

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL'S

ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT &



SELF-ASSESSMENT

2024 - 2025

This document contains information about the planning and progress of the Council's priorities which are the Council's Well-being Objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and also the Council's summary Self-Assessment as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council serves an area in the South Wales Valleys covering 424 square kilometres, stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north to the Capital City of Cardiff in the south. The range of services delivered is diverse in nature and complexity - from maintaining green spaces, collecting recycling and refuse, delivering meals on wheels, educating our young people and caring for those that require support to remain independent. The terrain of the county borough is equally diverse. Services are delivered within the community and from a significant number of locations, ranging from offices to depots and frontline buildings.

This report incorporates our annual self-assessment for 2024/25 which is a requirement of the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) as well as a summary of our performance which is a requirement of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

When reporting our performance for the year and conducting our annual self-assessment, we have been honest and have identified areas for improvement. Our embedded service self-evaluation process has helped us to demonstrate a commitment to continually reviewing our arrangements to answer the key questions in respect of how well we are performing, how we know and what needs to improve.

Based on the review undertaken and the evidence in place, ***the Council's arrangements have provided the basis to maintain the organisations' financial stability and resilience, during a period of significant financial pressures and constrained funding, through robust planning, prioritisation and management of scarce resources. This position was underpinned by sound scrutiny and decision-making processes and well-established self-assessment arrangements, and supported Corporate Plan priority areas, wider service delivery and improved outcomes for service users. A small number of areas for improvement have been identified to further strengthen existing processes. Accordingly, based on the self-assessment process the Council has demonstrated that it has exercised its functions effectively; used its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and that governance arrangements were effective for securing the above.***

Our annual self-assessment has identified areas for improvement, and these are included under the relevant sections of this report. These areas will be monitored throughout 2025/26 as part of our performance management arrangements.

If you have any comments or views about this document, or would like more information, please contact the [Council's Performance Team](#).



DELIVERY AGAINST OUR **WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES** DURING 2024/25

Before we go into the detail of our annual self-assessment (Section 3), in this Section we have provided a summary of the Council's performance during 2024/25. Quarterly updates on the Council's performance were reported during 2024/25. Our detailed annual performance report for 2024/25 was presented to Cabinet at its meeting held on [7th July 2025](#) and then to Overview and Scrutiny on [16th July 2025](#).

During the year we updated our reporting arrangements further by clearly setting out how we used the 5 ways of working and evaluated our progress against the 7 national well-being goals. We were particularly focused on demonstrating the impact that our services have on our communities and have developed further the 'lived experience' of some of our residents by including detailed 'delivery in action' sections within our performance reporting arrangements. We also strengthened the evaluation of our progress against the Corporate Plan against targeted outcomes, as set out below.

It is not the intention of this Section to reproduce the full detail reported in the end of year annual report, instead a focused summary of delivery against our Well-being Objectives and the supporting outcomes that are set out within our Corporate Plan is provided. The risks to delivering our Well-being Objectives are embedded into our performance reporting arrangements and are reviewed and scrutinised throughout the year, for ease of reference a copy of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at the end of 2024/25 is [provided](#).

Full detail of the work that took place during 2024/25 can be found in the annual performance report that was presented to [Cabinet on 7th July 2025](#).

The information presented below provides a summary of the progress we made during 2024/25.



PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

2024/25 DELIVERY

OVERALL STATEMENT OF PROGRESS:

For the 8 outcomes we set out to achieve in our Corporate Plan, we have made...

- positive progress against 5 outcomes;
- good progress although slower than anticipated against 1 outcome; and
- mixed progress against 2 outcomes.

More detailed information for each outcome is set out below.

Evaluation of progress against outcomes we expect to see by 2030.

Attendance, exclusions and attainment in all our schools will continue to show strong progress, compare favourably with other parts of Wales, with improved educational outcomes, work and training opportunities for our school leavers.

Progress in this area has been mixed. We have continued our focus on supporting school attendance, including support and challenge to schools and family engagement approaches. Both primary and secondary phase increased in academic year 23/24, with primary attendance increasing 0.7 percentage points to 91.7% and secondary attendance by 1.0 percentage point to 86.8%. Data to end of Spring term 24/25 show 70 schools have improved their attendance compared to the same period last year. Attendance for Free school meal pupils also improved in academic year 23/24, however although the gap closed slightly it remains well below that of other pupils. Although it is positive that attendance is increasing, attendance nationally remains below pre-pandemic levels and will continue to be a priority area for improvement.

Fixed term exclusions continued to increase in both primary and secondary phase in academic year 23/24. During 24/25 academic year to date, 3 schools within the Team Around the School pilot showed a reduction in fixed term exclusions and Step 4 provision has also had a positive impact on reducing/preventing exclusions across a number of schools. Current data shows exclusion levels are reducing in the current academic year, with fixed term exclusions in secondary phase reducing to 130.63 per 1,000 pupils to the end of spring term compared to 172.21 for the same period the previous year. However, exclusion levels remain too high, and this will continue to be a priority area for improvement, with continued support for whole school approaches to support behaviour and Well-being.

A-level outcomes were improved by 4.4 percentage points for A*/A (23.5%) and reduced by 0.2 percentage points for A*-C (70.1%) in 2024 compared to 2019. RCT remains below Welsh average, but the gap has narrowed by 0.5 percentage points for A*/A and grown by 0.4 percentage points for A*-C. GCSE outcomes were improved by 0.8 percentage points for A*/A (19.2%) and remained the same for A*-C (62.2%) in 2024 compared to 2019. RCT remains below Welsh average, but the gap has remained the same for A*/A and narrowed by 0.6 percentage points for A*-C. Key Stage 4 attainment data for academic year 23/24 showed a slight decrease for key indicators, in line with a similar decrease nationally. The Capped 9 score of 361.2 was above the Wales average, however literacy, numeracy and science scores remained below the Wales average. Of 24 schools inspected in academic year 23/24, 19 were not in follow



up categories. School improvement will continue to be strengthened through the introduction of the local school improvement service in Autumn 2025. There was a reduction in the percentage of year 11 and year 13 school leavers not in Education, Training or Employment. In year 11, this reduced by 0.5 percentage points to 2.4% and in year 13 by 0.9 percentage points to 3.7%. However, there was a significant rise in year 12 school leavers not in Education, Training or Employment, which rose to 2.1%. Practices for supporting year 12 learners at risk of becoming NEET will be reviewed to ensure young people are able to access alternative pathways and support to engage in education and training.

Families will have greater resilience: fewer children will be 'looked after' in our care and will have improved life chances.

In line with our Children Looked After Prevention Strategy, progress has been positive. We have continued to focus on supporting families to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. A number of very positive outcomes have been achieved on cases where Magu is providing support. There are examples of babies born, where there has been high risk of negative assessment and ultimately potential of separation from a parent, who have successfully remained in the care of one or both of their parents. The number of Children Looked After has continued to fall, from 637 at the end of March 2024 to 611 at the end of March 2025. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of Children on the Child Protection Register from 331 at the end of March 2024 to 309 at the end of March 2025. As in previous years, we have carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of children and young people, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support they receive. In total 117 children completed the survey, compared to 169 in 2023/24. Overall responses to the survey were positive, with the vast majority of respondents stating that they 'felt safe where they lived' (95%) and 'felt well cared for'. (96%).

More of our residents will use the opportunities available across the County Borough to keep active, healthy and well and reduce their risk of disease and ill health.

In line with our Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, progress has been positive. We have continued to develop initiatives that focus on 'People' by reducing barriers to exercise, providing personalised support to exercise and developing staff and volunteers to enable them to support physical activity; and 'Place' by expanding our programme of activities to school and community venues, developing formal and informal outdoor spaces and expanding our virtual offer. The number of residents using our sport and leisure facilities continues to grow with more than 2,750,000 visits recorded in 2024/25. The Council's Leisure for Life membership scheme also continues to grow year on year to almost 11,750 memberships.

Children in our care will be looked after closer to their home and stay connected to families, friends and communities.

In line with our RCT Residential Transformation Strategy, progress has been mixed. We have continued to focus on making sure that young people are looked after closer to home. Currently, 73% of children who are looked after currently reside in RCT (445/611). Despite continued efforts to increase the number of RCT Foster Carers and this continuing to be a priority, the number of RCT Foster Carers has reduced, 248 on the 31st March 2025 compared to 268 on the same date the previous year (and is a position that is being experienced more widely across Wales).



Better joined up services across health and social care so that people get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Progress continues to be made to implement an urgent health and social care community response although slower than we planned. Health data around Pathways of Care Delays have shown an increase in the number of people experiencing delays whilst awaiting social worker allocation (43 in 2024/25 compared to 34 in 2023/24), starting a new care home package (279 in 2024/25 compared to 170 in 2023/24) and the availability of care homes, both residential (50 in 2024/25 compared to 39 in 2023/24) and nursing (108 in 2023/24 compared to 58 in 2023/24). This performance reflects the increasing complexity of cases and high demand. Work will continue to improve pathways of care and reduce these delays.

As in previous years, we carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of adults aged 18 and over, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support that they receive. This year 496 people completed the survey compared to 724 people in 2023/24. Overall responses to the survey were positive, with the vast majority of respondents stating that they 'felt safe where they lived' (92%) and 'lived in a home that supports their Well-being' (93%).

Fewer people affected by/experiencing domestic violence and addiction.

6,327 individuals have engaged with our Healthy Relationships Outreach Project. Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) are specialist domestic abuse professionals who work with victims of domestic abuse at high risk of serious harm. Client outcomes for 2024/25 show 99% of clients reported feeling safer since intake, 68% had experienced a reduction in physical and sexual abuse and 66% had experienced a reduction in harassment and stalking and/or jealous, controlling and coercive behaviours.

More people have accessed treatment services for substance misuse compared to last year (3,188 treatment starts compared to 2,553 in 2023/24) and more individuals have engaged with targeted outreach where harm reduction services have been provided (781 individuals compared to 705 in 2023/24).

More affordable homes and fewer empty homes.

In line with our Empty Homes Strategy, progress in this area is positive. 240 empty properties (8.9%) were brought back into use in 2024/25, an increase from 200 the previous year. The rate of new affordable housing units delivered also increased to 14.3 per 10,000 households (from 8.6 per 10,000 households in 23/24), with 148 affordable homes delivered.

