where we need to do better.

Taking this approach with our first Corporate Plan has served the Council well, and as you will see throughout this report, we have made positive progress since 2016.

Looking at our progress since 2016, at what we need to do both now and in the future and also listening to what you have told us is important to you, has helped us to prepare the detailed steps and plans and set ambitious targets for the future. Our progress so far will help us to prepare to respond to the challenges we face in 2020 and beyond. We are confident that this progress will continue in the future as we plan for and deliver our new priorities in our new plan 'Making a Difference'. This is described in more detail in section 9.

As we progress our plans, we will continue, to involve people and communities, think about the effect of what we do now has on people and communities in the future, carefully plan what we do so that we can work with others where it is best to do so, and put in place services that will help prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

No single report or plan can tell you about the many services that we deliver directly to or organise for our residents, communities and businesses. Many of these services were at the forefront of responding to floods arising from storms Ciara and Dennis earlier this year, as well as the impact of Covid-19, and many plans for 2020/21 will be uncertain. However, you can find out more about all the services we deliver, the progress we are making and how we are supporting residents and communities, on the [Council's website](#), [Council's Twitter](#), [Council's Instagram](#) or [Council's Facebook](#) pages.

To help us to achieve our ambitions and respond to the impact of increasing financial pressures, we are continually looking at ways we can make more of the resources we have available by tackling

Digitalisation so that customers can access more of our services online and also helping to increase access to technology for people and communities.

During 2019/20 we made positive progress in rolling out our Digitisation programme e.g. increasing the availability of services on line, providing information about support available during the floods in early 2020 and free Wi Fi in Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Ferndale, Porth and Treorchy Town Centres, with infrastructure for Wi Fi in 2 other Town Centres currently in progress. In March 2020, this work was accelerated by the immediate need to make it possible for over 3,000 office based staff and Councillors to effectively work from home with appropriate equipment and 'tools'. This allowed

- residents and community groups to be kept informed about service changes and help available.
- democratic processes to continue virtually.
- online virtual meetings with vulnerable people.

At this time, we also worked with partners, put in place an interim solution for Covid-19 Contact Tracing across the areas of Cwm Taf Morgannwg and supported the development of a national solution to support the national drive to keep people safe.

Other ways that digitisation is helping people and communities can be found in our detailed evaluations for Economy, People and Place.

Commercialisation so that the Council takes more opportunities to act as a business to earn income rather than cut budgets.

Renting our assets to create income and new jobs

Early Intervention and Prevention so that we spend more on stopping problems and less on trying to fix them once they have happened.

We have changed the way we provide Early Years support in RCT, to include 0-7 year olds. Early Years services are now delivered as part of the [Resilient Families Service](#) to ensure families in RCT receive the right support at the right time. This means that the specialist parenting and early language support that was previously only available to families in 'Flying Start' areas, is now available to all families who require it in RCT as part of a comprehensive package of family support. More recently, we have received approval from Welsh Government to make changes to health visiting, by developing the RCT 'Family Health Visiting Programme' so more support is available to all families no matter where in RCT they live. It has also been agreed that we can trial changes to our childcare offer so that this support is available to all families in the same way.

Independence so that our vulnerable residents stay as well as they can for as long as they can.

This includes using funding from Welsh Government announced in Summer 2019, to develop and implement a new way of using technology to help our residents to stay in their own homes, safely, for longer. Our new Mobile Response service which started in January 2020, provides a 24-hour rapid response service, for 365 days a year, to people using an RCT lifeline pendant. You can see more about this new service in the [PEOPLE evaluation](#).

Efficient and Effective Organisation so that we challenge everything we do to see if we can do it better.

We continued to centralise office based administration to make the most of the skills and expertise available behind the scenes. At the same time, we helped staff working in the community by providing 'hot desks' that they could use in different locations so that they spent more time working with residents, communities and businesses and less time travelling across the County Borough back to an office. This approach meant that the Council had a head start when staff were required to work from home in response to Covid-19. The lessons we have learned from the necessity of home working supported by appropriate ICT tools etc. will help to inform our thinking for the future shape of the organisation.

During 2019 we also continued to embed the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) into the Council's work and priorities. This Act applies to 44 public bodies in Wales including all Councils, Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Services and Natural Resources Wales.

The Act means that as well as the Council continually improving, it also needs to carry out 'Sustainable Development' which is the process of improving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Act also asks us to "maximise our contributions" to seven national Well-being Goals, which you will see throughout this report.

You will also see more about how we are applying the Act in section 15 and we have also provided a summary of how our work is contributing to the seven national Well-being goals in Appendix 1. However, we need to continue to build and improve on this positive platform.

Our progress throughout the year has been set out in regular reports for Councillors to challenge and check, and for residents to see for themselves, and is included below. Our progress showed that we were on track to achieve most of our ambitions we set ourselves in 2016. However, the impact of severe flooding and the Covid-19 pandemic both had a significant impact on progress towards the end of 2019/20.

ECONOMY - Building a Strong Economy

We put in place the **ECONOMY** priority as we believed that economic growth would drive prosperity and bring opportunities to our residents and business as well as the Council. A growing economy will continue to support jobs for our residents and will also allow the Council to generate more income to fund services, enable a responsible approach to setting Council Tax levels, support businesses and invest in the infrastructure needs of the County Borough. Helping to create these conditions will also help to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of residents and communities. Residents told us this is important to them and studies have shown that work is good for people and can benefit individual mental health and contribution to communities.

We want to support residents, particularly our young people, to realise their potential by getting the best education, fulfilling jobs and good quality housing, irrespective of their backgrounds. We also want to make sure that RCT is best placed to take full advantage of the many different opportunities that will arise from the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#).

Making RCT Town Centres more attractive will not only benefit our residents, it will also add to the appeal of the area as a visitor destination, which will help to increase tourism and will in turn support local businesses as well as provide more opportunities for jobs for our residents.

We also know that we have to plan to meet higher expectations from our residents with less funding so we have to do things differently.

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority are

- **A responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created – including investments in town centres and the commercial infrastructure such as Treforest Industrial Estate**
- **Making Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can**
- **Making sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages - by using European Social Fund monies where we can**

Latest available data tells us

Economy

- Latest data, 2018, shows the value of goods and services (GVA) produced in the County Borough was £3,580 million, 5th highest in Wales. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- At the end of 2019, the average house price in RCT was £114,000, 3rd lowest in Wales [Source: Office for National Statistics](#)
- Council Tax increases in RCT have been the lowest in Wales over the last 3 years [Source: StatsWales](#)

Employment

- Latest data, March 2020, 69.8% of RCT residents aged 16+ were in employment, the third lowest L.A. in Wales and 3.9 percentage points lower than the Wales average (73.7%) [Source: StatsWales](#)
- According to latest figures (2018), the Public Administration, Education and Health industry is the largest employer throughout RCT (31% of workers), followed by Wholesale, Retail and Hospitality (28%) and Production (15%) [Source: StatsWales](#)
- According to 2019 estimates, the average weekly earnings of people working in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area was £521.20, an increase of £16.80 per week on the previous year but still lower than the Wales average (£535.00) [Source: StatsWales](#)

Education

- As of 2019, 11% of working age people in RCT had no qualifications, 2.5% higher than across Wales (8.5%). [Source: NOMIS](#)
- During 2018-19, there were 5,280 people employed within apprenticeship and trainee schemes in the RCT area, the second highest number in Wales. Of these, 1.42% were from a BAME background, the 5th lowest of the 22 Local Authorities. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- 29,320 people from RCT participated in further education during 2018/19. [Source: StatsWales](#)

In 2019 we said we would continue our work to Build a Strong Economy, focusing on improving our economy by supporting business growth and helping individuals improve their skills. Overall, we continue to make positive progress as a Council and in the wider partnerships including the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#) and the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#). Progress in some of our key measures was slower than we anticipated, for a number of reasons, some of which were beyond our control. For example, the increase in empty commercial units Aberdare, Porth and Pontypridd as a result of continuing national trends exacerbated by storms and Covid-19, although it is worth noting that these rates are better than the Welsh national average. Also the gap in educational achievement between our pupils receiving free school meals and their peers remains too high and we still have too many children and young people being excluded from our schools.

However, we continue to focus on supporting business growth and improving individual's skills. This focus was tested as never before towards the end of the 2019 reporting year, when we needed to prioritise our work because of the significant and unprecedented local impact of floods arising from Storms Ciara and Dennis, and also by the introduction of the lockdown conditions arising from the onset of the coronavirus, Covid-19. We rescheduled many of our plans and

focused on working with partners to provide direct and immediate support to businesses, people and communities in most need. However, more positively we were able to continue our work on some significant physical regeneration and improvement projects during this challenging time. The impact of the floods and Covid-19 won't be fully reflected in the progress we have described in 2019, but its impact will be more significant in our work in 2020/21.

Alongside our work in delivering our ECONOMY priority we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the ECONOMY priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate, the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Cwm Taf Public Services Board and other Boards.

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2019/20 in our [ECONOMY Performance Evaluation](#).

We said we would put in place a responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created

Measures we set out last year

- We supported 34 property improvements in our Town Centres (*not able to compare to last year as definition changed*)
- 86 new homes built by local small or medium sized businesses.
- There were 9,505 active businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2018, an increase from 8,585 the previous year [Source: StatsWales](#)
- Fewer business start-ups compared to last year but still significantly more than South East Wales region at 15.5%, Wales at 13.3% and UK 12.9%
- More business deaths, at 18% compared to 11.7% in South East Wales, 10.4% in Wales and 11.4% in the UK, reflecting in part the significant impact of the weather events in early 2020. However, we are confident that our plans for regeneration and the town centre redevelopments will support new and existing businesses. As a result of Covid-19, we are already developing new approaches to deal with the current challenges and different opportunities
- More affordable homes delivered. *This is better than last years at 135 compared to 83 in 2018/19.*
- Fewer empty properties brought back into use at 172 compared to 213 in 2018/19. *This was due to a delay in the launch of the Valleys Taskforce empty homes grant scheme, which meant it initially took longer to approve grants. However, this is still the highest number of properties brought back into use in Wales through direct action by a local authority during 2019/20.*

Among other things we have...

- continued to modernise our Town Centres and help them adapt to new challenges and opportunities. We are implementing the plans for Porth and Mountain Ash and are working on new plans for Treorchy and Tonypany. This includes work starting on site on ambitious projects such as the Porth Transport Hub, supported living accommodation and a new medical centre in Mountain Ash. We also rolled out *safe Wi-Fi to Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Ferndale town centres. Work to bring this to Treorchy and Porth was delayed but has now been completed and Pontypridd and Tonypany will be progressed as soon as possible. We also helped 34 businesses improve their premises. More recently we have been putting in place arrangements to make our Town Centres safe e.g. helping to manage social distancing, and providing grants to help businesses quickly adapt to new circumstances.
- continued to deliver the new development at the heart of the regeneration of Pontypridd, [Llys Cadwyn](#), following the demolition of the former Taff Vale precinct, bringing office accommodation, a community hub with a modern library and leisure facilities as well as additional jobs. The significant redevelopment of the former Pontypridd YMCA also started which will produce a modern facility for community and social business use.
- continued to support local small businesses and start-ups through our [Enterprise Investment Fund](#). This scheme has widened the scope of the previous Enterprise Support programme to provide better focussed financial assistance to enable them to grow and diversify as well as create jobs. We are currently putting together a more comprehensive package of support for local businesses, to help them face the challenges and opportunities of the new economic environment.
- launched our Town Centre Crime Reduction Strategy 2019-2021 and worked with businesses and partners to make our towns safer by tackling anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and public order offences. We have also upgraded CCTV in our Town Centres and are continuing our plans to put in place free Wi-Fi, accredited by the government's *safe standard [Friendly Wi Fi](#) which blocks inappropriate content.
- continued to develop the tourism offer in RCT, drawing on the strengths of the region, including landscape and green spaces and industrial heritage, working alongside local businesses to make the region attractive to visitors. Examples of new attractions being developed/explored include Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels and Zip World. Our long standing Welsh Mining Experience at the Rhondda Heritage Park received further recognition through the [Sandford Award](#) for inspiring learning and curiosity in our future generations. We have also continued to develop our two Discovery Gateway sites at Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park with grant support from Welsh Government. More recently we have been unable to involve stakeholders to develop the detailed plans for tourism in RCT as a result of Covid-19 pandemic but we are keen to start this work as soon as we are able.
- continued to widen the range of housing available including working with partners to redevelop derelict buildings, breaking down the barriers to help more people to self-build the properties of their choice, bringing empty properties back to life through schemes such as the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme and the Council's Houses into Homes Loans and using enforcement where necessary to encourage property owners to take appropriate action where homes are left empty for long periods. We also continued to work with Registered Social Landlords to provide good quality affordable housing utilising a £15m social housing grant investment, and helped people with disabilities to

make adaptations to help them stay in their homes, using local contractors to undertake £4m of work across 297 properties.

- continued to support RCT residents to access grants to install over 3,800 energy efficiency measures into their homes, improving the warmth of their home and decreasing energy bills.
- started to look at how work to put in place our new Local Development Plan can have a positive impact on the environment both now and in the future. Discussions to consider how this can best be achieved have been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and will now take place later this year. These discussions will include how planning can play a key part in reducing the impact of climate change and reducing carbon emissions in the County Borough. You can find more information about how the Council's work on climate change and the environment through our social media and in the work of the Council's [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#).

Investing in Local Businesses - [Gwalia Health Care](#)

Gwalia Health Care, based on Treforest Industrial Estate, received a £10,000 grant through our Enterprise Investment Fund to help them develop a partnership with Firstkind Ltd, to manufacture their 'Geko' products. The Geko device is worn like a wristwatch below the knee, helping to prevent and treat conditions like the prevention of swelling following orthopaedic surgery, reducing blood clotting risk in stroke patients and the treatment of leg ulcers. Gwalia produces several of the device's components locally. The grant support has assisted them to purchase laser technology equipment to assemble Geko products. The partnership between the two companies has created 18 high quality local jobs.

We said we would make Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can

Measures we set out last year

- RCT pupils increased their average Capped 9 Score to 352.0, a slight increase from last year's 348.0 (*average point score for each pupil's best 9 grades including English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science*)
- Pupils eligible for Free School Meals, on average, did not achieve as high results as their classmates. This data is not published at a Council level as Welsh Government has recommended that the performance of each school is considered separately looking at the challenges it faces. *We are working with individual schools to look at how we can improve support for pupils to enable them to achieve their full potential*
- more fixed term exclusions in both primary and secondary schools
 - Primary schools 20.14 (per 1,000 pupils)
 - Secondary schools 126.6 (per 1,000)
- permanent exclusions also increased. *To tackle this, we have put in place a range of options that can be used to support and challenge schools, early signs show that this approach is working but we are continuing to monitor the situation.*
- more of our primary school pupils attended school more regularly. At 94.3%, this is a slight improvement compared to last year's 94.2% and a step in the right direction.
- fewer of our secondary and through school pupils attended regularly, at 92.9%, this was marginally below last year's attendance at 93%. *We are continuing to challenge and support schools that need most help and also support pupil and parents to find more suitable education provision where appropriate and piloting a new school based approach.*

Among other things we have...

- remodelled or improved school buildings and facilities in Gelli Primary School, Llanharan Primary School, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant, Cymmer Primary School, Cwmdare Primary School, Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Treorchy Comprehensive School Ferndale Community School and Pengeulan Primary School. We have also successfully obtained Welsh Government funding to continue to improve our schools and increase the availability of Welsh Medium Education. More recently, the Council has received the

Helping families to help their children in Glenboi

Glenboi Primary School has a high number of disadvantaged pupils. To help pupils achieve their full potential and encourage more parental and family involvement, the school put in place a Family Engagement Officer who has been working closely with parents. As a result of her work, a positive relationship has developed between the school and its families, which in turn has been positive for pupil outcomes, their attitudes to learning and wellbeing and attendance. When asked, parents were positive about the school, information about their child's progress and general communication with the school. During a school inspection in March 2019, Education Inspectors, Estyn, were highly complimentary about the impact of the Family Engagement Officer on the school and has published the work as a case study on its [website](#).

You can see more details about the work of the [Family Engagement Officer in Glenboi](#).

As a result of the success of the Family Engagement approach in Glenboi, we are putting in place Family Engagement roles in six of our secondary schools with the lowest attendance as a trial programme to see if they have the same success.

results of a Judicial Review into school reorganisation in Pontypridd. We are currently reviewing the judgement before deciding how to move forward.

- obtained Welsh Government funding for a learning hub at Ffynnon Taf primary school, which will provide a new hall, childcare facilities and a community room, allowing suitable accommodation for popular local services to meet growing demand. The first part of the scheme is nearing completion and will allow a local childcare provider setting and the local Community Development Association to move into new accommodation during the 2020/21 academic year.
- we have reviewed the support we provide to children with Additional Learning Needs before they start school and put in place a pilot with Ysgol Hen Felin which aims to help children prepare for full time school. Following an initial review, the pilot was due to be extended until the end of the Summer Term 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, this work will be taken forward into 2020/21 when schools reopen.
- worked with Health Colleges, to develop the RCT 'Family Health Visiting Programme', to ensure all families across RCT with children up to 5 years old are given the opportunity to access support that meets their needs no matter where in RCT they live. The RCT Family Health Visiting Programme will focus support on all children and families who most need it.
- agreed to trial new funded childcare for families with 2-3 year olds who most need it, rather than being based on where families live. Those families currently accessing childcare will continue to receive child care during the changeover.

We said we would make sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages

Measures we set out last year.

- 1,400 people gained training, qualifications or work experience. 635 people successfully gained employment following our support and their hard work.
- the most recent number of young people not in education, employment or training is not yet available as a result of delays in the publication of data caused by the Covid-19. In 2017/18, our latest available data, 1.9% of 16 year olds (year 11) and 2.9% of 18 year olds (year 13) leaving school were known not to be in education, employment or training.
- we supported 147 people with health conditions or disabilities that affect them in the work place, to stay in, or return to work after a period of absence. (*new measure, too early to compare*)
- we also supported 41 small businesses to improve their policies and systems so they can provide better support to people with work limiting health conditions or disabilities (*new measure, too early to compare*).

Helping people into work

One of the people we helped into work was J, a single mum of two with anxiety and confidence issues who had little experience of applying for jobs or attending interviews and no childcare in place. J was helped to prepare, apply and train for work that she already had some personal experience of. By also supporting J with transport, providing work experience and information about ways that work would benefit her, J's confidence grew and she was successful in getting work that fitted in with her children's school hours.

Read more about J's story in our [Communities for work case study](#).

Engage to Change Gateway to employment for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities

Working [with Coleg y Cymoedd](#), Learning Disability Wales [Engage to Change project](#) and Elite employment agency, we provided supported internships for 10 young people as part of their college courses across Council services including libraries, leisure centres and social care. As part of their final year at college, the young people spend up to 4 days a week on work placement, developing work related skills in their areas of interest. *Tomos, one of the supported interns based at Ynysangharad Park in Pontypridd said "I have learnt so much from the team I've been working with, learning about all the different types of flowers, plants and wildlife. I've also felt part of the team and had the opportunity to use a variety of equipment such as leaf blowers to keep the park clean and tidy". Tomos has since started paid work in a temporary job with the parks service. You can find out more about the experience of some of our other interns in this [short film](#). Our 2020 internships were interrupted by Covid-19 but placements will restart as soon as it is safe to do so.*

Among other things we have

- implemented the [Staying Well at Work](#) project, supporting small and medium sized businesses to help people to stay in work by providing occupational health support. The project supported 81 people with health conditions or disabilities to return to work for their employers after absences, and a further 66 people were supported with adjustments or treatment to prevent time off work. The project also supported 41 businesses to put in place effective policies and procedures to help their staff with health conditions or disabilities, both now and in the future.
- through the RCT 'Gatsby' pilot, worked with all of our secondary schools to improve how careers information is provided to pupils. 'Gatsby' helps schools to plan activities including contact with local employers, so that pupils can see the direct link between what they are learning in school and potential future careers. You can see more detail in this [short film](#). We also continued to provide details of over 700 risk assessed and safety vetted businesses, including some who are disability confident, so schools can help young people to easily and safely access a wide range of work experience in line with their interests.
- We are working with Coleg y Cymoedd, University of South Wales and University of Wales Trinity St David to provide opportunities for young people within our 'participatory programme', giving them opportunities to work with and learn from professional artists and performers. We also began to develop sessions within our libraries and youth programmes, for example gaming and coding. Along with creative partners, we are working to develop a creative strategy for Pontypridd, linking to the many positive new developments including Muni Arts Centre, Llys Cadwyn, Clwb y Bont and YMCA building, although we have not made as much progress as planned due to the severe flooding in Pontypridd. More recently, our work with the creative industries has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are currently focussing on developing different ways of working, for example delivering online mentoring, coaching support, masterclasses and skill development for aspiring performers, including help with developing virtual performances.
- continued to support people of all ages to improve their skills and to access employment opportunities. Our support, known as the RCT Employment Pathway, is for people who need help with essential skills as well as for those who are 'job ready'. The Pathway also includes working closely with employers so that we are able to match people's skills and interests to opportunities which are available locally. We helped over 680 people gain qualifications and 635 to find work. We also provided work placements, training programmes and on the job

Helping to Stay Well@Work *A was absent from work in a small business following a work related injury. To support their recovery, they were asked to attend our Staying Well@Work Service by their employer.*

A's condition was assessed by Staying Well@Work physiotherapist when they also discussed what would help them return to work. A plan to treat the problems A was experiencing was put in place, which also included steps they could take themselves that would help. During the assessment, it became clear that A was also dealing with a close family bereavement which was affecting their self-confidence. To support A through this time, they agreed to attend counselling sessions.

Following an initial course of physiotherapy and counselling sessions, A indicated that they were better able to cope better both physically and mentally. A was able to start a phased return to work whilst still receiving physiotherapy treatment with adjustments in work to take account of the condition.

learning in various Council services to over 50 young people, including apprenticeships, graduate programme, traineeships for care leavers and internships for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The work in our Economy priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Our new Corporate Plan '[Making a Difference](#)' , 'agreed in March 2020, aims to "Support the Prosperity of RCT by creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper". How we will do this in 2020/21 is set out in section 12 and in our 2020/21 [PROSPERITY Plan](#).

PEOPLE - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf

In 2016 we put in place the **PEOPLE** priority as we believed that the best way to support people to live long and healthy lives was to support them to make informed choices, keep control of how they live their lives and support and contribute to their communities. Residents told us this was and is important to them.

From the latest available data, the population of RCT is 241,264 (2019 MYE), which has increased from 231,937 in 2001. As people are living longer, the proportion of older people in RCT is also growing. We want our residents of all ages to stay as well as they can for as long as they can but, inevitably, age related conditions in more older people will mean an increase in the need for health and social care.

We know that in RCT we have high numbers of vulnerable residents of all ages as well as deprived communities. We want to make sure people of all ages have the best chance of benefitting from the opportunities available to them including taking control of the services and facilities they value. We also want to focus on those in most need and to make sure that they have the right support at the right time.

We also know that we have to plan to meet higher expectations from our residents with less funding so we have to do things differently.

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority are

- **Personalising and integrating health and social care services, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes**
- **Giving our children and young people a great start in life**
- **Redesigning local services so that they are joined up and efficient**

Latest available data tells us

Population - Latest estimate 241,264, an increase of 0.5% on 2018 [Source: InfoBase Cymru](#)

0-15 years 19%	16-64 62%	65+ 19%
----------------	-----------	---------

(figures rounded for illustrative purposes)

Community & Equality

- 24% of children in RCT are living in poverty. However, when the cost of housing is deducted from household income, this figure increases to 32%. [Source: End Child Poverty.](#)
- As at 31 March 2020, there were
 - 717 children in the care of the Council
 - 597 children on the Child Protection Register at significant risk of harm.

Physical Health

- Average life expectancy at birth in RCT was 77.53 for men and 81.1 for women (2016-2018).
- Average healthy life expectancy at birth in RCT is 56.5 for men and 60.2 for women (2016-18).
- On average, people living in less deprived areas in RCT live longer than those from more deprived areas. Men can expect to live 6.7 years longer, and women 4.3 years. However, this difference described as the 'inequality gap' is not as big as in some other parts of Wales.
- 45% of adults in RCT reported at least one long-standing health condition in the last year.
- RCT residents reporting their health to be
 - "bad or very bad" is the second highest in Wales
 - "good or very good" is the third lowest in Wales.
- 26% of RCT residents participated in sporting activities 3 or more times per week.
- 12% of adults in RCT showed less than 2 healthy lifestyle behaviours.
- Men, middle-aged adults, and those in the most deprived areas were most likely to show less than two of the healthy behaviours.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- 13% of people in RCT are lonely. Source: [Source: StatsWales](#)
- RCT 'scores' in the [Thriving Places](#) Wales index measuring aspects of well-being, i.e.
 - 4.47 for Social Isolation, the same as in 2018.
 - 3.58 for Mental and Physical Health, slightly higher than 3.36 in 2018.*10 is the best possible and 0 being the worst.*
- Cwm Taf has the second highest rate of alcohol specific death in Wales 2016-18. [Source Public Health Wales.](#)

Culture

- 48% of RCT residents agreed that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect. *WFG indicator.*
- 67% of RCT residents attended arts, culture or heritage events at least 3 times in the last year Source: [Source: National Survey for Wales.](#)

In 2019, we said we would continue our work to promote independence and positive lives for everyone – Overall, we continued to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships including the [Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board](#) and the [Public Services Board](#). Progress in some of our key measures was slower than we anticipated, for a number of reasons, some of which were beyond our control. For example, we still have too many children at risk of significant harm or in the care of the Council, we need to do more to listen to and hear from children about how we deliver our services to them, we need to do more to support young people leaving care to access education, training or employment and we still need to encourage more people to use our leisure centres and libraries to support their health and wellbeing. However, we continue to focus on helping to keep our residents of all ages and backgrounds safe and well. This focus was tested as never before towards the end of the 2019 reporting year, when we needed to prioritise our work because of the significant and unprecedented local impact of floods arising from Storms Ciara and Dennis, and also by the introduction of the lockdown conditions arising from the onset of Coronavirus, Covid-19. At this time, we rescheduled many of our plans and focused on working with partners to provide direct and immediate support to people and communities in most need. Our work won't be fully reflected in the progress we have described in 2019, but its impact will be more significant in our work in 2020/21.

Alongside our work in delivering our **PEOPLE** priority, we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, looking at what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our ongoing work involves meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and we are continuing to learn and understand more about how we embed the requirements of these Acts to continue to help us shape our 2020/21 plans.

Our work within the **PEOPLE** priority is overseen by [Cabinet](#), relevant [Scrutiny Committees](#) and, where appropriate, the Regional Partnership Board and Public Services Board. In the last year, three areas of work in this priority have been subject to external review or inspection by [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) (CIW):

- 'Inspection of Children's Services, focusing on support for Disabled Children' in December 2019
- 'Focused activity with regard to support for Carers' in March 2020
- 'Focused activity with regard to support for Care Leavers' in March 2020

The findings from this work, have been made publicly available in the Annual Review letter issued to the Council by CIW in [August 2020](#). Officers are considering the findings, where the Council is doing well and also where we need to improve. The responses will be considered by Councillors in the coming months.

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2019/20 in our [PEOPLE Performance Evaluation](#).

We said we would personalise and integrate Health and Social Care services, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes

Measures we set out last year

- there were fewer people admitted to residential or nursing care. *This is better than last year with 385 people admitted to residential or nursing care compared to 420 in 2018/19.*
- more adults who completed a period of reablement needed less support 6 months later. *This is better than last year at 86.67% compared to 85.43% in 2018/19.*
- Fewer people per 1,000 population returned home from hospital more quickly. *This is worse than last year at 4.52 compared to 3.43 in 2018/19. This is because the demand for home care has increased as we support more people to live at home rather than in residential care.*
- more people used a direct payment to manage their own care arrangements, choosing who provides care and when. *This is better than last year at 16.8% compared to 16.1% in 2018/19.*
- there were fewer visits to our sports and leisure facilities for exercise. *This is worse than last year at 7,948 visits per 1,000 population compared to 8,302 in 2018/19. This is due to the impact of Storm Dennis and the reduction in visitors and latterly the closure of leisure facilities because of the Covid-19 global pandemic.*

Among other things we have

- built on the success of our [Stay Well@home](#) service with phase 2, introduced in January 2020, bringing additional care to our vulnerable residents. More recently, both the demand for the service and capacity to deliver was affected by the impact of Covid-19, and as a result was temporarily suspended. The service will be resumed in 2020/21
- introduced a new 24-hour rapid response service for people using an RCT pendant with the help of Welsh Government funding. Mobile Responders are able to help in situations such as falls where people are not injured but, for example, are unable to get back up, have personal care emergencies or need welfare checks. Users of the service can be helped more quickly and safely without an emergency call for an ambulance and they also avoid going to hospital unnecessarily. The service provides peace of mind for its users and their family and friends.
- continued to build Extra Care facilities with our partners Linc Cymru. Our second facility, [Maesyffynon Extra Care opened in Aberaman](#) with the first resident [moving in on 5 May](#). Construction is well under way at Cwrt yr Orsaf Extra Care, the former Magistrates Court in Pontypridd, despite the recent challenges created by Covid-19. However,

Helping people to get the help they need to stay independent

Mrs A, a 99-year-old lady was suffering from bladder problems which meant that she needed to visit the toilet more than usual, including through the night. Because of her condition and her lack of sleep, Mrs A was feeling tired and weak and on one occasion fell during the night. Mrs A was helped by our Lifeline service and her son who got her back to bed. Her GP prescribed medication to help her medical problem and also referred her to the Single Point of Access (SPA) team for help, as until Mrs A was completely well, she was at risk of greater injury if she fell again. Through our Intermediate Care and Rehabilitation service, we were able to provide care for Mrs A. in one of our residential care homes for a week until she recovered from her bladder problems. After this, she was able to return to her home with help to get her fully back on her feet.

progress on the three facilities in Treorchy, Mountain Ash and Porth has been slowed by the impact of the pandemic.

- continued to develop Supported Housing Schemes to help people with learning disabilities to live more independently within their communities. Penllew Court, Aberdare, opened in January 2020 and work is underway for a new development in Treorchy which is on target for completion in Autumn 2020.
- continued to work with partners across Cwm Taf Morgannwg to find non-medical ways to help to keep our residents happier and healthier. This is called Social Prescribing and might include activities such as volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports. Although progress was slowed by the pandemic, it will restart as soon as it is safe to do so. What we have learnt from helping to support shielded and vulnerable people in our communities and the strong community networks in place will help us in this work.
- continued to invest in our Leisure facilities including at the new Llys Cadwyn development in Pontypridd, outdoor pitches and the George V athletics track in Tonypany to encourage residents to participate in exercise, contributing to their improved health and well-being. We have also been working with partner organisations to deliver activities aimed at specific groups, e.g. 'Super-Agers', pregnant women and new mums in our ['Made for Mams'](#) programme. More recently, some leisure facilities have been able to reopen following a complete closure arising from the impact of Covid-19.

We said that Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people will receive a great start in life

Measures we set out last year

- more children were in the care of the Council. *717 children compared with 674 in 2018/19. This is worse than we had anticipated because more babies required our care. We will focus on more vulnerable women receiving support during their pregnancies.*
- more children needed the involvement of statutory services. *41.62% compared to 30.6% in 2018/19. This is worse, however the majority of children (69%) either did not need on-going care and support or they and their families were signposted to the Resilient Families Service*

Among other things we have

- strengthened the support we provide to Foster Carers e.g. by identifying 'Pioneer' Foster Carers who are able to offer peer support and advice and/or training for new Foster carers. We have also provided opportunities for Foster Carers to receive more intensive training which involves them working alongside schools and young people to gain more experience and a greater understanding of caring and working to improve outcomes for the children in their care. We have also launched [Fostering Cwm Taf](#), a regional fostering recruitment service, to improve recruitment of foster carers and increase the number of local placements that we have in Cwm Taf.
- continued to improve the availability of information, advice and assistance so families can find the help they need quickly, e.g. by
 - working more closely with community groups so that they can use their local knowledge to reach the families who can most benefit from our help,
 - putting in place drop in services in communities and
 - through digital/media platforms e.g. for our [Resilient Families Service](#) and [Family Information Service](#) and [wicid.tv](#). More recently these developments have supported a comprehensive online information advice and assistance offer which has proved instrumental in enabling the service to continue to provide essential support to children and young people during the Covid-19 global pandemic.
- following discussions with service users and staff and working with housing partners we have put in place a new Temporary Accommodation service. The service aims to provide appropriate housing options and support for vulnerable groups, prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation. However, more recently, there has been an increase in homelessness and the number of people eligible for temporary accommodation as a result of both Storm Dennis and the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020/21 we will be working to implement a Homelessness Recovery Plan which will use Welsh Government funding to address the increased demand we have seen during this time of great uncertainty.

Helping vulnerable children find their voice

G was placed with foster carers following allegations she made against her father. At that time G also accepted our offer of active 'advocacy' support. This means that an independent person, not employed by the Council, helped her to understand what the Council was doing to care for her, and why. Having this independent person helping her encouraged G to talk more freely, understand that her opinion mattered when decisions were made about her care and so be confident about how she felt and saying what she wanted for her care.

We said we would redesign Local Services for our residents so that they are integrated and efficient

Measures we set out last year

- the majority of clients we worked with across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg areas reduced, abstained or sustained their substance misuse from the start of their programme to their most recent review. 87.45% (*Cwm Taf Morgannwg APB*)
- our review of arrangements for people experiencing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence has been widened to include Bridgend as part of the change to the Health Board area, Cwm Taf Morgannwg. We are continuing this work in 2020/21.