Fewer homes in RCT will have energy ratings below Energy Performance Certificate D.

Progress in this area is positive. 81.48% of homes in RCT now have energy ratings of D or above, an increase of 4.18 percentage points from the baseline data of 77.73%. Data is calculated for a rolling 10-year period based on published energy performance certificates.



WORK & BUSINESS

2024/25 DELIVERY

OVERALL STATEMENT OF PROGRESS:

For the 6 outcomes we set out to achieve in our Corporate Plan, we have made...

- positive progress against 4 outcomes; and
- mixed progress against 2 outcomes.

More detailed information for each outcome is set out below.

Evaluation of progress against outcomes we expect to see by 2030.

Town Centres with thriving businesses that help support the economy

Delivery in this area has been positive, but its impact is yet to translate into some key outcome data. Significant redevelopment projects have been delivered and positively received, including the Muni Arts Centre and public realm at the former Bingo Hall site. Other notable projects are in development or underway, including the redevelopment of Rock Grounds in Aberdare and the former M&S site in Pontypridd. A Business improvement District for Tonypandy is currently in development and work continues with the local and business community to produce a new town centre strategy.

Independent evaluations of projects including the Llys Cadwyn development, Ynysangharad park improvements and Robertstown Business units have demonstrated the positive impact of these projects. However, footfall and vacancy rates across our town centres show a mixed picture, with increased footfall in Porth and Treorchy but a slight decline in Aberdare and Pontypridd in comparison to the previous year. Vacancy rates have fallen slightly in Aberdare but remain high in Porth. There has been a slight decline in occupancy in Pontypridd and Treorchy, however both these towns significantly outperform national benchmarks and continue to maintain a strong offer of independent retailers.

Public transport infrastructure and systems

Porth transport hub opened to the public in January 2025, providing integrated bus and rail transport options. Funding has been maximised to support socially necessary public bus routes and a £1 bus fare scheme operated within RCT over the school summer holidays and December 2024. Design and construction were progressed on a range of active travel schemes including Phase 4 of the Rhondda Fach active travel route. Work is on-going to develop the suite of information to help assess the impact of our work.



More accessible publicly available Electric Vehicle charging points at Council locations supporting low carbon travel

Progress in this area has been positive, with a significant increase in electric vehicle infrastructure delivered. 117 charging points have been installed at Council premises in 24/25, increasing the total to 145. 3.12% of bays in Council car parks now have electric charging points, a slight increase from the previous year. The Council's fleet now contains 44 ULEV vehicles.

More businesses supported to develop, modernise and grow

Delivery in this area has been positive; however, the impact of our work has been mixed. More businesses were supported through grant programmes (136 from 106 the previous year) with 48.93 full time equivalent jobs created or safeguarded. However, we did not grow the number of carbon reduction measures included in grant supported programmes. The rate of business start-ups decreased slightly to 11.8 as a percentage of active enterprises, but maintained well above the Welsh average, which has decreased more steeply than in RCT. The rate of business closures improved to 14.2 as a percentage of active enterprises, although this is still above the national average rate.

More people in RCT will have the skills they need to find and progress in work

Progress in this area has been mixed. We have successfully recruited 20 Apprentices and 20 Graduates to our long running schemes and have delivered employment support and skills programmes throughout 2024/25, targeting a variety of clients including vulnerable customer groups, in-house staff, and young people. However, the percentage of people in RCT who are unemployed remained at 3.6% in 2024/25. The percentage of economically active people increased slightly to 73.0%, however this still remains below the Welsh average.

More people will visit RCT from outside the County Borough and enjoy the cultural, nature, activity and adventure tourism RCT has to offer

Progress in this area has been positive. The RCT Eisteddfod in August 2024 saw 187,000 visitors, with an increase in visitors to other local attractions over the Eisteddfod week (see Culture, Heritage & Welsh Language priority) and a 21% increase in visitors to attractions overall.

Visitor numbers increased between 2023 and in 2024 by 6.8% (from 2,197M in 2023 to 2.346M in 2024 – Source: STEAM¹)

¹ [STEAM model | Tourism Research | UK | Global Tourism Solutions \(UK\) Ltd](#)

Global Tourism Solutions (GTS) is an independent tourism research company with over thirty years of experience. They own and operate the STEAM model - Social Tourism Economic Impact, which provides both the public and private sectors with timely estimates of the annual value, volume and economic impact of tourism, broken down into multiple categories, for any defined geographic area.



NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

2024/25 DELIVERY

OVERALL STATEMENT OF PROGRESS:

For the 6 outcomes we set out to achieve in our Corporate Plan, we have made...

- positive progress against 6 outcomes.

More detailed information for each outcome is set out below.

Evaluation of progress against outcomes we expect to see by 2030.

Improved air quality across the County Borough.

Progress in this area has been positive. In 2024/25, RCT had 16 air quality management areas (AQMAs) with historically elevated levels of NO₂ emissions. As a result of demonstrated sustained compliance to the annual mean AQO (Air Quality Objective) for NO₂, 10 AQMAs that were within Rhondda Cynon Taf were revoked in March 2025. Average NO₂ levels across RCT were 24.3, a 5.1% decrease on a rolling 12-month period.

People and communities able to keep active and well in our green spaces.

Delivery in this area has been positive. We have focused on improving and maintaining our green spaces across RCT with four public green spaces and parks awarded the Green Flag Award 2024 for: Aberdare Park, Dare Valley Country Park, Taff's Well Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The Council continues to encourage residents to keep active with substantial numbers participating in outdoor physical activities. Over 460,000 visits were made to our outdoor grass pitches and over 660,000 to our 3G pitches in 2024/25. Over 30,000 people participated in free physical activities in our RCT Outdoor Facilities including Park Run and visits to our paddling pools.

Wildlife will thrive on positively managed council land.

Progress in this area has been positive with significant projects in development. 15 new living landscape sites have been added to the network in 2024/25 and there are now a total of 59 sites across RCT. Maintenance of biodiversity areas continued successfully this financial year however, due to resource issues, data has not yet been collected for 2024/25 but will be reviewed and updated in 2025/26.

Communities supported to do more to reduce, reuse and recycle and live sustainably.

Delivery in this area has been positive overall. Following the implementation of the new 'bin2bag' policy, recycling rates in RCT hit 70% for the first time with 97% of households correctly embracing the changes. 79,214.72 tonnes of municipal waste was collected and prepared for reuse and/or recycling which represents 71.11% of waste reused and/or recycled. 13,881.60 tonnes of food waste has been collected, an increase of 1,778.16 tonnes compared to last year (12,103.44 tonnes). 1,082.93 tonnes of small electrical items (sWEEE) have been collected this year, an increase of 113.80 tonnes compared to last year.



(969.13 tonnes). However, there was a slight increase of waste sent to landfill at 1.65% compared to the previous year of 1.43%. Despite this increase, overall municipal waste collected has reduced by 888 tonnes (from 112,291 last year to 111,403 tonnes in 2024/25)

Food sustainability has been encouraged and supported amongst residents in RCT with 12 new allotment plots completed.

People enjoying clean streets, free from environmental crime.

Progress in this area is positive. Community wardens continue to meet with PCSOs weekly to take joint patrols monitoring and eliminating dog fouling, littering, excess black bag offences and contaminated recycling. There are currently 8 covert cameras set up in fly-tipping 'hotspot' areas and plans are in place to install an additional 3 cameras in various locations. 95.74% of all reported graffiti was removed within target which is a slight decrease from the previous year of 98.96%. 100% of highways and relevant land inspected were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness which is the same as last year.

Increased green energy produced from 'renewables'.

There has been an increase in renewable energy generated from Council land or buildings from 2.3 MW in 2023/24 to 2.74 MW in 2024/25 which shows a continuing upward trend from 2021/22 baseline of 2 MW. With the completion of the solar farm at Coed Ely, this figure is set to increase further over the next financial year.



CULTURE, HERITAGE & WELSH LANGUAGE

2024/25 DELIVERY

OVERALL STATEMENT OF PROGRESS:

For the 6 outcomes we set out to achieve in our Corporate Plan, we have made...

- positive progress against 4 outcomes; and
- mixed progress against 2 outcomes.

More detailed information for each outcome is set out below.

Evaluation of progress against outcomes we expect to see by 2030.

More people are confident to use Welsh in their everyday lives and more learners access Welsh medium education.

In line with our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27, we continue to promote and support the use of the Welsh language across our services. Positive work to increase staff skill levels, including the Guaranteed interview scheme, has seen an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers in the workforce. Currently 8.01% of the Council workforce has Level 5 Welsh speaking ability, 2.51% at Level 4 and 2.27% at Level 3. All these show an increase from previous year's data, bringing us close to our target of 12.4% of Welsh speakers in the workforce (in line with the percentage in the community).

People feel that they 'belong' in their communities, get along well and treat each other with respect.

We do not have the data to demonstrate progress against this outcome at this time. However, in July 2025, we will be undertaking a Residents Survey, as part of a national all Wales approach, working with Data Cymru. The data returned will allow us to further understand the communities that live within the RCT area, allowing for greater confidence in decision making across the Council and we will be able to regularly access and use valuable, benchmarked data.

More opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to 'connect' through arts, libraries and community activities and events.

Progress has been positive with increased visits to our libraries in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. There were 818,108 total visits to libraries including physical and virtual visits in 2024/25 compared to 779,929 in 2023/24. There were fewer visits to our arts events with 38,697 individuals attending arts events compared to 46,146 in 2023/24. This data needs to be considered in the context of the National Eisteddfod where it was estimated that the hugely successful festival saw more than 186,000 people attending over the eight days.



Opportunities for residents to promote and express their culture, heritage and share commitment to sustainable lives through a thriving arts community.

Progress has been positive with the National Eisteddfod providing many opportunities for residents to express and engage in a thriving arts community. 25 RCT based artists, and artistic organisations have been supported in 2024/25, the same as in 2023/24.

More people identify with the history that shaped the Rhondda Cynon Taf of today and have a connection with the past.

Progress has been positive with the launch of an RCT Heritage Strategy 2025-30 that aims 'To celebrate and value the rich heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf by showcasing our cultural legacy, recognising the people and stories that shape our history and preserving our buildings, collections and physical assets for the present and future generations'.