- more families indicated that they felt better able to resolve or cope better with the challenges they were facing following early support. *This is better than last year with 1,004 families compared to 761 in 2018/19*
- 95.1% of families increased their resilience following completed intervention with the Resilient Families Service (95.4% in 2018/19) – *Whilst this % is slightly lower than last year, the number of families supported was nearly 250 higher than last year.*

Among other things we have...

- changed how Early Years support is provided by making it available to families of children up to seven years old through our Resilient Families Service. This means that specialist parenting and early language support is now available to all families in RCT who need it. More recently, we have received approval from Welsh Government to make changes to health visiting, developing the RCT 'Family Health Visiting Programme' so more support is available to all families no matter where in RCT they live and agreement to trial changes to our childcare offer so that support is available to all families that need it regardless of where they live in the County Borough.
- introduced the new Cwm Taf Substance Misuse Service '[Barod](#)' covering the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf areas. Barod provides a number of different services for adults and young people who misuse substances and offers support to friends and family of all substance users. The new service makes sure that no matter where a person lives in the Cwm Taf area they receive the same help and support to avoid problems getting worse.
- identified where in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil services are in place for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. We had planned to use this information to put in place services that are to the same standard across the two areas. We haven't made as much progress as we planned and our work has also been affected by the changes in the Local Health Board which now includes Bridgend. We are continuing our work to change the way we support the survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence and this will also include people in the Bridgend area.
- worked more closely with South Wales Police to change the way vulnerable people are supported so that they have the chance to make better life choices and break generational cycles of crime and adversity that affect the children in their households. We now have a Police Community Support Officer based within the Resilient Families Service who is able to add more to the support provided to families e.g. staying safe online, grooming, anti-social behaviour and consequences of crime.

Every day, many of our families are coping with many different challenges

One of our families, already coping with mental health issues and divorce, also had to deal with one of their children being groomed online which lead to them being at risk of harm. To help the family cope together, they received help to rebuild family relationships and trust, recognise grooming and stay safe in the community and online and to understand about healthy relationships. You can see more about how the family was supported by the council and its partners to be better able to cope with their challenges by reading about the [EAT Programme](#).

The work in our People priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Our new Corporate Plan, [‘Making a Difference’](#) agreed in March 2020, aims to “Ensure that People are independent, healthy and successful”. How we will do this in 2020/21 is set out in section 10 and in our [2020/21 PEOPLE Plan](#)

PLACE - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

In 2016, we put in place the **PLACE** priority as we believed that despite public sector austerity, the Council must look positively to the future through the growth and regeneration of the County Borough's infrastructure. Millions of pounds were and will continue to be invested in schools, new housing, our principal towns and the transport networks that will benefit the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of residents and communities, helping more residents and families to become more independent. Residents told us this is important to them and there is much to enjoy and celebrate about the County Borough.

We wanted to help residents and visitors to RCT to get on with their lives by maintaining the environment for a thriving County Borough where they can get around efficiently and safely whether they are commuting to work or enjoying RCT's rich and varied landscape to stay active and healthy.

We know that our residents have pride in their communities and we believe that by giving choice and power to local people you get better results and achieve better value. We wanted to help communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services such as libraries and other cultural and community facilities.

However, we also knew it would be wrong to spend more than we can afford, and/or to pass on financial problems to future generations. This meant we had to make difficult decisions, manage our budgets and focus on our priorities.

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority were

- **Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe**
- **Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces continue to be valued by residents**
- **Involved and resilient communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf**
- **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**

Latest available data tells us

Housing

- There are 104,865 households in RCT. This is an increase of 0.8% on 2017 and 6.5% over the last 10 years. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- 172 empty properties were brought back into use in 2019/20. This was 19% less than the previous year.

Transport

- 1,436 million vehicle miles were travelled throughout RCT in 2019, the second highest total in Wales and an increase of 3% on 2015. [Source: Gov.uk](#). The majority (82%) were travelled by car. [Source: Gov.uk](#).
- Approximately 33% of RCT residents walked for over 10 minutes every day, the second highest percentage in Wales. 4% of residents cycled more than once a month, the third lowest in Wales. [Source: Gov.uk](#).
- There were 665 battery electric, plug-in hybrid electric, or range-extended electric vehicles registered in RCT, currently the third highest number among Welsh regions. [Source: Dept of Transport](#)

Energy & Environment

- The latest estimates show that in 2018, 1,064.8 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas was emitted across RCT. This equates to 4.4 tonnes of CO₂ per resident or 2.5 kilotonnes per km². [Source: Gov.uk](#)
- The Council generated 570,535 Mw/h of electricity through low-carbon or renewable technologies, [Source: StatsWales](#) approximately enough to power 65 homes for 1 year. [Source: OFGEM](#)
- 9,270 properties in RCT were considered to be at 'high-risk' of surface or river flooding, with a further 4,330 properties in the 'medium-risk' category. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- RCT is one of four¹ defined flood risk areas in Wales. 11.3% of the population of RCT is at risk from surface water flooding due to excess rainwater issues.
- There are 11 Green Flag Awards for parks and open spaces in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Waste & Hygiene

- 77 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for dog fouling.
- 2,945 recorded incidents of fly-tipping throughout RCT, continued to fall since 2016/17.
- RCT waste that cannot be recycled or reused equates to 0.2kg per RCT resident.
- We recycled 88,288 tonnes of waste and sent 6,239 tonnes of waste to landfill in 2019/20.

In 2019 we said we would continue our work to 'Create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'. Overall, we continued to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships, exceeding expectations in some areas e.g. Recycling. However, towards the end of the 2019 reporting year, our progress was affected by the significant and unprecedented local impact of floods arising from Storms Ciara and Dennis and also by the introduction of the lockdown conditions arising from the onset of the Coronavirus, Covid-19. At this time, we rescheduled many

¹ As defined by the Natural Resources Wales Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment in December 2018

of our plans and focused on supporting communities. This work will not be fully reflected in our progress in 2019 but its impact will be more significant in our work in 2020/21.

Alongside our work to deliver our PLACE priority, we continued to build on our experience of doing things differently, looking at what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region. This has been tested and challenged as never before during 2020.

Our work within the PLACE priority is overseen by [Cabinet](#), relevant [Scrutiny Committees](#) and, where appropriate the [Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet](#) and the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#).

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2019/20 in our [PLACE Performance Evaluation](#).

We said we would help to support involved and resilient communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Measures we set out last year

- 74% of households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless. This is better than last year 71%
- We are unable to provide information on '*resident's satisfaction with RCT as a place to live*' as the survey could not take place this year.

Among other things we have:

- worked with communities, private, public and third sector partners in our new Community Hubs in [Canolfan Pennar](#), Mountain Ash and [Ferndale Hwb](#) in Rhondda Fach. Progress in Porth Plaza, has been slowed by the impact of Covid-19. More recently the Council has adapted its use of all its Community Hubs to provide focal point to that delivered significant help to our residents most in need during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- worked with [Shelter Cymru](#) and [Llamau](#) to provide people facing homelessness with suitable accommodation and support and advice to help them to maintain tenancies over the long term. We have also worked with private landlords to check that housing in RCT meets the required standards. This has included bringing existing empty properties back into use wherever it is possible. How we are supporting homeless people is described in more detail in the [ECONOMY evaluation](#).
- continued to create and develop the spaces and opportunities for people to get involved with arts. Access to the Arts, libraries and learning has been shown to have positive effects on the well-being of people and communities. More recently our work has been significantly affected by the impact of Covid-19, which forced the closure of our theatres, community events etc. However, we are increasing our digital offer of shows, delivering outreach programmes and planning for a phased and safe opening of theatres in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- opened an education centre in Bryn Pica, to show people of all ages the importance of reducing, re-using and recycling waste. This sits alongside the proposed [Eco Park](#) that will provide light industrial units specifically for organisations that specialise in 'closed loop recycling', meaning that all materials can be recycled back into itself using the renewable heat and power generated at the site. Subject to funding, once in place, the first phase of Bryn Pica

Eco Park will secure available technology to process three material groups i.e. rigid plastics, absorbent hygiene products (AHPs) including nappies and waste paint.

We are also working as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board to deliver the changes it has set out in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan, in particular the [Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives](#) of Thriving Communities, to put in place Community Hubs and the wider support to residents and communities identified in our [PEOPLE plan](#).

We said that Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe

Measures we set out last year

- We have been unable to collect the required survey information to tell us whether '*people feel safe in our town centres*' as the survey could not take place this year.
- 97% of our most vulnerable or repeat victims of anti-social behaviour feel safer following our involvement (79.75% in 2018/19)

Among other things we have...

- learned lessons from the work of our Community Alcohol Partnership (CAPs) in Pontypridd that we can use to further improve in Pontypridd and also apply to new CAPs in future e.g.
 - keep involving young people and do even more to encourage them to get involved.
 - make sure we use different approaches to talk with pupils in different schools.
 - make sure our training is clear about who is responsible for what so that everyone knows what is expected of them.
 - stress the importance of healthy behaviours to young people
 - make sure that parents have information about underage drinking that they can use to positively influence their children's decisions about alcohol consumption
 - retailers and licensees are key to making sure that young people are not able to buy alcohol
 - keep checking that we keep focussed on what matters and that with our partners we are achieving what we set out to achieve.
- continued to raise aware of the harms associated with knife use and knife crime including working with schools to make sure that the messages to all our schools are clear and consistent. We have also worked with 'Crimestoppers' to put in place our Fearless campaign including making a [short film](#) to raise awareness of the dangers surrounding street crime, drugs and violence and shows how young people can report crime anonymously

- focused on getting earlier involvement with young people so that they can be directed away from criminality and ASB. By working more closely with our partners, young people have been provided with more appropriate and timely support to help them to understand the consequences of ASB.
- continued to protect vulnerable people in our communities from rogue traders and doorstep crime by assisting in the provision of call blocking unit 'Truecall' to stop nuisance calls. Also by [promoting](#) the [National 'Friends Against Scams'](#) the Council has signed up 1,441 Friends Against Scams, 15 SCAMChampions and we also have 51 ScamMarshalls, the most in Wales. More recently we have been raising awareness of [Covid-19 scams](#), where residents and organisations are targeted with emails, texts, telephone calls and WhatsApp messages offering advice and treatment for the Coronavirus.

True to its word....

Truecall users told us

"I would recommend it! It has been fantastic!"

"It is very comforting – I don't have any more night calls' 'It's marvellous!"

"I would much rather it be there, it's brilliant!"

"I want to keep it; it has changed my life".

We said that 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

Measures we set out last year

- Information campaigns and support to communities together with community action has allowed us to
 - recycle more of our waste, at 64.71%, this is better than last year (61.01%) and only 4.59% of our waste went to land fill
 - issue fewer Fixed Penalty Notices for Dog Control offences, at 129 this is fewer than last year (170)
- Since 2014/15, we have seen a marked improvement in our roads, when 9.3% of our 'A', 'B' and 'C' roads were reported as being in poor condition, this reduced to 4.8% in 19/20. Last year there were improvements in the condition of A and B roads by 0.2% and 0.3% respectively, and we are continuing our work through our road investment programme.

RCT Future Generations leading the way

Our school pupils always lead the way in their schools, recycling Christmas and Easter wrapping and batteries among other things. Nearly all RCT schools are registered with [Eco Schools](#) with over 60 achieving awards from the programme. The programme [empowers the pupils](#) to lead environmental change and work together with each other and communities to develop knowledge and environmental awareness.

Our young people also get creative, like the talented local rapper Joshua Packham working with our SONIG project and Social Soundwaves to produce the rap '[Plastic Earth](#)' which highlights the destructive issue of plastic pollution. Officially launched in Recycling Week in Treorchy Comprehensive School in September 2019, 'Plastic Earth' was shown in the 'Love Where You Live' awards, is played during visits at the education centre in Bryn Pica and will be used in future campaigns and social media to help raise awareness.

Among other things we have

- continued to improve the condition of our existing roads and highways e.g. resurfacing 96 of our roads and 2,030 potholes. We also repaired bridges and river walls, replaced footways and put in place new road safety measures.
- progressed major new schemes including Cynon Gateway North - A4059 Aberdare Bypass Extension, Mountain Ash Cross Valley link, Llanharan Bypass. Also put in place new traffic arrangements in Porth, Bridge Street Pontypridd and road safety repairs at [A4119 Ynysmaerdy Roundabout](#).
- progressed transport schemes that will join with other schemes that will encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport as well as Community and Active Travel routes providing safer walking options for our residents and associated environmental and health benefits.
- invested £550,000 for Flood Drainage and Flood Risk Management which included monitoring of culverts to help prevent floods in our communities. Our work included
 - [Culvert Installations at A4061 Rhigos Road, Hirwaun](#)
 - [Drainage improvement schemes in Aberdare](#) and off [Llanwonno Road](#) Mountain Ash
 - [Culvert Repairs at Treforest](#)
 - [Culvert Repairs at Pentre](#)
 - Culvert repair schemes in [Rhydyfelin](#) and [A 4058 Cymmer Road](#)
 - Repair works to [Gwrangon Culvert](#) beneath Heol Pendarren
 - Replacement [Culvert at Hirwaun](#)

However, February 2020 brought with it, severe weather conditions with heavy rain and strong winds with significant impact for people and communities in RCT. Storms Dennis and Ciara brought devastation across RCT with some areas seeing a months' worth of rainfall in 24 hours, and rivers reaching their highest recorded levels. [Storm Jorge](#) was the third storm to hit on 28 February. The Council and its partners worked together and with communities, to provide help including food, clothing, home items, financial assistance and emergency temporary accommodation. How the Council responded to support the residents, their families and RCT businesses throughout this and the Covid-19 outbreak is set out in [Major Incident Recovery Board Meetings](#) and a later report to [Cabinet](#). More detail can also be found in the [PLACE evaluation](#). Managing flood risk is a high and continuing priority for the Council in 2020/21.

- involved schools and residents in projects to encourage more recycling including a community project in Rhydyfelin, our long standing '[Love Where you Live](#)' awards and our new hidden green tickets that can win residents a 'Bagsy for Life'. Our work with schools will start again as soon as it is safe to do so.
- continued our campaigns to prevent littering and dog fouling and worked with residents and communities to help them tackle local issues. We have issued fewer Fixed Penalty Notices which suggests greater public awareness of enviocrimes as well as the consequences. We have 'zero tolerance' of flytipping and have taken legal action to prosecute offenders. In the last year we took 26 cases to Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates Court, resulting in fines and also jail sentences.
- completed our initial review of the infrastructure needed for low carbon vehicles and how the Council will consider low carbon vehicles in its own fleet. The recommendations were considered by Councillors at meetings on [3 September](#) and [24 September](#) 2019 and the work was developed for consideration by the newly formed Climate Change [Cabinet](#)

[Steering Group](#) on 28 January 2020. More recently our progress has been slowed by the impact of both floods and Covid-19 but will be continued during 2020/21.

We said that Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces would continue to be valued by residents

Measures we set out last year

- more of our parks, 11, were awarded a [Green Flag or Green Flag Community award](#), this includes four new community awards for 2019/20. This international award recognises the high standards of our parks and green and outdoors spaces.
- 80% of our residents were satisfied with our parks and open spaces – *This is worse than last year 80.7%. We are continuing our investment in parks and open spaces to make them more attractive and accessible to all our residents.*
- Air quality has improved in three out of four of our monitored areas following WG imposed speed restrictions on the A470. The area not showing improvement is marginally above, and may not see the same rate of change as it is an area with a slip road onto the A470, that sees a heavy traffic flow.

Following more successful bids for funding, we are continuing to develop and improve our parks and open spaces and also helping to support volunteering activities, with plans in place for 2020. Among other things we are

- continuing to take steps to make RCT more 'Green' including further investment in our parks and green spaces, tree planting and reducing air pollution. Information about our work will be more easily available through the work of our Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. More recently, some of our progress has been affected by the impact of Covid-19 but work has been starting again as lock down conditions ease.
- considering ways we can further improve air quality across RCT e.g. better traffic management including moving bus stops so they don't cause obstructions and improving traffic light signals, making it easier to use trains including the improvements to the Park and Ride in Abercynon as well as more and better trains.
- considering the effect of the speed reduction on the A470 on the air quality in the surrounding areas. Early signs are that air quality has improved in the three out of the four areas of Pontypridd being monitored but more information is needed on this work. Welsh Government imposed speed restrictions will remain in force on the A470 for the foreseeable future.
- continuing to invest in outdoor play facilities that are accessible to all. More recently some of our work has been affected by both the floods earlier this year and the closure of play areas arising from lockdown, but this remains a key priority in 2020/21.
- progressing plans to link Parks across the Valleys region as part of the Welsh Government's '[Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateways](#)'. This will connect the Valleys as a region, tell the stories of its rich cultural and industrial heritage, and encourage people to be more active and explore the Valleys landscapes. In Dare Valley we are creating family accessible bike paths and improving the play area as well as improving accommodation and campsite. Progress in Pontypridd has been affected by flooding earlier this year, this remains a key priority in our [Prosperity Plan for 2020/21](#).