An Armed Forces community is supported by the wider community.

We continue to support existing veterans' groups in RCT and are now building stronger relationships with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board, expanding our reach to outpatients and new GP recruits. Progress has been positive, and we have successfully helped and developed new support groups across the Borough, ensuring that there is a group for veterans to visit every day of the week, except Sunday.

3

SECTION

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL



OUR ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT &
SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024-2025

Overview

The Performance and Governance duties outlined in [Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) are about strengthening and empowering local government... *'defining principal councils as self-improving organisations through a system based on self-assessment and panel performance assessment'*.

Among other things, the Act requires Public Bodies to:

- keep performance under review
- consult on performance and
- report on performance, producing a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year.

The Act sets out that *'A council must produce a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year. The report must set out its conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements during that year, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements'*. This document aims to deliver this duty.

The Corporate self-assessment is a comprehensive assessment of the organisation and not a detailed assessment of the performance of each service portfolio. The self-assessment aims to provide a platform for assurance and improvement and in doing so help to ensure that we deliver the best outcomes for the residents that we serve.

This is our fourth self-assessment and we continue to learn and develop our approach from our [previous self-assessments](#), the most recent of which was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting held on [19th September 2024](#) and then approved by Council at its meeting held on [6th November 2024](#). We seek to learn from the shared knowledge emerging from other Councils and feedback from Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and the Council's Independent Regulators.

Within all parts of this self-assessment, we aim to make the best use of the data and information already available within the public domain, for example, reports to relevant Council committees, policies, plans and strategies. This approach reduces the repetition of information but provides the evidence required as set out within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act requires the Council to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', this is the extent to which:

- 1. is exercising its functions effectively;**
- 2. is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and**
- 3. its governance is effective for securing the above.**

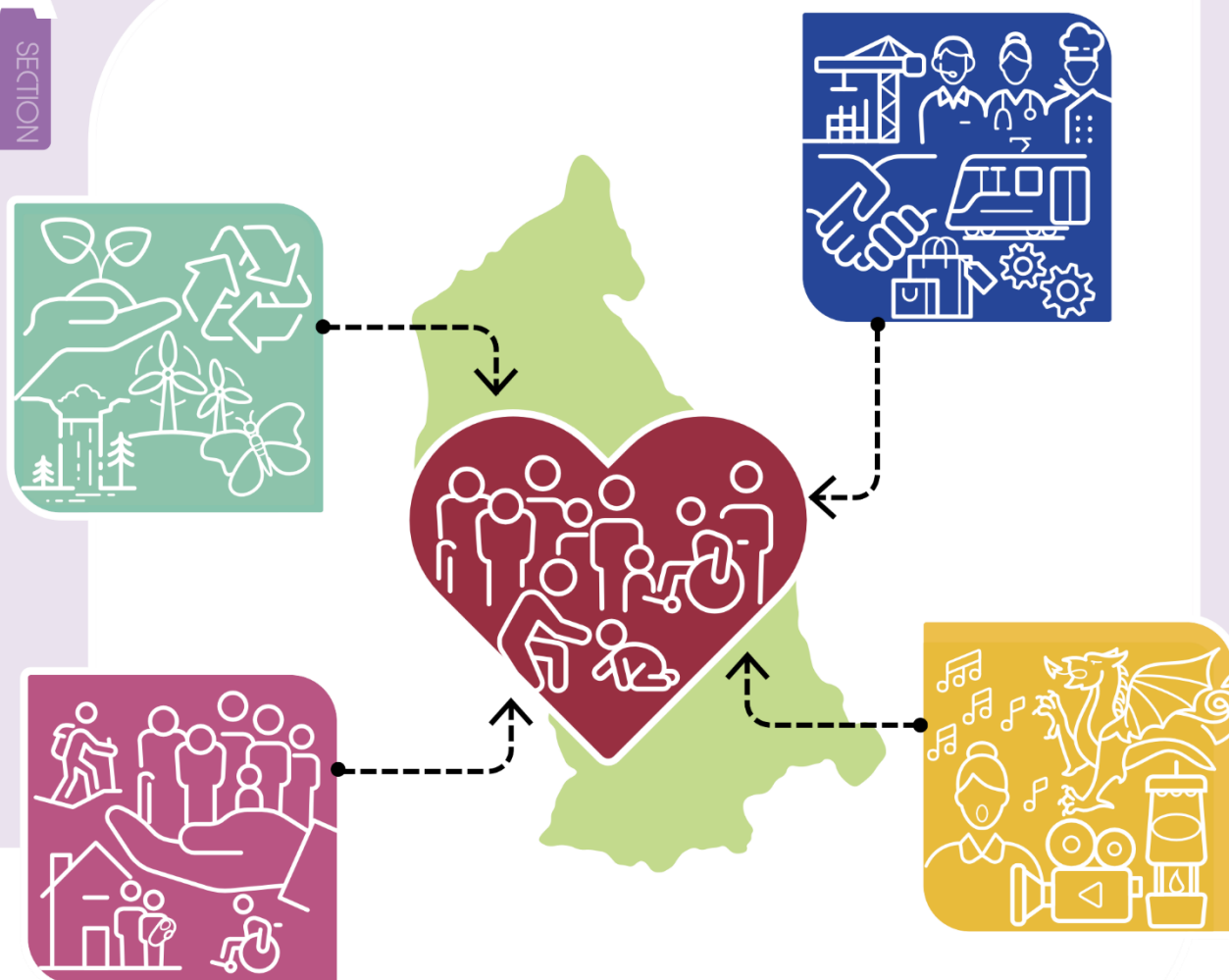
Whilst the Act sets out the duty to undertake and report an annual self-assessment, it does not provide a structure to either the process or the annual report, the Act specifically states that each organisation should determine its own approach. To help us through the process it is useful to understand what self-assessment means at its simplest level.

The following questions help guide us through the process of self-assessment:

1. **How well are we doing?**
2. **How do we know?**
3. **What and how can we do better?**

The framework that the Council has adopted and therefore the structure of our self-assessment is based upon the following areas:

- **Our Performance Management Framework - How it all fits together, with a focus on self-evaluation.**
- **Assessment of our 'Core Activities'** - This section includes the detail of our assessment and areas where we think we can improve on when appropriate.



OUR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK **HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER, WITH A FOCUS ON SELF-EVALUATION**

Our [Corporate Plan](#) sets out the outcomes the Council wants to achieve with the aim of delivering better social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for our communities. Delivery of the Corporate Plan is underpinned by our Performance Management Framework, the purpose of the framework is to have the arrangements in place to help deliver the intended outcomes, manage our risks and provide accountability for delivery.

Detailed priority plans are in place to support the delivery of our Well-being Objectives (these are our priorities within our Corporate Plan) and these plans aim to manage the strategic risks to achieving our objectives and contain milestones, actions, and measures. Service delivery plans are also in place, and are supported by a wide suite of policies, strategies and working arrangements.

Accountability in respect of delivering the Corporate Plan and managing our resources effectively is delivered through the reporting and scrutiny functions of the Council. To find out why, when and how our performance is monitored, please take a look at the [performance section](#) of our website.

To support the Council's performance culture, the [Performance Management Framework](#) includes timely and proportionate self-evaluation/assessment at both Service and Corporate levels. Our annual service self-evaluation (SSE) has been in place since 2016. In completing their SSE, services are encouraged to be honest and objective. Officers across the Council are encouraged to strive to deliver the best services within the resources available. The Council considers that effective self-assessment is not a fixed judgment that is completed once each year. It is an ongoing process.

The SSE asks services to be clear about how they are performing, and this is consistent with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. For example, how they are performing, evidence how they know, and identify what they can do to improve.

The SSEs also:

- Help services to make better decisions, manage risks and provide feedback in respect of the need for and scope of corporate support.
- Demonstrates value for money, potential for service change, spend or efficiencies and identify the impact of new or amended service provision.
- Enables corporate services to identify and prioritise service support needs.
- Acts as the mechanism by which key information is gathered to enable informed statutory reports in respect of the Welsh Language Standards, Equalities & Diversity and Biodiversity.
- Assists services in providing evidence for audits or inspections and deliver the requirements of relevant legislation.

The SSE model is reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure it takes account of feedback from services and remains relevant and fit for purpose. Over the years the SSE has been developed so that services can provide information about the Sustainable Development Principle through the five Ways of Working and other cross cutting themes that inform statutory reports.

Nineteen SSEs were completed by services during 2024/25.

Completed SSEs and Delivery Plan are reviewed and challenge by the Council's Chief Executive during 1-2-1 sessions. This robust and embedded arrangement allows the Chief Executive to hold Officers to account and identify areas where improvement or focus is needed to continually improve. These areas form the basis of service delivery and priority plans for forthcoming years.

These challenge and support meetings continue to be seen as an integral and valuable part of the Performance Management Framework and a positive opportunity to challenge performance, explore service issues and opportunities and gather intelligence on cross cutting issues for the Council.

All completed SSE's and Delivery Plans were made available on the [Council's Intranet site](#) for internal reference and use.

The Delivery Plans are subject to monitoring arrangements that are co-ordinated by our Performance Management Team. Relevant actions from Service Area Delivery Plans are pulled through to form the basis of the 'Priority Plans' that sit underneath the Council's Corporate Plan. These priority plans form the basis of the progress reports that are reported quarterly to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This Annual Self-Assessment Report provides the opportunity to assess our wider performance requirements as defined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Service Self Evaluation continues to identify and consider our more strategic challenges. Key themes identified by the Chief Executive from the 2024 process are listed below:

Strengths

1. Achievement of key milestones and actions in delivery plans, and delivery of service changes to meet needs, often within a challenging financial context across the Council, remains *consistently very high*. If we commit to do something, generally, it gets done. In most cases, it gets done exceptionally well, even in challenging circumstances.
2. Strategic context is generally well understood and robust and appropriate plans are generally in place across the Council. Leaders and managers know and understand their services, are aware of the pressures and needs, and respond appropriately. *This is a well-run Council*.
3. The Council has a *strong financial core* and our approach to financial management is consistently rigorous and robust. Our response to managing budget pressures is proactive and effective, and these approaches continue to serve the Council well.
4. The Council has *effective governance* arrangements in place to facilitate robust decision making and this helps to ensure and demonstrate accountability.