The Place priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Our new Corporate Plan, [‘Making a Difference’](#) agreed in March 2020, aims to ‘Create Places where people are proud to live and work and play’. How we will do this in 2020/21 is set out in section 7 and in our [2020/21 PLACES Plan](#)

What we achieved in our Corporate Plan between 2016-20

When the Council launched its first Corporate Plan '[The Way Ahead](#)' in 2016 to set the direction of the Council's work up to 2020, set ambitious targets for improvement and focus on three areas of work that would improve the lives of the people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Since the Plan was launched, the decisions that the Council has made, the resources that have been put in place, the risks that have been managed and the training and development opportunities that have been provided to staff have all been directed to making a difference to the lives of the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. We have seen investment of over £418M across 21st Century Schools, highways, transportation and other infrastructure, parks, play areas, leisure centres and outdoor sports facilities and our community assets.

The sections above set out what we have achieved the last year. The information below shows our achievements over the life of the plan, since 2016

In 2016 in our ECONOMY priority we said

We wanted to regenerate RCT, build new homes and create new jobs and we have seen

- the ratification of the £1.2billion City Deal which includes the implementation of the South Wales Metro and associated local transport schemes.
- a new building at the heart of the regeneration of Pontypridd, [Llys Cadwyn](#), following the demolition of the former Taff Vale precinct, bringing a community hub with a modern library and leisure facilities as well as additional jobs.
- over 2,800 new jobs coming to the County Borough. These will include 1,500 jobs to the new Headquarters of Department for Work and Pensions in Treforest and 500 to their depot in Taffs Well, 500 to Llys Cadwyn for Transport for Wales, 60 at Zip World Hirwaun and 300 in the Health Education and Improvement Wales Offices in Nantgarw.
- more business start-ups, and although there have also been more business closures, overall there has been an increase in the number of registered businesses/enterprises
- 2,106 additional housing units provided and 685 affordable homes delivered, helping to meet the housing needs of residents across RCT
- the development of two designated destination gateways at Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park which will see a range of improved facilities, although flooding had a significant impact on Ynysangharad park and the Lido. Work is underway to repair the flood damage and it is hoped the Lido will [reopen for Easter 2021](#).
- Confirmation of the Eisteddfod coming to RCT, although the event has been delayed until 2023 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic

We wanted our schools to be among the best in the country and we are seeing pupils enjoying new or refurbished schools in Y Pant, Treorchy, Porth, Tonyrefail, Cymmer, Ferndale and Garth Olwg with more improvements on the way at Hirwaun and a new learning hub under development at Ffynnon Taf. We have also continued to invest in our existing school buildings to improve facilities for pupils as well as adding more sustainable technologies so our buildings have less impact on the environment.

We have worked closely with schools to not only improve educational standards but also support pupils' wellbeing and mental health. We continue to work hard to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on young people's education.

We wanted to put in place a broad range of skills and employment programmes for all ages and we have supported over 3,500 people of all ages to gain qualifications and find employment through our employment pathway, which provides support for people at every stage, from improving essential skills to gaining sector specific qualifications and work experience for jobs that are available locally. We have also provided targeted support to help people with specific needs to find or stay in work, such as those with disabilities or learning difficulties and young people leaving care, and employed over 170 apprentices and graduates across our council services, providing a range of opportunities for young people to develop their careers and developing the talent of tomorrow.

In 2016 in our PEOPLE priority we said

We wanted to provide our residents with the care they need to live in their own homes for longer and we are seeing more people helped to live independently, however despite the new Stay Well@home service, there are fewer older people getting back to their homes from hospital more quickly. This is because the demand for home care has increased as we support more people to live at home rather than in residential care. Where care providers in the independent sector do not have enough staff to provide home care, our Support @Home Service provides short-term support so that people can get back home. We have seen happy residents living in a new extra care facility in Ty Heulog, Pontyclun, and a second new facility, Maesyffynnon, in Aberaman was completed in May 2020. We have started work on a third Extra Care facility, Cwrt yr Orsaf, in Pontypridd and proposals are also being developed for three further facilities in Treorchy, Mountain Ash and Porth. There are more adults choosing their own care providers and more people better able to remain independent following a package of care.

We wanted to make services more joined up and efficient and by working closely with others we improved and extended our Early Years services for families so that more families in RCT can access support, regardless of where they live, so they are less affected by poverty. We also improved our Substance Misuse services across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil to make it easier for people to access the help they need.

We wanted to give RCT's children and young people a great start in life so we put in place a [Resilient Families Service](#) and are seeing that families get the help they need at the right time. We provided more training opportunities for our foster carers to improve their knowledge and skills and they are better able to support the children that they care for. Despite positive progress, in 2019/20 we have seen more children subject to statutory intervention, more children are registered on the Child Protection Register (CPR) and more children taken into the care of the Council.

In 2016 in our PLACE priority we said

We wanted RCT to be among the safest places in Wales, with communities helping each other and residents feeling safe so we changed the way we deal with victims of Domestic Violence and also put in place technology to help protect older and vulnerable adults from unwanted phone calls and cold callers. We visited schools to talk to pupils about hate crime and how to report it, helped more people to enjoy socialising in town centres by putting in place Public Spaces Protection Orders in Aberdare and Pontypridd to help control anti-social behaviour because of the misuse of alcohol. We have also seen more residents who have been victims of anti-social behaviour feel safer after our involvement.

We wanted RCT's parks and green spaces to continue to be valued by residents, we have improved sports facilities by putting in 18 3G and artificial pitches across RCT, progressed grants to improve our parks which includes funding to restore the bandstand and sunken garden at Ynyshangharad War Memorial Park, supported local communities to manage and open paddling pools throughout the summer months and continued our playground investment programme with over 120 play areas improved since 2015. We want our residents and visitors to enjoy the many parks and green spaces that RCT has to offer and by using them, improve their health and wellbeing.

We wanted RCT's communities to be involved and resilient and we have done this by involving them more in the decisions that the Council makes to improve the lives of residents, e.g. the redesign of our Library services to ensure that they meet the needs of all residents. We have developed Community Hubs within the heart of communities to provide the help and support that our residents need and also the opportunity to socialise. We have also supported those residents in need of housing to prevent homelessness and provide longer term housing solutions. Our work to help families to be better able to cope is described in the Resilient Families Service, above.

We wanted a local environment that is clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill, so we have continued to keep high standards of street cleaning, and after listening to what residents told us, we put in place a [Public Spaces Protection Order](#) so that we could enforce the rules in place to reduce dog fouling, and have also run campaigns to enforce these messages of 'zero' tolerance of those dog owners that do not follow the rules. We have also made improvements to our roads and footpaths and have also replaced streetlights to make them more energy efficient. Looking to the future, we have started major road schemes and progressing others e.g. Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley link that will keep residents, business and visitors moving throughout the County Borough and benefit the local economy. We have also seen more residents recycling more of their waste which helps meet the challenges arising from climate change and meet the Welsh Government recycling targets.

We also know that there is still more work to do where we haven't made as much progress as we had planned e.g.

Economy - the achievement of our more vulnerable pupils is still too far below their classmates. We also need to work with schools in the future to improve school attendance and reduce the number of pupils excluded

People – we are not able to get all people home from hospital quickly when they are well enough

Place – we need to continue to encourage residents to recycle their waste so that we can meet our own challenging recycling target of 80% by 2025 and contribute to reducing the impact of climate change.

It is impossible for our Corporate Plan to show information about all the many different services we deliver to or organise for our residents, communities and businesses, but there is lots of information available about all our services on the [Council's website](#).

Our new Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' sets out the Council's ambitions for 2020-2024 and builds on what we have achieved to date.

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

How are we performing compared to the rest of Wales?

When comparing our performance in 2019/20, we must acknowledge the significant impact of the unprecedented events that occurred during the final three months of the financial year: firstly, Storms Dennis in February 2020, which caused significant damage to many communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf and was by far the most destructive weather event the area has experienced for a generation and secondly, the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Both events impacted on performance at the end of the year, although as a result of work undertaken earlier in the year, in many cases targets were still met and performance still improved when compared to 2018/19.

In 2019/20, there were fewer nationally set measures in place. This means that there are fewer measures with which we can compare with other councils in Wales. Of the 28² national indicators we report, we can compare our performance for 20 with other Councils³, using the most recent national data available. Our performance measured by national indicators show that

- 5 indicators were in the top quartile in Wales
- 13 indicators showed improved performance compared to other councils
- 10 indicators performed better than the Wales Average.
- 10 indicators performed worse than the Wales Average.
- 5 indicators were in the bottom quartile in Wales, although our performance compared to others councils improved in 3 of these indicators
- 9 indicators showed performance declined
- performance in 1 indicator remained unchanged

To see a full summary of how our 2019/20 performance compared to the rest of Wales please view our [PI comparisons](#).

To summarise, comparing our performance against other Welsh Councils we were among the top quartile in Wales for

- % of highways inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness
- % of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless
- % of non-principal (C) roads that are in overall poor condition
- % of all planning applications determined within requested time period
- % of planning appeals dismissed

We were among the bottom quartile in Wales for

- % of pupil attendance in primary schools and secondary schools
- % of principal 'A' roads that are in overall poor condition
- % of B roads that are in overall poor condition

² PAM033 & PAM034 have been withdrawn nationally by Welsh Government.

³ We have used the most recent all Wales data from 2018/19 to compare our 2019/20 performance

- Number of visits to local authority sport and leisure centres per 1,000⁴

Explanations for this performance and what we are doing to improve, are included within this report and in the detailed performance evaluations.

There will be no national comparative data available for 2019/20, as there was no national data collected as scheduled in May 2020 as a result of the pandemic. It is also unclear what, if any, data will be collected nationally in respect of the reporting year 2020/21. If you would like to see information about Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Councils across Wales, in an easy to read format, you can find it in [My Local Council](#).

Comparing our performance with other councils can raise more questions than answers. This is positive as it can help us to better understand what we do, learn from better practice as well as provide us with an indication on how well we are performing. If we can see that our performance is not improving over time and remains below the Wales Average without good reason, we can then focus on what we need to do to improve.

We have also compared our performance against the targets we set ourselves for 2019/20 and found

- 17 indicators met or exceeded target and 3 indicators were within 5% of hitting the target
- 5 indicators missed the target, and data was worse than 2018/19. This includes two indicators, *visits to leisure centres* and *kilograms of non-recycled waste per person*, where performance was affected by the flooding and Covid-19 at the end of the reporting year. For two of the remaining indicators for *getting older people back to their homes from hospital more quickly* and *children in our care that moved placements 3 or more times over a 12-month period*, performance remains above the 2018/19 Welsh average. For the remaining indicator, *% of child assessments completed on time*, we are reviewing current arrangements to see how we can strengthen processes and improve performance.

Performance indicators are not the only measure of how well services are performing, nor do they tell the whole story, but they can help. We also look at residents' views and survey responses, and the comments, compliments and complaints we receive through social media and our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Councillors are able to check this information in reports to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#). These reports also set out what has been done to improve services following feedback in previous reports.

We also [report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) so that Councillors can see the responses received through the [Council's Corporate Feedback Scheme](#). This also includes developments and improvements to the scheme in the previous 6 months. As part of our arrangement we also provide quarterly reports to [the Public Services Ombudsman \(PSOW\)](#). These reports provide information on the number of comments, compliments and complaints we have received and the outcomes of these. Should a customer disagree with the outcome of a complaint once it has been investigated by the Council, they can refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman to request an independent investigation.

⁴ PAM017 has been affected by a reduction in the overall leisure centre usage impacted by Storm Dennis and COVID-19 with no usage from 20th March 2020.

It is important that as a Council we can evidence that we learn from our residents' feedback and from other Local Authorities where they have received recommendations for improvements from the PSOW. We have been working with the PSOW to help us compare the quality of our services, processes and policies with other Councils across Wales so that we can improve.

We compare our performance with published best practice, we also consider what our auditors and inspectors as well as the PSOW, are telling us. There is always something we can learn to continually improve what we do. All of these steps help us to make sure that the services we provide help to make "[*RCT the best place in Wales to live, work and play.....*](#)". You can see the [reports that our auditors and inspector have issued to the Council](#).

We also need to contribute to the seven national Well-being goals for Wales set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is described in more detail in section 16. In September 2019, the Welsh Government published its third report, [Well-being of Wales 2019](#) which sets out the progress being made across 44 public bodies in Wales, to meet these seven national goals using 46 national measures. Whilst the report is not about Rhondda Cynon Taf, we can use this information to look at the Council's contribution to the 7 national goals.

The [main points in the Wellbeing of Wales national report](#) relating to Wales were

- "Healthy life expectancy continues to stagnate. Our diets continue to be low in fruit and vegetable consumption and too high in salt, sugar and red meat.
- We have seen improvements this year in the levels of main pollutants in the air, renewable energy capacity and carbon emissions.
- The labour market in Wales continues to be strong in historical terms. However, this does not necessarily equate to good quality work for everyone, and the gender pay gap has increased.
- The first survey data in a decade showed that house conditions have improved significantly in Wales, which means there are fewer people living in houses that have hazards and are not energy efficient.
- There continues to be disparities between the most and least deprived, for example in terms of avoidable deaths and educational attainment. And relative poverty rates remain at a similar level this year".

[The Thriving Places Index Wales for Local Conditions 2020](#) measures many different services and different providers categorised by Place and Environment, Mental and Physical health, Education and Learning, Work and Local Economy, People and Community. Across all of the categories, the 2020 data gives RCT an overall rating of 4.43 out of a possible 10. This is a slight increase from 2019. The highest rating category in 2020 was 5.56% for Place and Environment and the lowest was 3.58 for Mental and Physical health.

Making a Difference – the Council’s new Corporate Plan

We have built on the success of the Council’s first Corporate Plan which gave shape and direction to the Council’s work between 2016-2020. The Council’s [new Corporate Plan was agreed on 4 March 2020](#), following wide ranging consultation and discussions with our residents and stakeholders. This plan is key to the way we continue to manage the Council’s work, people and finances. By having this plan in place, we can make sure that the Council

1. is well placed to meet future challenges, particularly in the context of challenging funding levels, changes in law, population and the demand for services
2. has a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years; and
3. can allocate resources and ensure action plans are in place to deliver the agreed priorities.

The new plan ‘*Making a Difference*’ sets out a new Vision for the next four years which is ***“To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous”***. The Plan also sets out three new priorities, which also serve as the Council’s Well-being Objectives. These are

Ensuring **People** *are independent, healthy and successful*
 Creating **Places** *where people are proud to live, work and play*
 Enabling **Prosperity** *creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.*

We will deliver these priorities by

- Living within our means and making the most of the Council’s money in ways that also help us to reach our commitment to reduce Carbon.
- Being an efficient and effective Council so that anyone who contacts the Council gets the best possible service and with more online access, at a time that suits their lifestyle.
- Finding ways to get more income into the Council, taking advantage of RCT’s position as part of regional projects to create jobs and opportunities for RCT residents and businesses.
- Helping residents and community groups to have more control over what they can do to support local people in their communities and working with other public bodies to get the most out of all our work.

However, shortly after the new plan was agreed, the country and the Council, faced unprecedented circumstances as a result of the coronavirus Covid-19. On March 23, the Prime Minister announced lockdown measures to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus between households, changing the way in which everyone in the UK lived their daily lives. The purpose of the lockdown was set out in the four UK governments’ messages of ‘Stay at Home; Protect the NHS; Save Lives’. The overwhelming focus was to delay the virus and ensure the demand for NHS services did not exceed the supply, which could have resulted in many hundred thousands of deaths. This meant our planning and the context in which we worked and our short term focus changed.

Our detailed planning to deliver our priorities has been significantly affected by the restrictions imposed by UK and Welsh Government arising from Covid-19. Much of our planning for the short to medium term is with this in mind. However, the virus has not gone away. Because of this, all possible steps are being taken to minimise risks for residents and staff and to keep everyone safe. The potential for a second wave or localised clusters of the virus remains very real.

All Council services have been affected to a greater or lesser extent by the impact of Covid-19. The effect on many, particularly those front line services that have continued in the most challenging circumstances for the most vulnerable residents has been significant, others forced to provide reduced services and extended time scales etc. and some, where staff were furloughed. Planning for services can only be at a point in time and will take account of the best advice available. Plans will be continually reviewed and revised in the light of experience, advice and the effect of Welsh Government's relaxation of lockdown measures.

In re opening, each service is undertaking a risk assessment and considering a range of issues in respect of social distancing, the requirements of service users and staff, maintaining good personal hygiene, the capacity of buildings to accommodate the service and social distancing and the cleaning regimes required for shared areas.

As services emerge from lockdown at different speeds etc., they share common needs, e.g. ICT for increased agile working arrangements and 'Comms' support to help them to provide clear and timely information to as wide an audience as possible. They will also seek to address common 'barriers' that may affect progress, e.g. the impact of self-isolating/shielding on resources across services, particularly in the front line; the potential for continuing reduced capacity arising from child care/schooling and other care responsibilities; access to ICT/technology and equipment; the effect of changes to training and support particularly on recently appointed staff as well as skills gaps arising from new ways of homeworking and service challenges that have arisen.