5. Services are alert to and are *proactively managing workforce* issues with the graduate and apprentice schemes noted for their importance, being a highly valued and successful component of the approach.
6. Across the Council services are alert to and are *effectively managing risk*, although in some areas these are growing.
7. Outcomes of *regulatory inspections are generally very good*, demonstrating confidence and assurance in leadership and management of the Council. This is supported by our own performance monitoring and reporting arrangements and internal audit work programme. When issues are identified, management response is effective.
8. Senior Leadership and Elected Members can continue to be *confident in the capability, commitment and drive of all staff* to deliver for the Council and our communities.

Opportunities for further development/improvement

1. Workforce Resilience

The resilience of our workforce continues to be an area of focus, both management and operational. Many services are operating under significant and sustained pressure, responding to increased demand, complexity of need, acute incidents and emergencies. Although the response to this pressure is always good, the well-being of staff is a priority.

2. Organisational Change and Alignment

There are some opportunities across the Council to further strengthen the sound arrangements already in place: clarifying roles and responsibilities, improve efficiency and remove duplication of effort and better align services to deliver better outcomes, value for money and optimise performance.

3. Workforce Planning

Challenges in recruiting to specialist roles across the Council in respect of the competitiveness of salaries, age profile and succession planning in some areas, with attendance rates and opportunities for progression highlighted as areas for on-going focus.

4. Data and Intelligence

Although there is evidence of improving the use of data in the evaluation of services this is variable and greater use of the data held by the Council could be made to create actionable intelligence and better inform service planning beyond routine performance management.

5. Outcome and Impact, Long Term Planning

Across the Council there is a strong focus on delivery. More work is required to evidence the impact and outcome of what we deliver on our communities, and planning for the future as part of service delivery planning arrangements. Service delivery planning arrangements this time around aimed to address this by asking Service Areas to begin planning up to 2030.

6. Optimising Capital and Strategic Investments

The Council's strategic and capital investments are having a visible and significant beneficial impact on our communities. We need to optimise the workforce and approach to support the delivery of these programmes to ensure they are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

7. Prevention and Early Help

The current landscape of services on offer is complex to navigate, and outcomes are not always clear. Developing a coherent strategic approach focussed on outcomes and value is a priority.

8. Housing and Homelessness

The mismatch in demand and supply, coupled with increased demand and complexity of need, has created an unsustainable and high-risk pressure on frontline housing services. Despite service innovation and effective risk management, further measures are required to address this imbalance.

9. Strategic Asset Management

There remains a need to ensure we are getting the best value out of our assets, that we utilise these assets to optimise service delivery, efficiency and contribution to our agreed strategic objectives.

10. Digital and Technology

Services are aware of the potential benefits to be realised from digitalisation or technology, with the need for arrangements to be further developed to optimise the delivery of these benefits. Opportunities remain to improve the view of our customers, use digital system development and business process mapping as an enabler for improvement and service transformation, focussing on those areas where there is the greatest to be gained from investment.

11. Community Development and Community Resilience

Our capacity for community engagement, co-production, place-based approaches to community development and building community resilience is prioritised and potentially threatened by the financial challenges facing the public and community & voluntary sectors. As this is a stated aim of our Corporate Plan, we need to continue to invest resources and organise our efforts accordingly.

12. Economic Development

The potential benefits of regional arrangements to promote economic well-being have not yet been fully realised. We need to ensure that our commitment to the [Cardiff Capital Region \(CCR\)](#) results in tangible benefits to RCT through strategic development, regional transport planning and investment in the local economy.

The areas where further development is needed are known to us and are key themes within our Corporate Plan. Where relevant (i.e. where they link to the assessment of our 'core set of activities') some of these areas are explored further in Section 3b of this report.



ASSESSMENT OF OUR **CORE ACTIVITIES**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act contains a core set of activities common to the corporate governance of public bodies. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 suggests that we use these as a framework for our self-assessment.

However, the Council considers that there are additional activities that also need to be assessed. The following section of this report is structured around this list of core activities; those that are considered as the core activities as defined by the Well-being of Future Generations Act have been marked with an asterisk for clarity:

- **Strategic planning and Approach***
- **Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management***
- **Human Resources/Workforce Planning***
- **Asset Management***
- **ICT and Digital**
- **Procurement and Commissioning***
- **Partnerships**
- **Involvement and Engagement**
- **Welsh Language**
- **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion**
- **Regulators' Feedback**
- **Net Zero**
- **Corporate Safeguarding**

These areas of work set and support the strategic direction of the Council, they help to ensure the Council has a sound structure of governance, accountability, decision making and legal compliance. It is important to note that all services, whether they are frontline or back-office / support services, form key components of the Council and are all subjected to annual service self-evaluations and delivery planning. All services across the Council continually strive to improve and make the best and most efficient use of resources. We have previously included a section within our annual self-assessment in respect of 'governance and scrutiny', but on reflection the detail that is contained within the [Annual Governance Statement 2024/25](#) provides the necessary information, to avoid duplication it is not included in the annual self-assessment this year.

The following section of this report explores the areas listed above and evaluates how effective they have been and, where relevant, set out areas for improvement.

1. Strategic Planning and Approach

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires the Council and all public bodies, to set well-being objectives that maximise their contribution to achieving the seven national well-being goals. In doing so, the Council is expected to take all reasonable steps to meet those Well-being Objectives.

Our Corporate Plan '[Working with our Communities](#)', agreed by [Cabinet on 20 March 2024](#) and approved by [Council on 24 April 2024](#), sets out four Well-being Objectives which clearly and closely align to the four pillars of Sustainable Development i.e.

1. **PEOPLE and COMMUNITIES** – Social Well-being.
2. **WORK AND BUSINESS** – Economic Well-being.
3. **NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT** – Environmental Well-being.
4. **CULTURE, HERITAGE and WELSH LANGUAGE** – Cultural Well-being.

In readiness for 2025/26 we reviewed our well-being objectives, and they remain the same.

To demonstrate that we are applying the Sustainable Development (SD) principle, Public Bodies must apply five Ways of Working and contribute to seven national Well-being Goals. Our Corporate Plan sets out how we have applied the Five Ways of Working and how the plan contributes to the seven national Well-being Goals. Ongoing progress is included in our longstanding [quarterly Performance Reports](#), our [annual Self-Assessment](#) and our end of year reports.

In the last year we continued to embed the Sustainable Development Principle e.g.:

- continuing to strengthen our Performance Management arrangements via a revised Performance Management Framework to further embed the SD principles and five 'Ways of Working' into Service Self Evaluations and Delivery Plans,
- strengthening evaluation in the quarterly Council Performance Report, clearly stating how delivery of the Council's four Well-being Objectives, align to and deliver the seven National Well-being Goals,
- further promoting the requirements of the Five Ways of Working by highlighting positive examples in the Council Performance Report,
- delivering training to Senior Officers in collaboration with the Future Generation Commissioners Office,
- using the Ways of Working Progress Checker as a tool to test whether the [RCT Involvement Strategy 2024-30](#) and the [RCT Heritage Strategy 2024-30](#) were achieving Five Ways of Working in their delivery.

The [Auditor General for Wales](#) has the power to examine public bodies, to assess the extent to which a body has acted in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle when setting Well-being Objectives and taking steps to meet those Well-being Objectives. In 2024/25 the Council received two Sustainable Development Principle specific reports that were part of the 2023/24 Audit Wales Audit Programme:

- a) [Application of the Sustainable Development Principle](#) A Local Project emerging from the Assurance and Risk Assessment.

Issued in June 2024, the audit findings reported:

Overall, we found that the Council has broadly effective arrangements to drive the application of the sustainable development principle across the organisation. However, there are opportunities to refine guidance for staff and expand the Learning and Development offer.

The following recommendations were made that the Council was required to respond to:

- R1. *The Council should refine and strengthen its corporate guidance and templates by revising the service self-evaluation template to ensure that each of the five ways of working is explicitly covered by a separate question, and ensuring that explanations of the five ways of working in the Directorate Delivery Plan guidance are more detailed, and more closely aligned to the wording in the Act.***
- R2. *The Council should expand its learning and development offer in respect of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act to help to ensure that staff are able to apply the sustainable development principle as needed in their roles.***
- R3. *The Council should develop arrangements to ensure that the sustainable development principle is effectively and consistently applied as part of its project planning and project management arrangements.***

A report was provided to the Governance and Audit Committee on the [19th September 2025](#) that included the finalised report [‘Setting of Well-being Objectives’](#) along with the Council’s [Management Response](#) that set out the actions to be taken by the Council to implement the recommendations reported by Audit Wales.

- b) [Setting of Well-being Objectives](#) to meet the Auditor General’s statutory duty to examine each public body at least once in a five-year period, presenting their reports on the examinations to the National Assembly for Wales a year and a day before each ordinary Assembly election.

Issued in March 2025, the audit findings reported:

The Council has applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives and has considered how they will be resourced over the medium term, but there is scope to improve monitoring of long-term outcomes.

The following recommendations were made that the Council was required to respond to:

- R1. *We found there are opportunities for the Council to build on the progress to date when monitoring their well-being objectives. The Council should:***

- *Evaluate the overall progress against each well-being objective to help inform the public on the level of progress against each well-being objective and help inform the setting of future objectives.*

R2. We found there are opportunities to improve data and alignment of the Culture, Heritage and Welsh language well-being objective. The Council should:

- *Build on the evidence base that supports the objective by using all available datasets; and*
- *Look for further areas of alignment with other well-being objectives to maximise the value from the Culture, Heritage and Welsh language objective on other objectives.*

A report was provided to the Governance and Audit Committee on the [29th April 2025](#) that included the finalised report '[Setting of Well-being Objectives](#)' along with the Council's [Management Response](#) that set out the actions to be taken by the Council to implement the recommendations reported by Audit Wales.

We continue to liaise with the office of the Future Generations Commissioner and welcome their assistance in delivering future training in 2025/26, with the first event delivered in June 2025 to coincide with the publication and promotion of the Future Generations Commissioner Report and its 50 recommendations.