However, the Council is also challenging itself and all its services to take and build upon the opportunities created from this experience and continue the benefits e.g. the flexibility of working from home and delivering services digitally or in a different way. We are taking new opportunities and ideas, including learning from others, to ensure services do not routinely return to "normal – as we were". We will be asking our residents' if their expectations of the Council's services have changed as a result of their experiences. Also, we will be building on the relationships with our public sector partners which have become stronger and closer because of the unprecedented, immediate and sustained work which has given real 'life' to the value of collaboration, and working with others.

The Council's longer term ambition remains strong and clear. However, for the reasons above, many of our plans for 2020/21 can only be short term and will take into account the lifting of Government restrictions.

You can see how the Council has and continues to respond to the effects of the virus on people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf in key reports to the Council's Cabinet on [21 May](#), [25 June](#), [28 July 2020](#) and the [Leader's Executive Decision on 14 August](#) in respect of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Covid-19 Prevention & Response Plan.

The circumstances outside of our control, both now and in the coming months, have affected our plans and what we can achieve in 2020/21. However, we are taking all steps to make sure that the Council services recover as quickly and as fully as they are allowed, that we continue to invest in major developments across the County Borough and that we also take full advantage of any lessons we have learned from dealing with the pandemic to better support our residents, communities and local businesses. By doing so, we can come back stronger to deliver our vision for RCT ***“to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous”*** and maintain a sharp focus on our three priorities **PEOPLE, PLACES** and **PROSPERITY**. Some of the work we plan to carry out in 2020/21 is set out below.

PEOPLE our plans for 2020/21 include

Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing to work with partners to make sure that people get out of hospital more quickly and safely and are supported in the community. • continuing to work in partnership with Linc Cymru to complete the new extra care housing schemes at Pontypridd next year. • continuing to work with housing providers to complete modern Supported Housing accommodation for vulnerable people, including in Crown Avenue, Treorchy and Oxford Street, Mountain Ash. • helping care homes to implement procedures to safely accommodate visits from friends and family and also reopening day and respite services in line with Welsh Government guidance. • Reopening regional equipment services to meet increasing demand for community equipment in health and social care. • restarting Stay Well@Home (Phase 2) and launching RCT Lifeline+ Service. • restoring 'At Home' library service.
Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting more people to exercise at home or minimise face to face contact in our Leisure Centres. • introducing some open air classes making good use of our parks and 3G pitches. • promoting "essential exercise" for physical and mental health benefits of our residents and communities.
Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering an effective and efficient Contact, Track and Trace Service for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Morgannwg area, ensuring flexibility of staff to deal with potential resurgence of Covid-19 in our communities
Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making sure vulnerable children have access to Education and emergency childcare. • ensuring robust safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and adults at risk. • making sure we are able to provide statutory services to those children at risk of serious harm, increasing the service that can safely be made available with the goal of achieving a return to a full service when it is safe to do so in line with Welsh Government Guidance. • improving availability of sustainable quality accommodation for children and young people with complex needs where they cannot remain with their own families • continuing to offer 'virtual' activities for young people through our Youth Engagement and Participation service (YEPS) and plan to reintroduce face-to-face provision when it is safe to do so.

You can see more details about our plans for 2020/21 in our [PEOPLE Plan](#).

Looking beyond 2020/21 for PEOPLE...

By 2043, the Population

- of Wales is projected to rise by 3.7% to 3.26 million. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- of RCT is expected to rise by up to 5.3% to 254,145. [Source: StatsWales](#)
- of RCT residents over the age of 65 is expected to climb by 23.2% to 57,429. This means that the % of the population that are over 65 will rise from 19.3% to 22.6%. [Source: StatsWales](#)

Health & Well-being

- Life expectancy from birth in Wales is predicted to rise. [Source: Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#)

	2020	2029
Males	88	89.1
Females	90.6	91.5

- By 2025, 68.7% of adults in Cwm Taf will be overweight or obese. [Source: Public Health Wales Observatory Profile.](#)
- By 2035, the number of adults with a common mental health disorder in Wales will increase by 7.2% to 447,159 on the 2017 baseline, while the number of people aged 65+ living with dementia will increase by 64% to 77,769 in the same period. *Public Health Wales* [Source: Futures for Wales Report.](#)
- By 2035, there will also be an increase in the number of adults with chronic conditions in Wales, including an increase of 18.2% of people with diabetes to 220,376, an increase of 27% of people with heart conditions to 321,986 and an increase of 29.5% of people suffering a stroke to 90,214. *Public Health Wales* [Source: Futures for Wales Report.](#)

PLACES our plans for 2020/21 include

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 by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing waste and cleaning services, with appropriate safe working arrangements in place. • monitoring Community Recycling Centres (CRC) ensuring residents and staff safety follow reopening requirements after Covid-19 lockdown.
Keeping the County Borough moving, including improving roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality by continuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our Highways Improvement Programme including the design, planning and delivery of major infrastructure projects e.g. the A4119 dualling at Coed Ely, the Cynon Valley Gateway North Link and the Llanharan By-Pass and bridge repairs. • to deliver major Economic Infrastructure Projects and Transportation Investment (Metro, etc.); Improve our highways infrastructure including resurfacing of roads and footways and making necessary repairs to bridges, and continuing Flood Alleviation work. • to ensure safe parking for our residents particularly as shops reopen after lockdown. • to safely deliver and manage the Council's contracted passenger transport requirements particularly for schools and community transport.
Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resuming face to face..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Substance Misuse client support meetings. ○ Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) client meetings and drop in support at the Oasis Centre. • continuing to work in partnership to ensure the residents of RCT are safe
Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing biodiversity across RCT • managing the impact of flood damage in our Parks and open spaces including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ reopening Lido Pontypridd in 2021 and, ○ completing the rebuild/repair work in Ynyshangharad Park. • continuing to invest in playgrounds, sports pitches and parks buildings, encouraging use of green spaces for physical activity.

You can see more details about our plans for 2020/21 in our [PLACES Plan](#)

Looking beyond 2021 for **PLACES**....

Environment

- Based on estimates of future global greenhouse gas emissions, Wales may see an average annual increase in temperature of between 0.1°C and 1.5°C by 2039. [Source: UK Climate Projections](#)
- Wales could also see an increase in rainfall of 4% during the winter and decrease of 10% in the summer across the same period. [Source: UK Climate Projections](#)

Transport

- By 2030, the number of miles travelled on roads in Wales is expected to increase by at least 5.7% (1.02 billion miles) from the 2017 baseline.
[Source: Department for Transport](#)
- If current trends continue, the number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles registered in RCT may increase by 36% from 665 in 2020 to 901 by 2025.
[Source: Transportation for Wales](#)

Energy & Waste

- The Welsh Government has set a goal of achieving 70% renewable energy consumption by 2030.
[Source: Welsh Government](#)
- The energy demand in Wales is predicted to rise between 14% and 68% by 2035, *from 2014 baseline*.
[Source: Welsh Government](#)

PROSPERITY our plans for 2020/21 include:

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 by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with members of the business community to help them meet new challenges and opportunities, including developing grants to support businesses to recover and refocus following the impact of Covid-19 and encouraging local businesses to use local suppliers. • delivering a programme of key property developments in town centres leading to a more sustainable future such as those at Dunraven Street Tonypany, Hannah Street Porth, Mountain Ash Town Hall and the Black Lion in Aberdare.
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 by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generating sustainable local investment and jobs through investment across the County Borough, including delivering new business units at Robertstown, Aberdare and Coed Ely business park; completing the Llys Cadwyn project and footbridge to Ynysangharad Park; and redeveloping the old Bingo hall site in Pontypridd. • developing a new integrated Transport Hub in Porth for better connected bus and rail travel. • supporting the delivery of major Tourism projects such as Zip World Tower and developing an accommodation strategy to encourage visitors to stay for longer. • developing Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park as Valleys Regional Park Discovery gateways, providing new facilities and attractions for residents and visitors. • redeveloping the YMCA building in Pontypridd as a hub for social enterprise and community arts activity and seeking funding to develop a cultural hub in Treorchy, building on the existing theatre and library. • redeveloping Oxford Buildings, Mountain Ash for new residential use including supported living.
Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting Early Years settings and schools to deliver blended onsite and distance learning, including making sure all pupils have access to the technology they need to do their work • supporting the return of pupils to school sites in line with Welsh Government policy and supporting the wellbeing and additional learning needs of all our pupils • continuing to invest in our school buildings and facilities through our 21st Century schools programme.
Increasing the number of quality homes available and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritising housing need in response to Covid-19 including homelessness, temporary accommodation and landlord

affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents by.....	<p>support and developing an integrated Homelessness Recovery Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuing to support the development of new affordable homes by working with Registered Social Landlords and supporting projects through grant funding.
Helping people into work and better paid employment by.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuing to provide support to help people back into work, including developing digital/remote provision. increasing the number of apprenticeships and graduate trainees across Council services to support young people at the start of their careers.

You can see more details about our plans for 2020/21 in our [PROSPERITY Plan](#).

Looking beyond 2021 for **PROSPERITY**....

<p>Employment & Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The total number of people employed in Wales is expected to reach 1.466m by 2024, a 4.9% increase from the 1.397m employed in 2019 Source: Working Futures 2014 – 2024 and StatsWales From 2019 to 2024, Wales will see a decline in jobs in Engineering, Agriculture and Manufacturing. Jobs in Finance and Insurance, Information Technology and Health and Social work are set to increase Source: UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024. <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The total number of pupils in Wales is set to increase by 1.36% between 2018 and 2028, with the greatest increase predicted in the number of students over 16 (12.31%) Source: StatsWales. The number of people in the Welsh workforce without a qualification is set to drop from 3% to 2% between 2019 and 2024, while 70% of the workforce in 2024 will have qualifications at A level/equivalent or above, up from 65% in 2019 Source: UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024. <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of households in RCT is projected to increase by 5.7% by 2028. RCT will also have one of the highest increases in Wales in the number of one person households, up 13.3%. Source: Local Authority household projections for Wales. <p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pay difference between the highest and lowest earners is likely to grow across the UK to 2030. The pay difference in Wales is lower than the rest of the UK and this is projected to continue to 2030. Source: UKCES future of work evidence. Based on predictions from the Institute for Public Policy Research, the UK economy is set to be £55bn smaller by 2030 than it would have been without Brexit. In a worst-case scenario, households may be up to £1,700 worse off per year. Source: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Delivering for the future

For many years, Councillors have been faced with financial challenges that have meant they have had to make tough choices and difficult decisions. These choices and decisions have allowed the Council to prioritise services, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, whilst at the same time make the savings needed to balance the books. We are continually reducing our management structures and administration, finding new ways to work in partnership with other councils and public bodies, making better use of the buildings and office space we have as well as increasing our use of technology to help us to be more agile and to work smarter.

We have achieved these changes because we are continually looking to see where we can do things differently or better and where we can get better value for our money. We ask our residents and our staff for their ideas, we use all the feedback we receive from inspections and audits and we learn from organisations that are the best at what they do. We also [regularly review and challenge every service](#) the Council delivers to see how and where it can improve. This means that we know our strengths and also our areas for improvement and are better able to respond quickly to change and continue to provide quality services with reducing resources, including fewer managers and staff. We continue to making best use of limited resources by working with others where it makes sense to do so. By continuing to challenge what we know about our services and the needs of our residents and communities, both now and in the future, we can better understand how and what we need to change. This helps us to make sure that we focus on improving what matters most now and also make sure that the needs of future generations can be met.

The Council also works in partnerships with other public bodies e.g other councils, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board, South Wales Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, the Third Sector and Natural Resources Wales. You can see some examples of how we work with others on [our website](#). Some of the partnerships are in place because we think we can deliver better services together, and also because some problems cannot be dealt with by one organisation alone.

The Welsh Government also recognises the value of partnership working, and has put in place laws that direct public bodies to work together e.g. the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) which is described in more detail (see section 16)

Another law that directs how we work is the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). This Act gives people more of a say in the care they receive. To do this, the Act asks Councils to work in partnership with Health Boards and the Third Sector to work together better to improve the well-being of adults and children who need care and support, as well as their carers. To do this, in RCT we now work as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board, which was formed on 1 April 2019 when the Bridgend area was merged with Cwm Taf Heath Board Area to form Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

The Social Services [Well-being Area Plan](#) put in place by the previous Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board is still in place but will be updated as part of the new plan for Cwm Taf Morgannwg in 2023. It sets out what it intends to do to work better together to benefit:

- children and young people
- older people
- health/physical disabilities
- learning disability/autism
- mental health
- sensory impairment
- carers who need support
- violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

with priority given to

- older people with complex needs and long term conditions, including dementia.
- people with learning disabilities.
- carers, including young carers.
- integrated Family Support Services and
- children with complex needs due to disability and illness.

As a Council, working alone and also working in partnership with others, we continually strive to improve everything we do so that we can provide better, more efficient, effective and joined up services to our residents and communities.

In its most recent report published in [September 2019](#) our independent regulator, the Wales Audit Office, indicated that “the Council continues to meet its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement”. You can see this and other reports from our inspectors on our [website](#).

Making the best use of our budget – Living within our means

Over the past decade, Rhondda Cynon Taf, like all Councils in Wales, has operated within an environment of reduced resources alongside rising demand and costs associated with many services. Despite this challenging climate, we have delivered over £96Million in efficiency savings and have achieved this through carefully managing our finances and prioritising investment, planning ahead and changing how we work.

The 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy took account of expenditure requirements such as changing service demands, inflationary pressures and priority areas for continued additional investment together with the money we would receive from our main funding source, Welsh Government, of +4.5%. This meant that we needed to make savings of £8.7Million that we were able to deliver from areas that did not impact on frontline services and included for example becoming more efficient in how we purchase goods and services, restructuring and redesigning services by taking advantage of latest technology, and also through the use of specific one-off grants.

Importantly, the Revenue Budget Strategy also allocated additional resources to priority areas, for example, an 8.5% increase to schools, equating to £12.7M and, within this, recognising that there would be a requirement for local efficiency planning on a school by school basis; £0.250Million supporting further youth engagement activities to help young people reach their full potential; £0.050Million to support the provision of paddling pools across the County Borough; and £0.104Million to support the preparatory work required to re-open the Muni Arts Centre (Pontypridd).

As part of balancing the Council's Revenue Budget, we continued to take a responsible approach when setting Council Tax levels. For the 2020/21 financial year, a Council Tax increase of 2.85% was agreed, the lowest increase in Wales for the third consecutive year. More detail on our 2020/21 Revenue Budget of £508.747Million can be found in the report to [Council](#) on 4 March 2020.

Our financial planning arrangements also look beyond one financial year and forecast expenditure and funding levels over a three-year period. Our latest Medium Term Financial Plan published in July 2019 and covering the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 estimated that we will need to find further savings of around £39Million by 2022 to meet increasing demand for services, particularly social care, and forecasted real term reductions in funding levels. We know it will be harder to deliver year-on-year savings in the future and that is why we are continuing with our approach of examining every part of the Council's budget alongside a programme of significant investment in key areas. Our work and investment is continuing to focus on:

- Early intervention and prevention work in a wide range of areas to improve the lives of residents. This includes our Early Years and Family Support Service, Resilient Families Programme and Youth Engagement and Participation Service.
- Keeping adults independent, by, for example, working with partners to deliver the regional Stay Well@home service, providing home adaptations, support for carers and also involving

residents in helping to shape social care over the longer term in areas such as Extra Care provision.

- Investing in town centres and bringing more empty properties back into use to support the provision of good quality housing and to generate income from Council Tax.
- Offering more services on-line and involving customers in the design of services and continuing to use digital technology to modernise how the Council works.
- Thinking longer term and investing in the future through improvements to the highways infrastructure to reduce on-going maintenance costs and invest-to-save energy efficiency schemes that reduce energy consumption in Council buildings.

Since the publication of the Council's latest Medium Term Financial Plan in [July 2019](#), the unprecedented events of Storm Dennis and the start of the Covid-19 pandemic have occurred. The impact of both events has been significant and the Council's robust approach to financial management and planning is supporting the continued delivery of a range of important services to residents and businesses as well as ensuring the financial health and stability of the Council is maintained. This approach will ensure the regular reporting of updates on the Council's financial position during 2020/21, working in partnership with Welsh Government to secure funding to cover additional costs associated with Storm Dennis and Covid-19, and updating our Medium Term Financial Plan that is scheduled to be published in autumn 2020.

In parallel, our 3-year capital programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23 invests £132Million in priority areas to further improve infrastructure and facilities available for residents. These include regeneration projects, improving school buildings and facilities, improving adult social care provision through a long term programme of creating new Extra Care facilities, improving the condition of both roads and community assets such as parks and playgrounds, and a programme of flood alleviation works. We will continue to work closely with partners over this period to ensure we make the best use of resources and take all opportunities to attract additional funding should it become available.

As part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the Council is also playing a central role in delivering an exciting and ambitious long term plan to improve the economy of South East Wales.