Our progress and planned work against the recommendations will be reported on in our Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26.

In our previous self-assessment, we identified 4 areas for improvement in respect of our Strategic Planning and Approach.

- **We need to use the new Corporate Plan 2024/30 as a springboard for further innovation and delivery of more targeted and efficient services. This means continuing to consider all options and opportunities, researching what others are doing and deliver on-going service transformation.**
- **We need to build further capacity to support transformational change, particularly in frontline service areas experiencing sustained high levels of demand.**
- **We need to increase the use of data and turn this into meaningful information, whether this is how we compare with others, or to inform how services could be changed (i.e. learn from others) to deliver services more effectively and efficiently. This will also support on-going effective scrutiny.**
- **We need to reflect on how our services work together, where similar roles are discharged and consider structural changes to our workforce where required. This will help us to deliver better outcomes and be more effective and efficient.**

An update on our progress is below:

Reviewing and transforming our services worked well in some areas, but we learnt that more alignment is needed between the transformation work and the work that takes place by the Finance Service during the annual budget setting process. During 2025/26 we will review and establish how the transformation work can be better aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements, all of which supports the delivery of our Corporate Plan. A key part of the way in which the Council can transform its services lay in the ways in which we use data. Whilst we use data well in lots of instances and we have a dedicated and specialist team (within ICT & Digital Services) in place to help ensure robust quality assurance process are in place that enable timely and accurate information to be collated, we know that there remain opportunities to use the data that the Council holds more extensively in support of our strategic planning and delivery.

Transformational work took place during 2024/25 whereby a number of Service Areas were selected and reviewed to establish whether there were any instances of overlap or duplication. The aim being to identify opportunities to restructure relevant parts of the business thereby helping to deliver more effective and efficient services. This work was completed by March 2024, the results of which were submitted for consideration by the Council's Senior Leadership Team. The outcome of this work is due to be reported in 2025/26.

The Council continues to deliver its corporate plan during times of significant pressure on public finances and pressure on our statutory and discretionary services. Good progress has been made to transform some areas of our services, but further work is needed to ensure all services are reviewed and challenged. Overall, the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment 2023/24 continue to be relevant, but have been updated to reflect the work that has taken place:

- A: We need to continue to be innovative and deliver more targeted and efficient services by considering all options and opportunities, researching what others are doing and deliver on-going service transformation.**
- B: Transformational change needs to be embedded into our processes by building it into the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.**
- C: We need to continue to use our data meaningfully – using it to identify future trends and inform change.**

2. Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management

FINANCIAL PLANNING

The Council updated its MTFP and this was reported to Cabinet (23rd September 2024), full Council (25th September 2024) and the School Budget Forum (24th September 2024) providing opportunity for scrutiny and stakeholder understanding of the Council's forecasted financial position, risks and opportunities.

The Council's MTFP updates have consistently supported:

- The identification of future forecasted budget gaps (taking account of estimated expenditure requirements and funding levels) that have accurately informed savings requirements and supported a sustainable and targeted programme of improvement and investment (see also

Supporting Principle D – ‘[Annual Revenue Budget Strategy](#) and [3-year Capital Programme](#)’ and ‘[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)’).

- An on-going assessment and public reporting and scrutiny of reserve levels, including a detailed overview of the Council’s reserves reported to full Council alongside the MTFP update on [25th September 2024](#). The sustainable approach to the replenishment and utilisation of the Council’s earmarked reserves has enabled continued additional one-off investment in Corporate Plan priority areas; for 2024/25 this totalled £23Million and were agreed by full Council on [25th September 2024](#) (£6.950Million) and [5th March 2025](#) (£16.050Million). The additional one-off investment, along with other allocated resources, contributed to capital expenditure investment of £152Million for 2024/25.
- The setting and delivery of balanced revenue budgets.

The consistent delivery of the above outcomes provides assurance on the robustness of the arrangements in place and a demonstrable commitment to prioritise resources to Corporate Plan areas.

The Corporate Plan comes at a time of significant pressure on public finances and pressure on our statutory and discretionary services, it will not be possible to deliver the plan without changing the way in which the Council operates. We need to continue to transform our services, this will be a challenge but one that the Council must embrace (and invest in with staffing resources) to deliver change and deliver the best possible services to those that need them. A key aspect of delivering transformational change will be to review the data that the Council holds; we need to use data effectively to inform decision making. We will also need to research and see what others are doing.

The Council’s financial management arrangements are well-embedded and have provided the foundation for delivery. In light of the current pressures on public finances we know that we have significant challenges ahead. The areas for improvement set out within Strategic Planning and Approach, namely points A and B, also relate to Financial Planning.

PERFORMANCE

The Council’s [Corporate Plan 2024-2030 'Working with our Communities'](#) sets the overall direction for the Authority describing the vision, purpose, well-being objectives and defining outcomes, further to stakeholder engagement and scrutiny. In parallel, the Corporate Plan has taken into account the Well-Being of Future Generations Act Sustainable Development Principle, Five Ways of Working and Seven National Well-Being Goals, and has set Four Well-being Objectives.

There is clear alignment between the Council’s Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and:

- Key Council strategic documents including: the [Revenue Budget Strategy](#), [3-year Capital Programme](#), [Medium-Term Financial Plan](#) and [Strategic Risk Register](#), with progress updates reported quarterly as part of [in-year Performance Reports](#); and
- The [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan 2023 – 2028](#).

During 2024/25 we reviewed and updated our [Performance Management Framework \(PMF\)](#), informed by engagement with services and the Health Determinants Research Collaborative. The PMF aligns with the vision, purpose and defined outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2030 ‘Working with our Communities’ and reflects the findings of the [Council’s 2023/24 Self-Assessment](#) to make better use of existing data as actionable intelligence and continue to strengthen how impact and

outcomes are demonstrated. The updated PMF was reported to and approved by the Senior Leadership Team during 2024/25. Following approval and at the request of the Senior Leadership Team, a programme of staff training for managers and aspiring managers commenced, with further rolled out planned for 2025/26. Feedback from this training has been positive with recipients confirming how informative the sessions have been, and they have helped them to understand the framework within which they work. This work will continue in 2025/26.

The [Council's quarterly Performance reports](#) are in line with the requirements set out within the updated PMF and were developed further during 2024/25 with the aim of demonstrating the impact that our services have on our communities. This is an on-going programme of work and an area that we know we need to develop further.

The Council's performance management framework provides a robust basis upon which delivery can be monitored, reported and scrutinised.

Notwithstanding this, the following area of improvement has been identified:

A: A review of the suite of information in place should be undertaken to determine the extent to which impact and outcomes are being demonstrated and, where required, revisions can start to be incorporated into performance reporting arrangements for the 2025/26 financial year. This will take longer than one year to implement fully.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Council continues its clear approach to managing risk, as set out within its [Risk Management Strategy](#). The Governance and Audit Committee's [Terms of Reference](#) includes its purpose in respect of risk, i.e. providing '...*independent assurance to the Members of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment*' and underpinned by specific responsibilities.

The Council's strategic risks are reviewed, challenged and monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and Risk Leads. This includes a formal review of the Strategic Risk Register to ensure the Council's strategic risks are relevant and timely.

The information contained within the Strategy and Toolkit has been used to develop a training resource for Officers across the Council, the detail of which was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on [29th April 2025](#).

Key activities in respect of the Council's risk management arrangements are summarised, as follows:

- Strategic Risk Register – The Strategic Risk Register was reviewed and updated for 2024/25, with progress updates included within the Council's quarterly performance reports and updates reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on [4th November 2024](#).
- The Risk Management Strategy was reviewed and reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on [29th April 2025, with updates being of a housekeeping nature](#).
- Staff training and awareness – an online training module for staff in respect of the Council's risk management arrangements was launched during 2024/25 and is in the process of being rolled out to officers. The training module was also reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on [29th April 2025](#).

Internal Audit undertook an audit review of the Council's risk management arrangements during 2024/25 and concluded:

- During the audit a number of strengths and areas of good practice were identified as follows:
 - *The Council has a Risk Management Strategy, and it provides the necessary structure to the arrangements in place. The Strategy is supported by a Risk Management Toolkit and a detailed Strategic Risk Register. The format of the Strategic Risk Register is reviewed and updated annually in order to ensure it is fit for purpose with all risks having a clear risk owner.*
 - *The Strategic Risk Register is embedded into the Council's quarterly performance reporting arrangements and has been reported to the Governance and Audit Committee during 2024/25.*
 - *Clear controls and actions are documented in the Strategic Risk Register, with actions linking to the Council's Well-being Objectives.*
 - *Whilst the arrangements in place are considered robust, they can be improved further by the identification and inclusion of longer-term actions to manage the individual risks.*

The management of risk continues to be an embedded practice across the Council, and this helps the Council to deliver its priorities and services. The Council is taking steps to develop longer term actions and milestones as part of service delivery planning arrangements; however, the mitigating actions within the Strategic Risk Register generally cover one year.

A: Medium to longer term mitigating actions should be developed and included within the Strategic Risk Register for 2025/26, thereby aligning with service delivery plans and the Council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2030.

3. Human Resources/Workforce Planning

Following Cabinet approval in January 2023, work continued during 2024/25 to implement the [Human Resources Strategy 2023-28](#) and the more detailed [Workforce Plan 2023-28](#). Together, the strategy and workforce plan set out the strategic pillars and operational themes to be delivered across Council services working together to enable a positive organisational culture, personal development, support and deployment in order to achieve the Council's vision and priorities.

An update on year 1 progress (2023/24) was presented to Cabinet at its meeting held on [21st October 2024](#). Overall, it was concluded that the arrangements were fit for purpose with minor amendments required.

Progress has been monitored during 2024/25, and an update report will be presented to the Council's Senior Leadership and then Cabinet during the autumn of 2025. Initial indications show positive progress in delivery, and these are summarised in the following section of this self-assessment.

The key deliverables of the service during 2024/25 can be grouped under the following areas, further detail on the work delivered across these areas is listed below:

- 1. PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE**
- 2. ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT** - enabling staff to thrive in our organisation, with a focus on Well-being, working together to deliver the Council's vision and priorities

1. PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE

The overriding aim is to have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time, performing to a high standard to deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

Work to support recruitment and retention more generally across the Council continued during 2024/25. The Council continued to be an accredited [Real Living Wage Employer](#). All our Suppliers and contractors are encouraged to pay at least the real living wage to their employees. A clause now exists within contract arrangements that states –

'Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC is an accredited real Living Wage employer. This means that all employees of the Council receive a minimum hourly rate of pay as set by the Living Wage Foundation. This commitment extends to our supply chain and therefore bidders shall ensure that any employees assigned to working on any subsequent contract as a result of this tender shall also receive the living wage as a minimum'.

During 2024/25 the Corporate Data Team developed a Staff Organisational Dashboard designed to maximise the use of our data and ensure that decisions are informed and evidence based.

The dashboard provides comprehensive data analysis in the following areas:

- **Identifying Trends and Patterns:**

The data has been used to identify trends and patterns in employee salaries, grades, departmental reductions and growth, and sickness. This information assists in understanding the financial impact of the workforce and can assist making informed decisions about future amendments to organisational structures.

- **Employee Retention and Turnover:**

Insights into employee retention and turnover rates are provided, informing strategies to improve employee satisfaction and retention.

- **Workforce Allocation:**

The dashboard offers greater visibility into the organisational structure of various departments and teams.

During 2025/26, it is projected that the Corporate Data team will continue to investigate, obtain, and develop additional data in the following areas:

- **Staff Training:**

Providing a high-level organisational overview of training programmes.

- **Performance Management:**

Analysing staff performance data to measure compliance and identify training and development requirements.

In our previous self-assessment, the following area for improvement was identified in respect of the Council's recruitment and retention arrangements -

We need to continue to focus HR expertise on those Service Areas that have identified recruitment and retention as a key risk.

A key area of risk in respect of the Council's workforce relates to qualified Social Workers within Children's Services (note that this is not unique to Rhondda Cynon Taf). This is a known issue and a risk that is monitored and tracked through the Council's strategic risk management arrangements. Positive progress against the Children's Services Workforce Strategy was reported to [Community](#)

[Services Scrutiny Committee on 2nd December 2024](#). The report sets out a detailed update on delivery. Significant progress includes the reconfiguration of the Intensive Intervention Service; improved communication across the service leading to changes to support practitioner well-being; development of a bespoke RCT Model of Practice; and the development of the Social Work Academy to bring together the range of training and development opportunities for social work practitioners and increase sponsorship opportunities for staff to access the Open University Social work degree programme.

Headline data includes:

- A 4.6% reduction in the children's service vacancy rate between September 2023 and September 2024, from 24.7% (168.1 FTE) to 20.1% (137.8 FTE)
- 12.3% reduction in social worker vacancies between September 2023 and September 2024, from 44% (50 FTE) to 31.7% (35 FTE)
- Increased ability to cover workload, with 18 agency social worker practitioners employed (August 2024) compared with 10 in October 2023

Despite this good progress, further work takes place with the aim of ensuring the Service has the workforce required. Sufficient supply of experienced, qualified social workers for court and child protection work, and experienced residential staff continues to be an area of considerable risk for the Council.

Wider work has resulted in targeted advertising, dedicated jobs websites and use of social media being used to target a range of hard to fill vacancies across the Council. New arrangements went live in May 2024 which supported targeted advertising via Facebook, TikTok and LinkedIn for roles including school cleaners, occupational health nurses, legal assistants and solicitors, childcare practitioners and graduate and apprenticeship roles.

Data from the staff survey was generally positive regarding recruitment and retention. 88% of staff surveyed said they wanted to work for the Council for at least the next year, with only 4% wanting to leave 'as soon as possible'. 76% said they would recommend RCT as an employer to friends and family, with 17% neutral and only 7% disagreeing.

Overall, staff turnover has decreased slightly to 11.33% in 2024/25 (from 11.51% in 2023/24).

We know that we have work to do in some Service Areas in respect of staff retention. It is hoped that the dashboard that was developed during 2024/25 '*Employee Retention and Turnover*' will provide us with the necessary insights into employee retention and turnover rates. This will help us to use the data to inform strategies with the aim of improving employee satisfaction and retention.

A key aspect to successful recruitment and retention relates to having in place effective succession planning arrangements, this not only helps new starters and less experienced officers to settle into their roles better, but it crucially helps the Council to put in place resilient succession planning arrangements.

In our previous self-assessment, the following area for improvement was identified in respect of the Council's succession planning arrangements -

We need to continue to develop our succession planning arrangements to support medium to long term service planning and resilience.

The most recent round of service self-evaluation highlighted the importance and impact of the graduate and apprenticeship schemes in respect of succession planning across a wide range of services, particularly those with specialist and technical roles. In 2024/25, 20 graduates and 20 apprentices were recruited via the schemes. Retention data shows that that 79% of apprentices and 72% of graduates remain with the Council at the end of their placements (93% of apprentices and 94% of graduates gain employment overall, with 3 and 4% respectively entering further education after the end of the scheme). However, it has not been possible to track longer term retention in the workforce at an organisational level. We know that more work is needed to ensure that we have robust succession planning arrangements in place, particularly in Service Areas of known workforce risk.

We continue to grow our management development training offer:

- The Mercury Management Programme has been refreshed with new modules encouraging managers to view challenges through a variety of lenses through delivery from specialist teams on topics including inclusive leadership, well-being, the Corporate Plan and evidence-based approaches and evaluation.
- The Transform Leadership Programme for senior managers also re-commenced during 2024/25.
- A range of other accredited and non-accredited programmes offered includes ILM qualifications in management and coaching.
- Masterclasses have also been offered in carrying out performance reviews and presentation skills.

In addition, 137 staff have been signposted to access externally funded qualifications in areas such as Project Management, Business Administration and Customer Service, as well as training to support their well-being. We also continue to develop our coaching network, where qualified internal coaches and learners working towards a relevant qualification offer coaching services for individuals to support service delivery.

2. ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Enabling staff to thrive in our organisation, with a focus on Well-being, working together to deliver the Council's vision and priorities continues to be a key aspect of the work delivered by the Human Resources Directorate.

Staff well-being is essential and intrinsic to our workforce plan, and a [workforce well-being strategy](#) was published in March 2025 to support a proactive approach to mental health and wider well-being and to encourage, motivate and retain existing staff whilst helping to attract new staff to the organisation. Work is ongoing with the HDRC to develop an implementation plan to monitor the impact of the strategy.

In our previous self-assessment, the following area for improvement was identified in respect of the implementation of the iTrent system -

We need to build on the progress made to date to implement the iTrent system (i.e. the integrated Payroll and HR System). This will allow for a wider suite of data to be accessed and reviewed to measure compliance by our managers, for example, personal development reviews and training take-up.

A range of work has been undertaken both to improve staff access and data quality within iTrent and to improve the extraction and usage of data from the system and will continue into 2025/26.

Employee Self Service (ESS) to staff without a Council/work email address has progressed. At the time this work commenced, 42% of our staff had access to ESS (predominantly IT users). As a result of the on-going exercise, 94% now have access to ESS with over 85% of these regularly logging in. Work will continue into 25/26 to ensure all staff have access to ESS. Following this exercise, work to explore the use of iTrent for staff communication can commence.

In 2024/25, compliance with the annual staff performance review was 71%, a 12% increase from the reported 59% compliance last year. This increase was facilitated by implementing the compliance improvement action plan and targeting areas with lowest compliance and highest numbers of staff for support with the process. Review of sign-off streamlining and improvement work is still underway, working to realise the benefits of iTrent system upgrades.

Continuing to develop and implement improvements through iTrent will allow us to more accurately track the impact of our training and succession planning at an organisational level going forwards.

The Council's Human Resources Service provides a key function to all services across the Council. Progress has been made to address the areas identified for improvement from the 2023/24 annual self-assessment, but more work is needed to continue the good work that has taken place.

The following areas for improvement continue into 2025/26:

- A: We need to continue to focus HR expertise on those Service Areas that have identified recruitment and retention as a key risk.**
- B: We need to continue to develop our succession planning arrangements to support medium to long term service planning and resilience.**
- C: We need to build on the progress in respect of implementing the iTrent system (the integrated Payroll and HR System). This will allow for a wider suite of data to be accessed and reviewed to measure compliance by our managers.**

4. Asset Management

The property estate of the Council comprises a wide variety of land and built assets valued at £903m (at March 25, subject to audit) and includes schools, libraries, depots and waste disposal sites, cemeteries and crematorium site, allotments, offices, community centres, homes for the elderly, children's homes, theatres, and investment property. In addition to our built assets, given the range of services delivered by the Council, it operates a diverse and large number of vehicles. More than 400 vehicles are in use.

A new Corporate Asset Management Plan for 2024-2030 was approved by Cabinet on the [21st October 2024](#). The vision of the new Plan aligns with the delivery of the Council's Well-being Objectives. The Vision is *'to develop a property portfolio that is sustainable, financially and environmentally, supports the delivery of high-quality public services and economic regeneration, protects the environment and nature and builds healthy and resilient communities.'*

The Corporate Asset Management Plan comprises three clear parts – a Policy, a Strategy, and a Working Action Plan. The Sustainable Development principle is embedded throughout the asset management process by ensuring the estate is designed to meet current and future needs.

To ensure the Council has the right assets in the right place to deliver effective and efficient services we challenge Service Areas through the Service Asset Management Plan process. The Corporate Asset Management Plan is informed / underpinned at service level through Service Asset Management Plans.

Progress against the actions in the Corporate Asset Management Plan are kept under review and monitored by Cabinet and Scrutiny. The first progress update was presented to Cabinet in June 2025.

In our previous self-assessment, we identified 2 areas for improvement in respect of our assets. An update on our progress is below:

Areas identified for improvement in 2024/25 were:

- **We need to ensure that we have the right assets in the right place and not be limited by where our assets currently are. The information we hold and refresh on the needs and demands of our residents, now and in the future, will inform this process.**
- **For all our built assets, we need to ensure they are utilised fully and are run efficiently, supported by our energy consumption monitoring arrangements.**

This year we have introduced a new [Asset Review and Challenge](#) process under which we are reviewing each asset on a rolling programme. This process uses property data, including running and maintenance costs, carbon impact, utilisation levels, to inform decision making about [optimisation, rationalisation, and enhancement of built assets](#) and ultimately the long-term use of the property assets. An initial tranche of built assets has been selected for review in consultation with the Director of Corporate Estates. Following the review recommendations will be made to the Corporate Asset Management Board for the repurpose or release of surplus, underperforming or underutilised properties.