Working now for the well-being of Future Generations

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) puts a legal duty on the Council to improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of its residents and contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals. This Welsh law also asks all Councils and many other public bodies in Wales to change what they do and how they do business so that they can make these improvements. We are working hard to embed what the law is asking us to do, into everything we do. The Council's new priorities and its Well-being Objectives, PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY set out in the Council's new Corporate Plan, endorsed by [Council at its meeting on 4 March](#), will help direct how we improve the Well-being of our residents, carrying on from the direction from our first Plan.

The Act also tells us that we must maximise our contributions to seven national goals by applying 5 Ways of Working so that we

- balance the short term needs with planning for the future.
- work with other partners to deliver our objectives.
- involve those with an interest in our work and seek their views.
- put resources into preventing problems altogether, or getting worse.
- consider the effect of our work with that of other public bodies and organisations.

You can see many examples of how we have applied these Ways of Working throughout this report.

The law also means we need to think more about those services which are behind the scenes so that they also work in a way that helps us to succeed in delivering our plans and to meet the Well-being requirements. These 'back office' services provide the best possible support to our front line services, so that as a Council we can continue to focus and deliver our priorities at the pace required and to make best use of resources available. The work of these 'back office' services are described by the Act as "Core Activities" which are "*likely to most effectively secure the type of change required*". Our progress in these activities can be seen below.

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
Corporate Planning	In March 2020, Councillors agreed that the new priorities in our new Corporate Plan should be considered as our Well-being Objectives. This Plan,

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	<p>'Making a Difference' will direct our work between 2020 and 2024. This decision further develops the way we approached the requirements of the Act in our first Corporate Plan in 2016, which was to embed these requirements into the Council's business at every level of the organisation, including the Corporate Plan. The processes that underpin our Corporate Plan include our annual corporate and service assessments which also helps us to see how this approach is working across the whole Council. We continually look to increase our knowledge and understanding of how the Act should be applied, learning from feedback and recognised good practice.</p>
Financial Planning	<p>We spend our budgets on what matters most to residents and communities, directing our resources to our priorities and finding ways to work more efficiently, work better with partners and share our resources.</p>
Work force Planning	<p>We train our staff so that they continue their personal development and keep up to date with the skills they need to help the Council to improve. We think that the physical and mental well-being of our staff is key to a well-motivated workforce and make sure that they are supported to stay as well as possible. We also look to the future e.g. with our graduate scheme and our apprenticeship programme which won an award in the National Apprenticeship Awards Cymru in 2018. We want to make sure our residents are also able to develop their skills so that they can take advantage of work and digital opportunities so we also put in place activities to help them e.g. Digital Fridays, opportunities to get involved in intergenerational projects and supporting them to maintain services and facilities as part of 'RCT Together'.</p>
Procurement	<p>We make sure that anything we buy for the Council is value for money, benefits society and makes as little impact as possible on the environment. We also make sure that our policies take into account other social responsibilities e.g. promoting anti-slavery, the use of Fair Trade products and buying electricity that is generated from 100% renewable energy sources. The arrangements we have put in place with our major contractors when they are working on our contracts, provided 139 people with jobs in 19/20.</p>
Managing our Assets	<p>We make sure that we make best use of our buildings to benefit our residents and communities, e.g. community use of our schools and also provide staff with the equipment they need so that they can spend more time with residents, communities and businesses. We share office space with other organisations where it makes sense to do so. e.g. Porth Plaza contains a library, childcare facilities, private training businesses and our One4All centre. We are also working with Public Sector partners to see how we can improve services, make better use of all partners' buildings and so reduce costs. More recently over 3,000 staff have been required and supported to work from home as a result of Covid-19 and we will learn the lessons from</p>

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	home working etc. to plan the use of office space in the future. All of this work also takes account of our drive to deliver a carbon neutral service.
Managing Risks	We identify short, medium and long term risks that will need to be mitigated in order to help us to deliver our Corporate Priorities. These are set out in our Strategic Risk Register .
Managing our Performance	We make information about what we do and how well we do it, widely available on our website. This report is one of the ways we make this information more accessible to people, communities and our partners. We make sure that everything we do is focussed on the things that people have told us are important to them and continue to find new and different ways to involve residents and communities in our work and the decisions that affect them. We continue to look for ways we can share relevant data with our partners to help us improve all public services in RCT and also strengthen the information we have available. We also continue to lobby national bodies, e.g. Data Cymru, Future Generations Commissioner and Welsh Government to improve access to a wider range of consistent, timely and relevant information about Future Trends that will help us with our long term planning.

How we have applied the Act is shown throughout this report. We have used the Act to check where we can do better and also use resources being developed by the Future Generations Commissioner to provide relevant support and challenge as we continue to embed the Act into the Council's arrangements and processes.

We know we are making positive progress and also that there is always more to do as we plan for and keep up with the speed and scale of changes facing the Council and all public bodies in Wales. This is why we continually challenge why, what and how we do what we do so that we can make changes that will benefit the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, both now and in the future. This work has, and continues, to be tested by the ongoing work to meet the challenges we are facing because of the impact of Covid-19.

During 2019, we were able to get an independent view of our progress to date from our Regulator, Audit Wales. This independent view was arrived at following two 'Tracer' reviews in two different areas of service over the last 18 months, to show how the Act is being applied. The reviews were conducted in the Stay Well@home Service and Leisure Services. The feedback from Audit Wales from each of these reviews, has given us confidence that we are on the right track.

[Stay Well@home service](#), - This review looked at how the Council is working with the Health Board to focus on early intervention and prevention, choice, control and independence for older and vulnerable people.

The findings set out many positive aspects and also some areas for improvement. Overall, the review found

“The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing and implementing the new community based models of service, and recognises a number of areas where it could further embed the five ways of working

Leisure Services – The review looked at how the Council is delivering priority investments for leisure facilities to increase participation in exercise and so contribute to improvement in residents’ health and wellbeing.

The findings set out many positive aspects and also some areas for improvement. Overall, the review found

“There are clear examples of how the Council is applying the sustainable development principle to the investment in leisure facilities, but there are opportunities to strengthen long term planning and involve people in shaping future leisure provision”

We are pleased that our work to date has been positively acknowledged by our independent Regulator. We also know that we need to continue to ensure that the Act is fully integrated into all our processes and plans, including the work to shape the detailed plans which support the delivery of the priorities within the new Corporate Plan.

In the next year, to meet our obligations as a Council, we will continue to

1. use advice, guidance and feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner, Audit Wales and best practice to continue to embed the Act into our work, and also to lobby for more national support where necessary.
2. use what we learn from our own pilot projects in the Council to test and further improve our arrangements.
3. continue to work with national bodies, e.g. Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner so that collectively we can improve how we join together the different national policies put in place.
4. work with national partners to find stronger and more consistent information about future trends that will help us to improve our long term thinking.
5. continue to seek a solution that will allow/enable appropriate data sharing with partners.
6. contribute positively and support the Cwm Taf Public Services Board, particularly in its joint working with Bridgend County Borough Council.

We know we can’t do everything ourselves and we have a good track record of working with others. From well-known partnerships like the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#) to smaller partnerships, you can see some examples of how and where we work with others on our [Working with Others](#) page on our website. There are also many other everyday examples of where we talk to and work with other public bodies so that we can overcome shared local difficulties more easily. We also work with and alongside local community groups to provide residents and communities with direct support to get things done in their communities, e.g. through our ‘RCT Together’ programme, supporting them to prepare community bids for Welsh Government funding.

However, the Act also puts a legal duty on the Council to work in a formal partnership with other public bodies in a Public Services Board (PSB). This means public services covering the Council’s

area, must work as part of a Public Services Board, finding out how they can make the biggest difference to people and communities by working better together.

As RCT works with many of the same public bodies as Merthyr Tydfil CBC, e.g. South Fire and Rescue, South Wales Police, Cwm Taf University Health Board, in 2016 the Councils agreed to join together to form a joint PSB, the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#), covering the Cwm Taf areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.

The Cwm Taf PSB set out how it will work together to improve the Well-being of the Cwm Taf area in four Well-being Objectives. These objectives are set out in more detail in the Cwm Taf [Well-being Plan](#), published in 2018. The four Well-being Objectives are

Thriving Communities	promoting safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the wellbeing of residents and visitors and building on our community assets
Healthy People	helping people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenge
Strong Economy	growing a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf
Tackling Loneliness and Isolation	finding new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.

The Council is the lead partner for the Thriving Communities objective and is also actively involved in the other three Well-being objectives. You can see more information about the PSB's work and progress on its [website](#). How we are working with our PSB partners has been described throughout this report. The PSB published its first annual report in [July 2019](#) and an interim update report in [July 2020](#).

The highlights of achievements set out in the latest PSB report include

- Launching the Cwm Taf Employability Pledge – to share information across partners that will widen opportunities for residents and staff to volunteer, find work experience and jobs across the public bodies.
- The opening of two PSB supported Hubs in Cwm Taf. Hubs are [Calon Las](#) in Gurnos, Merthyr Tydfil, and [Hwb Glynrhedynog](#) in Ferndale in Rhondda Cynon Taf. [Hwb Glynrhedynog](#) is one of the Hubs being put in place across RCT to meet the Council's commitment to working more closely with communities. This work is described in more detail in [section 6 –PLACE](#).
- Making progress in identifying vulnerable families in Cwm Taf early so that they get the help they need before they reach crisis point.

Since the Cwm Taf PSB was established, one of the statutory partners, the Cwm Taf UHB has been joined by the Bridgend Council area to form the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) University Health Board. Whilst there are no detailed plans in place to expand the Cwm Taf PSB to reflect the changes in the Health Board boundaries at this time, there is commitment for more regional working and better integration between the work of the various Partnership Boards e.g. the Regional Partnership Board, to make better use of partnership resources. In the meantime, the Cwm Taf and Bridgend PSBs will work together to produce a joint [Well-being Assessment](#) to cover

the CTM area that will refresh and replace the Assessments for the two separate areas completed 2017. This work will drive and shape new arrangements that will bring together the two PSBs for a new joint Well-being Plan from early 2023.

The Future Generations Commissioner has also set out six areas of work that people across Wales have told her are the biggest challenges facing the country and where she could have the most impact.

These areas are

1. [Skills](#) – our work includes putting in place an employment pathway to support people to develop their skills in line with the needs of local employers. For more details refer to [section 4 - Economy](#).
2. [Housing](#) - our work includes putting in place new housing, bringing empty properties back to life and providing all our residents with the opportunity to live safe independent lives in purpose built accommodation.
3. [Transport](#) - our work includes putting in place active travel routes and also creating a sustainable, accessible transport system for all by investing in public transport as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as well as considering the infrastructure requirements for electric vehicles. For more details refer to [section 6 - Place](#).
4. [Planning](#) - our work includes how planning can be used to create the right places, communities and infrastructure for future generations. We are also looking at how the work on our new Local Development Plan can help us do this. For more detail see [section 4 -Economy](#). [Making Wi-Fi available in Town Centres will help](#) support high street business.
5. [Adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) - our work includes helping children and young people and their families to cope with the difficulties they face including through our Resilient Families Service and providing work opportunities for young people leaving care. For more details refer to [section 5 – People](#) and the [PSB interim Report July 2020](#).
6. [Better Ways to keep people well](#) - our work includes working with partners across Cwm Taf Morgannwg, finding non-medical ways to help to keep our residents happier and healthier. This is called Social Prescribing and might include activities such as volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports. For more details refer to [section 5 - People](#).

These are just some of the ways we are already tackling these areas of work. You will find more detail included throughout this report.

You can give your thoughts and experiences on the Commissioner's priorities on the [People's Platform](#) and see the Commissioner's first [Future Generations Report](#) published in May 2020. This report analyses the progress of all public bodies subject to the Act, including Welsh Government, in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act since it became law in 2015.

Equalities – A fair and equal County Borough

<u>RCT Population (2019 MYE)</u>	RCT staff data (March 2019) Over 80% of employees live in the Council area		
Total - 241,264 Males - 118,397 (49%) Females - 122,867 (51%)	Total 10,698 Male 25.6% Female 74.4%		
Age range 0-15 - 44,975 (19%) 16-64 -149,661 (62%) 65+ - 46,628 (19%) <i>(figures rounded for illustrative purposes)</i> Source: InfoBase Cymru	Age Group	Total	% of Workforce
	16-24	612	5.7%
	25-34	1,949	18.2%
	35-44	2,500	23.3%
	45-54	3,215	30.1%
	55-64	2,092	19.6%
	65+	330	3.1%
Ethnicity 2.8% of RCT residents identify as Black, Asian or Minority ethnic.	<i>More detailed information about the workforce can be found in the annual equalities monitoring report to Cabinet 19 March 2019.</i>		
18% of all Lower Super Output Areas, within RCT are amongst the 10% most deprived in Wales, while 45% are ranked amongst the 30% most deprived . A Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) is a small geographical area of population of approx. 1,500 people. There are 154 LSOAs in RCT and 1,909 in Wales. Source: WIMD 2019 .			
<u>The Thriving Places Index Wales for Equalities 2020</u> measures inequalities in Health, Income and Employment. The 2020 data gives RCT a rating of 4.43 out of a possible score of 10. The measure covers many different services and different providers at a local, regional, national and international level and the score for RCT has fallen from 5.26 since it was introduced in 2018.			

In the last year we have maintained our good progress towards a fair and equal RCT and we can point to many positive examples of this throughout this report as well as in our annual Equality Report which was presented to Cabinet in [March 2019](#). Other examples include helping people with additional learning needs to access public transport, ensuring that applications for street cafes meet consistent accessibility standards and remain pedestrian friendly and putting in place more help for transgender young people that works alongside the support provided by schools. We have also been working with partners to provide support and opportunities for homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness, which includes providing 1 to 1 advice and support to help them develop independent living skills.

Our new [Strategic Equality Plan for 2019-22](#) was agreed in May 2019. In our plan we said we would focus on the five key areas that our residents told us were most important to them to help to achieve a fairer Rhondda Cynon Taf.

we said we aim to	and amongst other things we
better understand the needs of our	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have developed a new approach to collecting equality monitoring information for our customers and staff. By capturing information

we said we aim to	and amongst other things we
communities and the barriers they face to thrive.	<p>about our customers, services are better able to respond to their needs and help to break down the barriers they face accessing Council services e.g. getting into buildings, using technology, language or availability of transport. We will test our new approach within Leisure Services, as this service has a direct contact with a large amount of staff and customers, to see if it provides the right information at the right time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are working with Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales 'EYST' to strengthen how we involve Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people. • continued to work with and involve the RCT residents Disability Forum. This year we asked them for their views on the Modernisation of Residential Services and Day Care and Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations. One member of the forum has been working closely with the Council's Highways teams to make accessible improvements to footpaths in their community.
reduce inequalities that exist within our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are continuing to look at how our services can better support people to reach their potential e.g. in education, housing and employment. This also includes making information more accessible to all our residents.
promote safe communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued to provide hate crime awareness training in schools and raise awareness of the need to report Hate Crime. This is described in more detail in the PLACE evaluation.
reduce the gender pay gap within the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are continuing to analyse the gap between the pay of men and women employed by the Council so that we can better understand and can reduce this pay gap. We are exploring how we can encourage more women to apply for senior roles. We are continuing to roll-out the Performance Review of staff to ensure that they discuss career and development opportunities with their manager. We now have a better understanding of challenges women face when returning to work following maternity leave and we intend to provide awareness for managers on pregnancy and maternity arrangements.
creating an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are continuing to develop our staff networks and improve how we promote national campaigns to raise awareness. For example, for Deaf Awareness week in May 2019 daily posts were published on the staff Intranet which included the finger alphabet, information and facts about the effects of hearing loss and where to get help. This year we focussed on the experiences of staff to raise awareness of difference, for example:

we said we aim to	and amongst other things we
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In December 2019, for 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities', we featured the experience of a staff member, L, who is a carer for her father, who has a disability. By being a member of the RCT staff Disability and Carers Staff Network, L is able to get the support and flexibility she needs at work that also allows her to care for her father. • As part of LGBT+ History Month in February 2020, we featured stories from 'Perthyn' our LGBT+ staff network. Council staff have frequently appeared in articles in Fyne Times, a UK based free gay and lesbian magazine, setting out their experiences of working for the Council. • Time to Talk Day in February provided a focus for staff across the County Borough to have conversations about mental health without being judged. 'Time to Talk' also featured one of the council's senior managers sharing their experience of mental ill health and the steps they take to help them to cope. • On World Menopause Day in October 2019, we held an 'Afternoon Tea' to support staff, provide information and raise awareness of the symptoms of menopause in the workplace.