In addition to reviewing recommendations for the repurpose or release of assets, the Corporate Asset Management Board (comprising Senior Officers from across the Council) will, when necessary:

- Identify opportunities for the reuse of underutilised properties
- Review policies and procedures for the management of the property portfolio

An Operational Management Board has also been put in place to:

- Ensure Service Asset Management Plans are produced annually
- Ensure the Welsh language and equality and socio-economic impacts of property decisions are considered
- Communicate property decisions and cascade information on property management good practice

The Council continues to make good progress with the implementation of our [Office Accommodation Strategy Workspace Plan: Fit for the future 2023-2030](#) approved by [Cabinet in May 2023](#) to make better use of our physical assets to meet the needs of a changing organisation as we respond to the needs of our residents and communities. A progress update was presented to [Cabinet in Nov-24](#), examples of work delivered include:

- Relocating the Council's headquarters to Llys Cadwyn in March 2024 and reusing equipment and furniture where possible.

- Demolishing the former Council premises at Clydach Vale and preparing the site for redevelopment as a Special School. It is anticipated the new Special School will be completed by the autumn of 2026 subject to satisfactory design, planning and funding approvals.
- The sale of Ty Trevithick to South Wales Police Authority in April 2024.
- [Cabinet in Sep-24](#) agreed the redevelopment proposals for the Rock Grounds buildings in Aberdare; plans include a hotel and Spa on the site that will contribute to positive economic growth for Aberdare and the Cynon Valley.
- The GoBright desk, room and parking space booking solution has been rolled out to Council buildings including the Rhondda Fach Sports Centre, Ty Oldway, and Llys Cadwyn with the next roll out phase at Ty Elai and Ty Glantaff at an advanced stage.

During 2024/25 we continued our work to decarbonise the impact of our assets (i.e. built assets and our fleet) through our Corporate [Decarbonisation Plan](#), which is due to undergo a full review during 2025 (a process which is already underway). An [Update Report on The Decarbonisation Strategy & Action Plan for Period 2023 To 2025](#) was provided to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in December 2024.

More widely we continue to develop the community use of our schools and to make land and buildings available and sustainable for community use. Through the [RCT Together](#) initiative we strive to maximise social value through Community Asset Transfers.

Community Asset Transfers enable our communities to own and/or manage facilities that may be surplus to Council need and may otherwise be closed down or disposed of. [Examples of successful Community Asset Transfers](#) demonstrate the range of activity across the County Borough. The Service has completed 6 Community Asset Transfers during the period and currently monitor 36 properties leased to community groups including Y Muni Pontypridd which supports the arts and entertainment, transfer of a former Community Centre at Perthcelyn to support children and their families with Autism, communication difficulties or anxiety related behaviours and a food bank at Pontypridd. We have recognised that most community groups who take on property assets have limited knowledge of property management and we are putting together a package of property management support to ensure the groups are well equipped to manage the assets effectively and sustainably. Further information relating to Community Asset Transfers is available on the Council's Community Asset Transfer [webpage](#) and includes current opportunities for the transfer of land and buildings.

In addition, by granting leases to Sports Clubs we can ensure that the facilities are maintained and used effectively as the Clubs can draw down funding. There are 54 leases of sports pitches with 5 completing in the last year.

Key deliverables this year in respect of us managing our assets in addition to those mentioned above:

- The relocation of staff from Rhondda Principal Social Services Offices, Tonypany to refurbished offices at Ty Elai Williamstown allowing the disposal of the vacant office to Trivallis for redevelopment.
- Completing the refurbishment and remodelling of offices at Cynon Principal Social Services Offices, Trecynon transforming the work environment for effective service delivery.
- Continuing to reduce the office accommodation footprint. We remain on track to reduce the gross internal area floor space by 43% by 2027, as stated in the [Office Accommodation Strategy Workspace Plan: Fit for the future 2023-2030](#).

A breakdown of the reduction and the contribution of each property towards the overall figure can be found below:

Property	% Reduction
Ty Bronwydd	13.56
The Pavilions	7.39
Rhondda PSSO	2.14
Ty Sardis (Floors 2-6)	4.64
Rock Grounds	2.77
Ty Trevithick	11.16
TOTAL:	41.66

- Energy consumption remains a significant revenue cost for the Council. Work continues to review all our major sites, in particular those sites with the highest energy consumption. The aim remains to review all consumption and identify energy reduction measures, which can then be acted upon either by targeting investment or by establishing good practice with the building users/managers. This whole process results in good outputs, and this essential work will continue into the future, to both save money and help reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

The Council continues to develop ways to effectively manage its assets, and tailor assets to the changing landscape of the Council following service transformation. We know that we need to do more to ensure that we are optimising the use of our buildings, and to rationalise our property portfolio. We will continue to do this in line with the changing Council environment and through community involvement.

Identified Areas for improvement in 2025/26:

- A:** Continue to review and refresh our property portfolio to ensure that our assets are fit for purpose and are suitable for the evolving needs of the Council, utilising the Corporate Asset Management Board to strategically manage the asset portfolio.
- B:** For all our built assets, we need to ensure they are utilised fully and are run efficiently, supported by our energy consumption monitoring arrangements.

5. ICT and Digital Service

The Council has a good track record of implementing digital change, but we know we have more to do in this fast-paced environment. The Council continues to make strong progress in supporting organisational and service changes through the delivery of its [Digital Strategy 2022 – 2026](#). Our approach supports the delivery of the Council's priorities and is consistent with the requirements as set out within the [National Digital Strategy for Wales. Our Strategy](#) comprises four work streams:

1. Digital Solutions and Service Design
2. Data Insight and Intelligence
3. Digital Skills, Learning and Inclusion
4. Digital Infrastructure

The Digital Strategy includes an Appendix which demonstrates how it contributes to the seven National Well-being goals, and arrangements have been developed to capture the application of the Sustainable Development principle at the point where Service Areas request digital project support. We are also using the recently issued 'Ways of Working Journey Checker' to continue to strengthen our approach to applying the SD principle.

- As part of the national audit of Digital Strategies across Wales, RCT Digital Strategy was subject to review by Audit Wales. One of the recommendations made was to improve our monitoring arrangements for value and benefits of our projects. The recommendation stated:
"... to better understand the impact of its digital strategy and the extent to which it is securing value for money the Council should routinely set out the full costs of individual digital projects and how it will assess their impact and the overall impact of its strategic approach".

During 2024/25, the Digital Improvement Office actively sought to improve the way it captures anticipated benefits and how it measures the value of its projects. This information will be used to further challenge project outcomes and to evidence the value of the digital projects in the future.

We are currently developing a mid-term update report of our progress in delivering our strategy and strengthening its governance, reporting and scrutiny arrangements, and this will be reported during 2025/26.

For the purpose of this self-evaluation, the key deliverables of the service during 2024/25 have been grouped under the work streams listed above.

1. Digital Solutions and Service Design

In our previous self-assessment, the following area for improvement was identified in respect of changing at pace and exploring the use of technology:

We need to continue to change at pace and explore technology such as Artificial Intelligence to support on-going effective and efficient service delivery that meets the needs of our customers / service users. We also need to continue to explore what others are doing and where relevant, learn from them.

The Service is leading a number of pilot projects to fully inform the Council's approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI), seeking to embed it as a cross-cutting enabler of digital transformation. Microsoft

Copilot has been selected for use and piloted within Children's and Adult Social Services. The work has demonstrated early benefits, including reduced administrative burden, improved collaboration, and enhanced staff engagement. In parallel, the Council is trialling Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and an AI Phone Assistant to streamline repetitive tasks and improve resident interactions.

We have collaborated with national bodies, peer authorities, and suppliers, contributing to an ADSS Cymru AI review report and participated in national Communities of Practice. Service staff have benefited from resources via SOCITM and the UK Government's AI Playbook, helping to inform shape our ethical and inclusive approach. Investment in digital skills remains a priority, with initiatives such as Digital Heroes, drop-in sessions, and one-to-one coaching fostering a culture of experimentation and peer learning. Continued AI work is a stated improvement action within the 2025/2030 Service Delivery Plan.

Continuing to use digital solutions to increase digital self-service, improve customer digital experience, reduce administrative burden, automate workflow and mobilise our workforce. This work aims to maximise resources through more efficient and streamlined processes and access to services. Projects include Contact Centre solutions integrated with the corporate CRM platform, to improve online services for residents and back-office systems for staff. This has enabled improved resident experience, through new integrated technology that will form the Council's digital 'front door,' providing access to Council Services. The Delivery Plan for 2025/30 will seek to further technologies such as telephony, email, webchat, ChatBOTS, Artificial Intelligence and online forms that trigger automated processes via Robotic Process Automation (RPA). In order to capitalise on these opportunities, it was identified that more advanced foundational technology was required beyond the current solutions in place.

The review of the current CRM helped us to understand how it was contributing to service needs. The findings highlighted that whilst it met existing needs, there were significant additional requirements to meet the Council's future ambitions. With the contract approaching its end, a full requirements activity was conducted ready to inform a procurement activity for a new corporate CRM solution that would act as a foundation for the above additional technologies.

Throughout multiple projects within the digital programme, the corporate website was routinely referenced as a barrier to effective engagement with customers.

In our previous self-assessment, the following area for improvement was identified in respect of ensuring that our website provide information that is relevant and reliable.

We need to review our website and ensure that information that is regularly requested is easy to find and accurate, this can help to improve the customer experience and reduce the number of calls received by our call centre allowing them to focus on the most important calls. This will also allow our residents to receive the best possible service by 'going online.'

An independent review was commissioned to understand the current status of the website as a strategic asset to supporting better digital / self-service opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors. The overall conclusion of the review highlighted the need to develop a website that meets our future ambition and our strategic objectives, findings have been taken on board with actions in place to deliver improvement. In addition, the report suggested that a council-wide contact strategy was

needed that would ensure the website is developed as a tool as part of a broader approach to how the council interacts with its customers. Our website continues to be an area for improvement for us.