As well as implementing our new Strategic Equality Plan we also

Continue to meet our responsibilities under the '[Disability Confident](#)' Scheme so that as an employer the Council makes the most of the talents disabled people can bring. Examples of how we do this include

- providing reasonable adjustments for people when they apply for jobs and go through selection processes and also for our staff while they are in work. In social care we also work with our partner universities to make sure that students have any reasonable adjustments put in place for them before they start their practise placement. There are many types of reasonable adjustments e.g. making sure candidates can access interview spaces, providing the right type of phone for an employee who uses a hearing aid, providing a parking space for a person who has a disability or it could mean a change to a Council policy.
- buying technology software '[Browsealoud](#)' and '[Read&Write](#)'. 'Browsealoud' is now available on the Council's website to make it easier for people to access the information contained on the website and so improves accessibility for all our customers. 'Read&Write' has been introduced across the Council for staff who need extra support with reading and writing.
- continuing to share relevant information and updates relating to disability through our Disability Officers group, which is a network of RCT staff from across the Council. The group meets quarterly and a recent meeting was attended by representatives from Transport for Wales to provide an update on the South Wales Metro system, which provided the opportunity to discuss accessibility barriers that some customers may face.
- reviewing our accessibility guidance to improve how we communicate with our customers. This includes internal, external and digital accessibility and a particular focus being on the

Deaf community. The next phase will involve engagement with disability and Deaf groups and well as our staff Disability and Carers network.

- keeping HR staff updated with relevant disability awareness training. We are reviewing the range of equality and diversity training we offer to ensure that staff receive appropriate training to support the diversity of our customers.

Remain committed to the 'Time to Change Wales' pledge, 'Stonewall Diversity Champions' programme and 'Stonewall Equality Education Index'.

Time to talk days

Reducing the stigma around mental health is important to the Council, as we want to encourage a culture where staff are confident to share experiences and seek support when needed. Our Time to Talks days described above, are an essential tool to raise awareness of mental ill health and to encourage open conversations.

Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme

The Council was again recognised as an inclusive employer by ranking in [Stonewall's Top 100](#) employers 2020, demonstrating our commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Over the year, we have engaged with the LGBTQ+ community at Rhondda Pride and Pride Cymru. The people we talked to at Rhondda Pride told us that they felt the Education sector could do more to train teaching staff so that they are better able to understand some of the barriers and issues that LGBT+ pupils can face. By training teachers, they can provide better support to LGBT+ pupils. Behind the scenes we also made sure that the Council's Human Resources policies are correct and up to date. Part of this work included refreshing our policy that applies to RCT staff who are transitioning to make sure that it is clearer for staff and managers.

[Black History Month \(BHM\)](#)

In October 2019 we held a coffee morning in Aberdare Library to mark the Council's first BHM event, celebrating Black History Month and raising awareness of racial diversity. The focus was on black literature, highlighting black authors and stories. Whilst the event was modestly attended, it provided insights of experiences of people of colour living in RCT and their experiences of our services. BHM also featured a staff awareness campaign called 'Hidden Figures' highlighting black British people that have been forgotten in history.

Continue to deliver Dignity and Respect training to all Council staff.

The training also serves to remind staff of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and includes an overview of the Public Sector Equality Duties as well as all protected characteristics. The training also provides them with the knowledge and encouragement to challenge negative attitudes in their workplaces or communities. Equality and Diversity training is also included in Induction programmes for all new staff joining the Council.

Strengthen equality training for staff dealing with complaints about the Council's services and ensure that findings are used to inform improvements in services.

Any complaint made about a service providing unequal or unfair treatment to our residents is reviewed in depth after it has been dealt with so that we learn lessons to make the necessary

improvements and/or train our staff. This means that staff gain a better understanding of the different issues and needs of our residents so they can challenge their own actions in future.

Continue to focus on Mental Health

We have continued to work with trade unions to raise awareness of mental health issues for managers and helping them to recognise symptoms in Council staff. As a result of this work, we secured a further £16k from the [Welsh Union Learning Fund](#) and the Council contributed the same amount. Because of this joint funding we have been able to pay for 350 managers and supervisors to receive Mental Health awareness training between November 2019 and February 2020. Plans to train more of our staff between March and June 2020 were affected by Covid-19 and will be arranged as soon as it is safe to do so.

The awareness training that took place was well received by those who attended. This training also highlighted the need for managers to be able to better support staff and their mental health and wellbeing and also for managers to have the confidence to have difficult conversations where necessary. We have been working with [Psychology Wales](#) see how we can meet this additional training need and have run a pilot course to see if this can be rolled out more widely

Strengthen our understanding of the needs of our Armed Forces Veterans.

In April 2019 the [Veteran Advice Service](#) was launched. The service is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund. The service regularly engages with veteran groups across RCT and Merthyr Tydfil, e.g. Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association '[SSAFA](#)', [Royal British Legion](#), and Welsh based charity for veterans '[Change Step](#)'. As part of its work, the service offers a range of support and advice to veterans in the Council's Community Hubs. More recently this support has been provided by staff working at home in line with WG guidelines and will resume in the Council's Hubs when it is safe to do so. All Council managers have received training about the Armed Forces Covenant and all new staff also receive training about the service when they start work in the Council.

Between April 2019 and August 2020, the Veteran Advice Service received 215 direct contacts or referrals from across RCT. The service has helped the veterans in a number of ways including making sure that they get the benefits they had previously not been claiming. More recently it has helped to support veterans during lock down because of Covid-19.

By talking to and building relationships over time, we are able to gain a greater understanding of our Armed Forces veterans and are able to shape our services to better meet their needs.

Following a successful pilot launched in 2018, the Council introduced a reduction of 25% on bereavement fees for veterans. RCT is the only Council in Wales to offer this scheme. During the pilot alone, 58 families benefitted from reduced funeral costs for their loved ones. The reduction in fees varies according to the service families receive, but some have had funeral costs reduced by more than £400.

We also work closely with our schools to support service children and their families, recognising that service children may have distinct needs.

In the last year, we held a number of events commemorating the Armed Forces including:

- [Armed Forces Day](#)
- [Festival of Remembrance and Remembrance Day Service](#) at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

Delivery and success of these events is as a result of working in partnership with the Armed Forces and Armed Forces charities such as Help for Heroes and Royal British Legion.

The new [Cynon Valley Memorial Garden](#) in Aberdare was formally opened in November 2019. Funding for the memorial was raised by the Aberdare Branch of the Royal Welsh Comrades Association and hundreds of people came along to show their support on the day. The local support highlighted how important the memorial is to the community and the Council is committed to continuing to give it our support.

"The project has been a massive success, it has provided a focal point to the area bringing in members of the general public and also family members who have placed a stone in memory of a loved one".

Phill Adkins

Cynon Valley Armed Forces Memorial Garden Co-ordinator

On 5 November, 2019 we held a very special event at the Park and Dare Theatre when we [screened the film Zulu](#) for Armed Forces families. The film was chosen by the families also. This idea was developed following discussions with veterans about how fireworks on Bonfire night can be a trigger of PTSD symptoms. The event attracted over 100 people and was deemed a huge success by all. It also attracted [significant media coverage](#).

Our work to deliver this plan helps us to show how we are contributing to [a more equal Wales](#) - a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. But it also seeks to support all the Well-being goals including a Wales of Cohesive communities and a Prosperous Wales.

Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice

We are making good progress with our work to deliver services to you in the language of your choice, although we know that there is more to do, especially if we are to play our part to help Wales to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- The number of Welsh speakers in RCT has remained fairly consistent since 2001.
- The greatest proportion of Welsh speakers are under 25 years old.
- The 2011 Census tells us there are 27,779 Welsh speakers in RCT, 12.3% of the population. Data from ONS Annual population survey in March 2020 suggests that there are now more Welsh speakers, 42,500 (18.3%). However, the ONS survey involved fewer people so it might not be a true reflection.
- According to the National Survey for Wales, 9,650 (4%) of people in RCT use the Welsh Language as part of their everyday life. The survey involved a fairly small number of people so it might not be a true reflection
- RCT continues to have the highest % of pupils taught Welsh as a first language from within the 5 Councils covered by the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (18.9%).
- The number of 7 year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh has increased slightly, 526 in 2019/20, 9 more than in 2018/19. However, there are now slightly more 7 year olds being taught in English so the overall percentage of pupils learning through Welsh has decreased by 0.07%
- In 2019 the Council committed to a number of projects to increase school capacity which will provide a further 690 Welsh medium education places by 2022.

During 2019 – 2020 we provided Level 1 Welsh language training to 304 staff. An additional 238 member of staff have benefited from Level 2, 4 & 5 lessons. As a result of the improvements in recruitment and training for Welsh language, more of our staff have indicated they are fluent in Welsh. In March 2020 there were 569 staff who self-identified as fluent Welsh speakers, 167 more than in 2017/18.

We are committed to encouraging residents to deal with services in Welsh, and making it easier for them to contact and do business with the Council in the language of their choice. At the last census, the number of Welsh speakers in our communities was 12.3% of our population 27,779, lower than the Wales average at 19%. As a result, the number of local people applying for jobs in the Council who are able to speak Welsh is low, as the majority of Welsh speakers in RCT are not of working age.

This means we need to continue to support and encourage our existing staff to use and improve their Welsh skills at work and encourage our residents to engage with us in Welsh. It also means that we need to plan ahead so that we are able to take advantage of the Welsh language skills our young people have to offer as they leave full time education and reach working age. Our Welsh language tutor continues to support our staff with training directly related to their job role so they can better respond to residents' needs, and tutored 542 members of staff during 2019-20. We continue to work in partnership with the [Welsh Government's 'Work Welsh' project](#), ensuring that our staff can access on-line support and tutoring. 40 staff completed Work Welsh online training between 2017 and 2019, with further 88 staff undertaking courses during 2020 so far, a number

which is likely to increase. Additionally, a small number of staff have also attended week long intensive courses at [Nant Gwytheryn](#).

Along with the planned projects to increase capacity in our Welsh medium schools, the announcement in March 2019, that Rhondda Cynon Taf will [host the Royal National Eisteddfod](#), originally scheduled for 2022 but now to be held in 2023, is an exciting opportunity to further boost the use of the Welsh language in our communities. This will also contribute to helping the Council to meet the national Well-being goal of a 'Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language', a Prosperous Wales as well as other national Well-being goals.

The Council also needs to adhere to the [Welsh language laws](#) and apply [national Welsh Language Standards](#), making sure that we:

- treat the Welsh language the same as the English language, and
- offer people the opportunity to receive their services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.

The Welsh Language Standards apply to all parts of the Council's work, including to Council meetings, where translation facilities have been put in place. The Welsh Language Unit now have dedicated translators at senior level to provide text translation and simultaneous translation support to Members and Senior Officers for and at Council and Committee meetings. These arrangements have remained in place throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

A national [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) is responsible for making sure that the Welsh Language Measure and the Standards are being implemented across Wales. We [report](#) our plans and progress to the Commissioner every year. The Council also has its own arrangements in place to make sure we are making progress, which in 2018 were recognised as good practice on the [Welsh Language Commissioner's website](#). Our compliance officer continues to audit practice within the Council and works with services to improve the ways they provide services through the medium of Welsh.

If we do not properly implement the Welsh Language Standards, we could receive a penalty of up to £5,000 for each breach. In 2019/20, 23 complaints were received, or still under investigation, about how the Council is treating the Welsh language, a slight decrease from the previous year (27). In the majority of these cases, complaints were upheld and action was taken to resolve the problems identified. We continue to work to quickly resolve any issues identified and to put in place measures to stop mistakes happening, including working closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, and so far have received no financial penalties.

As part of our duties under the law, we must publish two documents:

1. [Welsh Language Standards Action Plan](#) explains how we intend to comply with the standards
2. [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy](#) sets out how we will promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use more widely in the area.

To make sure that we keep on track and meet the Welsh Language Standards, a Steering Group of Councillors and representatives from other interested public bodies and voluntary groups, including Fforwm Iaith, who bring together local Welsh language groups:

1. checks the progress we are making against our Promotion Strategy,
2. reviews Audit reports to make sure that all services are delivering services in Welsh, and
3. approves major Welsh language policies that affect all services to our residents.

In addition to this, we had planned for our Overview and Scrutiny Committee to check how effectively we deliver our services in Welsh. This work has been delayed due to the postponement of meetings as a result of the impact of Covid-19, but we aim to put it in place later this year. Every year each service also looks at what they can do to improve and increase the services we provide in Welsh.

As well as challenging ourselves to do better, another way of helping us to improve is to work with others. We do this in many ways e.g.

1. as part of the Welsh Language Forum, made up of local voluntary groups, schools, and other key Welsh-centric local and national public bodies to progress the promotional strategy and other key work streams
2. Grŵp Deddf, the National forum for Welsh language officers working in the Public Sector
3. Grŵp Deddf Llywodraeth Lleol a Llywodraeth Cymru, a South East Wales Regional workgroup to support compliance with the regulations and share best practice;
4. Fforwm Mwy Na Geiriau, a Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional forum for Social Services and the Health Sector;
5. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Group and also
6. the Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner who help us to develop and implement our plans for the Welsh language.

To increase services we provide in Welsh,

last year we said we would	and amongst other things we
work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in RCT by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted investment in Welsh medium books and online resources in our libraries which has resulted in an increase in loans • worked with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to approve a revised List of Welsh Place-names for Rhondda Cynon Taf and started developing functionality on our website to allow residents to search using Welsh addresses e.g. for planning applications. • created an Estates & Works signage manual to support partner organisations to produce bilingual temporary road signs, increasing the visibility of Welsh language on our roads.
work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appointed an Eisteddfod Project Officer to co-ordinate the preparations for the Eisteddfod across the Council and liaise with the National Eisteddfod officers and chair of the Working Committee (Pwyllgor Gwaith) on behalf of the Council. As a

last year we said we would	and amongst other things we
the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2023.	result of the impact of Covid-19, the Eisteddfod will be held in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2023 and not 2022 as originally planned.
promote key national and local Welsh medium events to raise awareness of the Welsh language	Ran campaigns linked to St David's Day, Owain Glyndwr Day and Shwmae Su'mae Day, focussing on a variety of elements including both language and culture. Activities included storytelling and craft activities in libraries and work with both Welsh and English medium schools which received positive engagement and feedback.
encourage our businesses to see the advantages of Welsh both locally and globally.	Unfortunately, due to a lack of Welsh Government funding, we were unable to provide Businesses with support in using the Welsh language. However, we have recognised the Welsh language as an integral part of the RCT Tourism Strategy, which will play a key role in boosting the local economy through encouraging sustainable tourism to the area.
further strengthen the translation facilities in Council meetings.	Put in place new simultaneous translation equipment in the Council chamber along with guidance to help people chairing meetings to run them bilingually with the help of translators. Two staff are following post graduate courses in simultaneous translation, which will help them to support people to access meetings in their language of choice without interrupting the flow of meetings
increase the opportunities for staff to learn Welsh, including by working with Cymraeg Gwaith (Work Welsh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Cymraeg Gwaith, provided online and residential training courses to help staff improve their workplace specific Welsh language skills. • Provided basic Welsh language training as part of induction for all social care staff, and included the nationally produced app 'Gofalu Trwy'r Gymreg', on the mobile phones of all social care staff which provides Welsh phrases to help communication with Welsh speaking clients. • Set up a buddies scheme so that staff can practice their workplace Welsh with other learners • Produced a Corporate Induction video to help all new staff understand the Welsh Language Standards in a more interactive way using infographics and animation

We have received positive feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner about our progress, so we know we are on the right track, but there is always more to do.

Among other things, in 2020/21 we will:

- continue to work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in RCT by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.
- continue to work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2023.
- highlight the significance of Welsh people and culture, including the Welsh language, in Council wide campaigns relating to UK and world events.
- Continue to support staff to develop more advanced Welsh language skills so we can help more customers in their language of choice.
- help people use more online services in Welsh through developing bilingual software.
- develop our processes so more customers can have their queries dealt with in Welsh by the first person they speak to.
- continue to review how well our services are offering and promoting Welsh.

Our work to promote the Welsh language is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Biodiversity

Key Information:

- Over 70% of land in Rhondda Cynon Taf is classed as countryside, while total tree coverage is approximately 33%.
- There are at least 85 different kinds of bee throughout old coal tips in RCT, alongside a wide range of other insects, lichen, fungi and flowers.
- Two thirds of the land within County Borough has been identified as high-importance for wildlife, including Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- 11 Parks throughout the County Borough have been awarded Green Flag status for accessibility and exemplary management.
- According to the [State of Nature Report 2019](#), of the 6,500 plant and animal species in Wales, 523 (8%) are under threat of extinction from the UK, 666 (17%) are under threat of extinction from Wales, and 73 (2%) are already extinct in Wales.
- As per the figures from [Natural Resources Wales](#), 22% of electricity generated in Wales is from renewable sources. The amount of renewable electricity generated is the equivalent of 48% of electricity consumed in Wales, a five-percentage point increase compared to 2016.
- As shown in [Government statistics](#), while RCT is the 4th largest producer of total carbon emissions in Wales, the County Borough is also 4th lowest when considered on a per-person basis (4.11 metric tonnes)

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, comprising all plants and animals, as well as the ecosystems in which they live. Alongside all other Local Authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a duty under [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) to maintain and enhance its biodiversity, taking account of the diversity, scale, condition and adaptability within its local ecosystems. This is in addition to the requirements of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#), which itself compels public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions and to safeguard our local environments in pursuit of becoming a [more resilient](#) and [more globally responsible Wales](#).

In line with the Biodiversity Duty of the Environment Act, the Council must also produce a report to the Welsh Government every 3 years outlining what has been done to improve biodiversity across the County Borough. Our [first Biodiversity Report](#) in 2019, demonstrated a considerable amount of positive work being conducted across the Council, while identifying certain areas in which improvements can be made.

Plans to address issues of Biodiversity, as well as interrelated environmental issues such as Climate Change, are set out in [the Council's new Corporate Plan](#) and are being developed in more detail as part of the ongoing work of the [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#). This newly established group, which first met in November 2019, aims to ensure that the Council becomes Carbon Neutral by 2030 and intends to work with both residents and businesses throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf

to support the entire County Borough in also becoming Carbon Neutral as close to 2030 as possible.

As outlined in its [Future Work Programme](#), the work of the Climate Change Steering Group is set to focus on a number of major environmental issues, including Biodiversity, Carbon Reduction, Renewable Energy, Natural Resources and Community Engagement, as well as addressing any unforeseen and pressing issues brought forward by a member of the committee. A more detailed account of the work currently undertaken by the Steering Group, alongside that of other services across the Council, is given below.

Our work in 2019/20 included:

- Putting in place a sustainable natural drainage system to prevent flooding at Park Lane School, with [work onsite starting in August 2020](#). The scheme uses existing land between Aberdare Park and a redundant pitch to reduce the flood risk. This work will also contribute to the Rhos Pasture network for the conservation of the rare Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.
- Publishing a new [Biodiversity website](#) to showcase the Council's Biodiversity work and to encourage local residents to engage with future Biodiversity initiatives. The site will be further developed in the future to provide information that will help staff, residents and community groups to work together to protect and enhance our local ecosystems.
- Working with Community Groups across the County Borough on events including the Pontyclun Wildflower Walk, the Beddau Biodiversity Ramble; Aberdare Park moth and bat events and Dare Valley Country Park bird events, engaging and educating members of the public about local wildlife and habitats. Nature events for children were held at both Dare Valley and Ynysangharad Parks.
- Publication of the [RCT Recorders Newsletter](#) in January 2019. The newsletter details resident wildlife sightings and so provides a snapshot of biodiversity within the area. The latest edition, which provides a summary of resident records from 2018/19, indicates a continued interest in the local biodiversity, with evidence of involvement from at least 34 residents. Following delays due to the ongoing pandemic, the 2019/20 edition is planned later in the year.
- Ensuring that Biodiversity is considered across all Council work through providing training and advice to services. This included training Street Care teams on more [sustainable grass-cutting and wildflower policies](#) and supporting our Corporate Estates team to consider biodiversity in the management of our Council land and buildings.
- Establishing the new Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group (as mentioned above), attended by Councillors from all political groups across the Council, as well as community representatives from [Welcome to our Woods](#) and [Friends of the Earth](#). This was set up in response to the recommendations from [the Committee on Climate Change](#) and the Welsh Government's '[Low Carbon Wales](#)' and has started to put in place and monitor work across the Council to tackle the impact of Climate Change. Future areas of work will include: creating and using renewable energy, reducing energy use in Council buildings, improving air quality across the County Borough and eliminating the use of single use plastic across the Council.
- Completing 396 ecological reviews of planning applications received by the Council and continuing to monitor the work identified from previous planning applications to reduce

the environmental impact e.g. sustainable long term management of public open spaces, protecting trees and hedges meadows and wildlife corridors.

- Continuing to reflect the Biodiversity Duty in our work, including work to prepare the new Local Development Plan, which will set out the development of the County Borough over the next 15 years and provide the basis for the consideration of future planning applications.
- Developing a new [Procurement Social Responsibility policy](#), which acts to protect local and national biodiversity by making sure that goods and services bought by the Council, suppliers and partners cause minimal damage to the environment.
- Working with partner organisations to promote biodiversity across operations and supply chains; for example, collaborating with Natural Resources Wales to develop the [South Central Wales Area Statement](#). This digital statement, which covers an area comprising Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, maps out the local environment, ecosystems and natural resources in detail and begins to identify the key challenges facing the area. This is an ongoing project that intends to address the identified challenges with collaborative and sustainable solutions.
- Progressing the [‘Healthy Hillside’ project](#), continuing to work with partners and the community developing sustainable land management to reduce the severity and impact of grass fires on 6 sites in RCT whilst increasing the biodiversity of the habitat.
- We had planned to continue with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership and progress the review of [Action for Nature](#). However, progress was delayed by the late start to Welsh Government funding, and some partnership events were cancelled due to Covid-19.

Our plans for 2020/21 include:

- Delivering peatland restoration schemes to ‘re-wet’ peatlands which have dried out or degraded, to prevent carbon being released into the atmosphere and improve biodiversity, alongside other flood-management to provide natural flood management solutions.
- Working with residents to support grassland management and wildflower growth, also making more and better information available, including through our new Biodiversity webpage. The public will also be engaged through social media to help assist wildflower growth through the identification of new growing areas and the continuation of the ‘Grab a Rake’ scheme.

Supporting Wildflowers and Grassland in Rhondda Cynon Taf

To improve the Wildflowers and Grassland in RCT, we have put in place a ‘cut and collect’ system of mowing. ‘Cut and Collect’ allows flowers to bloom and seed before they are cut, and the cuttings collected and removed help provide the best environment for wildflower growth. Removed cuttings are composted in ‘eco-piles’, which both eliminates waste and also provides hibernation areas for wildlife. Wildflowers that are thriving also support bees, other pollinating insects and creatures that thrive in the habitat. Welsh Government is funding the ‘cut and collect’ machinery that will do most of the work but we are encouraging residents to join our [‘Grab your Rake’](#) scheme to help in areas that the machinery cannot reach.

- Continuing to update the 'Action for Nature' plan in collaboration with the Council's Local Biodiversity Partnership. The Plan will set out how the Council intends to protect and enhance the wildlife and biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taf, while considering new legislation, emergent environmental challenges and the viewpoints of local residents, community groups and conservation experts.
- Considering the role of Natures Assets in RCT. This work has slowed as a result the pandemic but will include enabling the natural regeneration of woodland and the development of 'Green Infrastructure' – a network of natural spaces and features including parks, street trees, allotments, gardens and streams which provide benefits such as improved drainage, carbon storage and cooling of built up areas during heat waves, and also benefit people's mental and physical health.
- Planting approximately 350 trees, funded by Welsh Government. Most of the planting will be in our parks and cemeteries with the aim of helping to tackle the impact of climate change and pollution in urban areas as well as supporting local wildlife.
- Continuing to prepare the new Local Development plan, including the overall land use development strategy for the County borough, taking account of sites of importance for nature conservation and local ecosystems, and strengthening the Council's biodiversity policies. Residents will also be involved in the development of the new plan to ensure that expectations regarding the local environment are understood and that work is directed to satisfy the needs of the community.
- Developing a plan to reduce greenhouse gases across RCT and taking actions based upon the recommendations of the [Committee on Climate Change](#) and in line with the Welsh Government's 'Low Carbon Wales' advice.
- Through our Climate Change Steering Group, developing and implementing plans that will support and encourage Biodiversity and improve the environment across the County Borough.

Involving people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf

We have a good track record of engaging with and involving our residents from all backgrounds in many different ways. We take account of what they tell us when we are planning or changing our services and welcome feedback on what we do. We also know that there is always room to do better so we are committed to continue to improve how we involve residents and communities in the decisions that affect them.

We have shown throughout this report many examples of how we have involved people and communities in the decisions that affect them and the services they receive. We do this in many different ways ranging from having face to face conversations in our town centres and other public spaces e.g. parks and supermarkets to conducting more traditional surveys whether this is online or over the telephone where it is appropriate to do so. We also encourage feedback through social media, Twitter @RCTCouncil and [Facebook](#). We have found that talking to people about what is important to them and their families can provide a wealth of information that we use to both help shape our services and inform our more formal surveys. Getting out and about in communities and talking to people also means we get to know what is happening in communities when it isn't always obvious.

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to be involved and provide their views on the decisions that will or may affect them. To encourage more people to get involved we have to make the information available to them in different ways, including using plain English or Welsh in written information, producing easy read versions that provide a short, clear and simple summary of complex information and also using graphics and animated videos. Where we have used these different ways they have been well received and allowed us to widen our involvement with residents and communities.

Helping people to get involved

As part of our conversations with residents in our care homes about changes in residential care, we produced an easy read booklet which set out the proposals in ways that residents could better understand and be informed.

By making it easier for people to give us their views, more people are responding to us, using different methods and engaging in different ways. However, as with all public bodies, we know we need to do more if we are to be fully inclusive and if people are to continue to have a real and lasting involvement in the future of their communities. Covid-19 has meant that our usual ways of talking to people are not possible for the foreseeable future so we need to be more creative. One way of doing this is using 'virtual' engagement e.g. Zoom etc., which was used in August when [we asked people for their views about dog fouling](#). We aren't able to show you the session because of data protection, but the views of the people that joined us will be used to plan ahead. We also need to improve how we use the information that residents' complaints is giving us so that we get a more complete picture of residents views.

To improve how we work across the council to involve people and communities, we aimed to put in place a new Involvement Framework for 2020-24. The aim of this Framework is to provide an overview of the ways that the Council will inform, engage and consult with and involve people who live, work and do business in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the decisions that affect them. Discussions with Councillors on our Framework started in the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)

[in January 2020](#). Since then we have not been able to fully progress the work as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but will be doing so during 2020/21. In the meantime, we are working to the principles contained within the proposals agreed by Councillors so far, i.e.

1. Strengthen the culture of involvement
2. Make sure our Involvement is focused and has a purpose
3. Make it easy for everyone to be involved
4. Streamline our involvement requests
5. Train and enable staff so that they have the skills they need
6. Provide feedback to people about how their views have been used
7. Evaluate what have done so that we can improve in future

In developing our new Framework we have taken account of good practice and advice including guidance from the [Future Generations Commissioner](#) about involving people and communities.

We can point to many examples of how residents and communities were involved in the Council's work last year e.g.

- **Setting the Council's Budget** - 4,000 residents gave us their views about our 2020/21 budget in town centres, leisure centres and libraries across RCT. We also talked to representatives of our older residents in the Older Person's Advisory Group (OPAG) and representatives of our disabled residents in the Disability Forum. By using 'RCT Money' people were able to choose where they thought it could be best spent.
- **Shaping our new Corporate Plan** - we held 15 events in venues and locations across Rhondda Cynon Taf so that we could talk to residents of all ages and background and get their views on what is important to them. We also videoed a sample of willing volunteers to bring life into the feedback they provided.
- **Changes to residential care homes** we sought a wide range of views from our residents in residential care and their relatives. These discussions took place within the Care Homes which were also open for care staff to attend. We also provided an advocacy service for all residents and their families. We also held more open 'drop in' events for RCT residents of all ages to inform discussions and decisions about residential homes for older people in each of the three geographical areas of the County Borough.
- **How to tackle empty properties across RCT** – so that we can bring empty properties back to life and improve local places.
- **Traffic Management in Llantrisant**, when 200 people give us their views about a [potential traffic management scheme for Llantrisant Old Town](#).

The Secretary of the Older Person's Advisory Group [tells us what is important to them and to many of our older residents.](#)

We are also in regular contact through meetings or by mail with representative groups so that we gain a greater ongoing understanding of the issues that affect them, including

- Our Citizens' Panel – which we have continued to review and expand so that it more fully represents the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Disability groups and the [RCT Disability Forum](#).

- Young People through Youth Forums. Feedback from an event held in Pontypridd Rugby Club, some of which was filmed, told us what it is like for young people to live in RCT and what could be improved. This feedback was used to develop the Council's new Corporate Plan.
- During 2019/20 we also trialled a new system to help us find out the best way of getting to know more about our residents and the best way of getting information directly to those who want or need it. Although information from the system helped us in some ways, e.g. helping us to prepare to bid for some funding, it didn't fully meet our needs. We are continuing to look for other ways that will provide the information we need. We are also continuing to work as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board, the Safeguarding Board and other partnerships in involving people in their areas of work.

More recently, in early 2020 we were dealing with a series of unprecedented events that affected people and households across RCT. The significant flooding arising from Storms Ciara and Dennis and the start of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic have affected all areas of Public Services. These events required the Council to communicate and engage with residents, volunteers, community groups and other key partners to provide accurate and timely information so that we could coordinate help and support our most vulnerable residents and businesses affected. The Council is continuing to work with people, communities and partners to support those in need. You can find more detailed information about the way the Council is responded to these events in the [PLACE evaluation](#).

Our plans for 2020/21 include

- continuing to engage and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions.
- finalising the Involvement Framework and putting in place the steps needed to implement the principles across the Council so that we improve how we engage and involve our residents and communities.
- making sure the Council meets the requirement of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) law, to increase public participation in local democracy and improving transparency by putting in place a 'public participation strategy'.
- continuing to make our consultations more accessible to residents, by increasing the use and availability of easy to read materials. Training our staff in the production of plain English materials.
- increasing the use of digital engagement methods, through increasing the use of social media and videos.
- developing 'virtual' involvement and engagement, ensuring that we include those people without online access.

Giving Back

In a recent staff survey 77% of staff surveyed told us that they were proud to work for the Council. Over 80% of our staff live in RCT, with many others also having connections to local communities. Throughout the year, the Council, Councillors and staff support many charities in their own time, in many different ways, giving back to the community they serve. Examples include.....

Giving Gifts – at Christmas to children and young people who may not otherwise receive gifts through the Santa appeal and to those who are homeless through relevant charities.

Giving Essentials – through regular donations to foodbanks and homeless charities.

Giving Money – to numerous charities and supporting national and local causes in bake sales, dressing up and down days, direct sponsorship for activities and donating cash instead of sending Cards at Christmas time.

Giving the Spotlight – to people and groups in our communities e.g. PRIDE, International Women's Day, Black History Month and many Health Awareness campaigns.

Giving Blood – encouraging staff to donate blood and providing the opportunity to do so in work time if necessary.

Giving Support – locally by providing access to council buildings, parks and pitches to charities so that they can hold activities within communities. This Council is also a partner in [PONT](#), a charity funded by local people based on friendship, commitment and respect and providing support and community to community links to Mbale Uganda. Among other things PONT has provided motorbike ambulances, trained thousands of healthcare workers and twinned over 100 local schools.

Giving Confidence

For the last 10 years, one of our residents in Supported Living Accommodation has joined the many hundreds of people in the Annual Macmillan Rhondda Walk from Treherbert to Trehafod, last year raising £90 for Macmillan Cancer Support. From collecting and banking sponsor money to completing the walk, staff are with him every step of the way.

How our work in 2019/20 contributed to the seven national Well-being Goals?

National Well-being Goal	Building a Strong ECONOMY	Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone PEOPLE	Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work PLACE
Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for businesses to emerge and flourish • Building new homes • Creating opportunities for jobs • Providing schools where children can achieve the best they can 	Supporting Children and Young People by giving them a great start in life through our Resilient families programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements • Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future
Resilient	Promoting biodiversity by protecting existing habitats where possible and creating new areas for wildlife in our schools	Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules by using modular construction methods in the construction of our Extra Care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces • Integrating biodiversity into new housing estates • Expanding 'Healthy Hillside's' project
Healthier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in our Leisure Centres • Putting in place Walking Routes for residents and visitors and also safe routes to school for children and young people 	Helping people to stay as well as they can for as long as they can by encouraging increased activity through investing in our playgrounds, leisure centres and community facilities in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Flag progress in parks • Continuing to tackle environmental crime • Encouraging healthy activities in our parks e.g. Park Runs
More Equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing sanitary products to help tackle period poverty for girls in our schools • Providing opportunities to all our residents to improve their digital skills • Freezing prices in Leisure Centres and minimal pricing in the Lido 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances • Creating opportunities for people of all ages to get together to learn from each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Community Hubs for all to enjoy and benefit from • Making sure that our residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy our parks and green spaces
Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving housing for all our residents and creating pleasant neighbourhoods in which communities can thrive. • Organising Community events that bring people together, e.g. Big Bite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people to stay in their own homes for longer and enabling them to contribute to communities and strengthen social relationships • Continuing 'Food & Fun' during School holidays 	<p>Keeping people safe and helping them to feel safe by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting sensible drinking • tackling anti-social behaviour

National Well-being Goal	Building a Strong ECONOMY	Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone PEOPLE	Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work PLACE
Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating the culture and history of the area in our theatres and parks • Promoting RCT as a visitor destination, including the Eisteddfod 	Providing more opportunities for our residents to communicate with the Council and each other in Welsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising Arts events for all sections of the community • encouraging local talent
Globally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting in place transport hubs that will minimise car use and so improve air quality • Supporting Fair Trade Initiatives 	Our work with PONT, a volunteer-based charity organisation in RCT which is making a difference to lives in Mbale, Eastern Uganda and which aims to support Ugandan organisations who have the potential to tackle poverty in their towns and villages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating our recycling and reuse • Progressing the Eco Park in Bryn Pica • Continuing to celebrate residents who go above and beyond to keep RCT clean and green through our 'Love Where You Live' awards