The Service has a good track record of helping to re-design services and putting in place digital solutions. Examples of the work delivered during 2024/25 include:

- An improved school digitised Allergen Notification and management process, ensuring pupils' nutritional requirements were effectively recorded, tracked and adhered to across all Schools.
- An expansion of the Flying Start provision led to a need to revise the existing management of childcare places across the county. The increase in applications, allocation and placements and subsequent attendance, could not have been managed within existing staffing resource. Therefore, a system review was conducted and a digital solution introduced that resulted in a cost avoidance position, as the needs of additional customer and childcare providers being met without the needs for additional staffing resource to administer the scheme.
- With an introduction of the Biodiversity Duty, the council's Biodiversity Team required a digital solution that allowed them to capture new areas for conservation, monitor existing sites and produce reports to influence future proposal. A mobile working solution was implemented that supported inspection report whilst onsite, offering greater efficiency for the team members.
- The management of tips across RCT remained a high priority for Frontline Services, both in terms of efficiency of practices and management of risks. A Tip Inspection app was developed allowing officers to capture all inspection details, monitor changes in the landscape and accurately capture exact inspection routes. These collectively assist to capture changes in the tip structures and produce insight where action needs to be taken. The final version of this application will be deployed early 2025/26.
- Contactless Car Parking was introduced to all Council-owned car parks, offering greater flexibility for town centre users by providing an additional payment method that meets current day expectations.
- August 2024 saw the National Eisteddfod coming to Pontypridd. As part of the promotion of the tickets for this national event, a ticketing solution was required for concession tickets for families of children in RCT schools. This solution administered up to 3,500 family tickets.

2. Data Insight and Intelligence

We continue to strengthen our use of data insights and intelligence to maximise the value of our data assets. This includes enabling service-level data dashboards that support evidence-based decision-making through data-driven approaches. Examples include:

- Flood Risk Management
- Waste Management – integrating CRM and Routeware data to optimise service delivery for Winter Green and Trade Waste
- Children Looked After and Homelessness
- HR – Training and Course Completion
- Draft Itrent Dashboard using Datamart connection

Improved data acquisition from core systems has allowed us to standardise reporting and reduce reliance on third-party reporting tools. This has helped eliminate single points of failure within departmental teams.

We are also continuing to progress the development of a Data Strategy to provide a clearer framework about how we manage all aspects of our data. We are currently working with Data Cymru to develop a Data Maturity Audit that meets our needs and those of other Councils across Wales.

We are strengthening our data, research, and digital capabilities through the [Health Determinants Research Collaboration \(HDRC\)](#). Building internal capacity for research and analysis and fostering a culture of data-informed decision-making to improve future health outcomes for our residents.

3. Digital Skills, Learning and Inclusion

- Ensuring accessibility standards are reviewed and our website adapted accordingly and providing a sensory line for those hard of hearing.
- Upskilling many non-digital staff to utilise technology as part of their roles, providing them with transferrable skills to utilise in their personal lives.
- Continuous development opportunities and support for Elected Members to conduct their interactions with both the Council and constituents via digital solutions.
- Working in collaboration with [Ofcom](#), [Digital Communities Wales](#) and [Get RCTOnline](#) partners to deliver community sessions in relation to Online Misinformation.

4. Digital Infrastructure

A key responsibility of the Service is to manage risks associated with information assets by ensuring that ICT infrastructure is continuously reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and secure, business processes are [GDPR compliant](#) and that cyber assurance activities are monitored, challenged and scrutinised through the Cyber Resilience and Information Management Board.

Key work to continuously review and strengthen our infrastructure took place during 2024/25 with investment in new Firewalls by using its internet filtering capabilities and allowing for the decommissioning of a legacy system, reducing complexity and cost. Decommissioning out of support infrastructure took place, examples include:

- Procurement of a new Storage Area Network to support growing data volumes
- Deployment of Teams Telephony
- Migration of backups to new Cloud based system enabling more efficient recovery, also enabling financial efficiency.
- Migration to improved desktop antivirus, also realising financial efficiency.
- Migration from Citrix desktop to Parallel RAS, also realising cost avoidance.

Cyber Security Resilience is fundamental. Work took place during 2024/25 to safeguard, prevent and ensure that the Council is prepared to effectively respond to attacks. [PSN reaccreditation](#) was once again achieved, along with the onboarding of Cymru Security Operations Centre (SOC) to give improved threat detection and response. Cyber assurance features as a strategic risk monitored in the [Council's Strategic Risk Register](#) as part of the Council's quarterly performance report to Cabinet - [Risk 20 refers](#).

The Council has a good track record of implementing digital change and ensuring the resilience of the infrastructure, but we know we have more to do as the way in which we use technology is

fundamental to the ways in which we transform our services. Progress has been made to address the areas identified for improvement from the 2023/24 annual self-assessment but more work is needed to continue the good work that has taken place.

Areas for improvement continue from last year:

A: We need to continue to explore technology such as Artificial Intelligence to support on-going effective and efficient service delivery that meets the needs of our customers / service users. We also need to continue to explore what others are doing and where relevant, learn from them.

B: We need to review our website and ensure that information that is regularly requested is easy to find and accurate, this can help to improve the customer experience and reduce the number of calls received by our call centre allowing them to focus on the most important calls. This will also allow our residents to receive the best possible service by ‘going online’.

6. Procurement and Commissioning

We are continuing to strengthen our approach to Sustainable Procurement, through our [Commissioning, Socially Responsible Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2024/30](#). Our progress is generally positive, and we continue to strive to maximise the value, including the social value, in our contracts. During 2024/25 we planned for and implemented new requirements placed upon the Council in respect of the [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act 2023](#), and the [Procurement Act 2023](#) that came into effect during February 2025.

The work of the service during 2024/25 can be split into the following areas, further detail on the work delivered across these areas is listed below:

1. Ensuring the Procurement Activities are Undertaken in Compliance with the Regulatory process
2. Local Spend
3. Delivering Social Value
4. Reviewing the Carbon Footprint Associated with Procured Goods and Services.

1. Ensuring Compliant Arrangements

We supported Service Areas of the Council to compliantly deliver a significant number of projects, examples are listed as follows:

Theme	Contract Value
Supporting our vulnerable communities	
Helping people to live independently	£347M
Care homes for adults	£27M
Supporting the regeneration of our communities	
Development agreement for a town centre hotel	£4.7M

Town centre regeneration	£8M
Highways projects	£50M
Helping to deliver a better environment	
Solar Farm incl. a private wire to a hospital site	£8.6M
Waste recycling contracts	£11M
52 Electric Vehicles – including EV Vans and Cars	N/A
Providing first class education facilities	
Additional Learning Needs School	£35M
Primary & comprehensive schools	£165M
School Cleaning	£17M

In addition to this, the Service led 2 collaborative projects:

- Strategic Partner for Core Engineering Services (previously Redstart) – estimated value of the contract £77M
 - Administered on behalf of RCT, Bridgend and Merthyr.
- The Replacement Social Care System – on behalf of 10 local authorities in Wales. This work was previously being led by another organisation, but due to a lack of progress being made, the Council's Procurement Manager stepped in to take the lead.

2. Local Spend

In 2024/25, £228M of the Council's spend was with suppliers across Wales, with £210M spend through suppliers from the CF, SA and NP post codes. Of the total spend, £93M was spent with suppliers from within the County Borough. We know we still have more work to do to understand the local markets and the barriers to tendering for work, and we hope that our [Local Business Directory](#) will allow for more local businesses to register their details with us.

The Local Business Directory section of the website has resulted in over 100 companies having provided the details. The purpose of this directory is to allow local businesses to record their details with the Council with a view to us using this information when inviting tenders in the future – an example of this being when we undertook the Disabled Adaptations Tender. Extract from the tender report, as follows:

A Contract Notice was published on Sell2Wales on 21st June 2024 and made available to suppliers via eTenderWales on the same date. Tenders were returned on the 23rd July 2024. The recently formed RCT Local Business Directory was utilised in this tender and a link to this tender opportunity was sent to various contractors listed on the directory.

The opportunity was sent to **18 suppliers on the directory**.

3. Delivering Social Value through our Procurement Processes

Our social value approach has been in place for over two years. Very few Councils across Wales have implemented this or a similar arrangement.

The social value model is now embedded into our contracting arrangements, with a dedicated resource in place to monitor Social Value commitments as a result of tender processes.

During the year 66 active contracts where Social Value commitments have been identified as part of the tender process were monitored. From these contracts a commitment has been made against 606 social value measures.

Examples of the Social Value achieved during 2024/25 include:

- **187 jobs have been created**, with **35 of these being retained** following contract completion.
- **42 apprentice opportunities** have been secured.
- Our Suppliers/Contractors have also provided **13,216 hours** of support targeted at curriculum and educational activities for local schools and colleges.
- An additional **7,985 hours** and **£67k** has been committed to provide more opportunities for local businesses and innovative ideas to support a more prosperous Wales (e.g. provision of expert business advice).
- **8,203 weeks** have been delivered in upskilling existing staff on vocational qualifications.
- Through our various contracts, **£33,484,474.99** has been spent with the local supply chain, further boosting the local economy and supporting local businesses.
- **£8,220 and 900 hours** have been committed to supporting supplier and community groups in promoting climate change and carbon reduction initiatives.

In our previous self-assessment, we identified an area for improvement is respect of our social value arrangements:

We need to develop our social value reporting to not only show the outputs, but to also show the impact that these are having on individuals and our communities.

Our monitoring and reporting arrangements were developed to demonstrate the impact that our social value arrangements are having on individuals and our communities. This is in its infancy and something that we will continue to develop further.

4. Reviewing the Carbon Footprint Associated with Procured Goods and Services

In the financial year 2023/24, emissions from purchased goods and services (supply chain) accounted for 73% of the Council's total carbon footprint.

A very clear theme throughout our [Strategy](#) is to support the Council's ambitions to be carbon neutral by 2030.

We have developed a first of its kind [carbon toolkit](#) that will allow suppliers to calculate their own carbon footprint, and our standard procurement arrangements now require suppliers to identify and set out how they aim to reduce their carbon footprint. Our supply chains are inexperienced in this area

and will require a significant amount of support – particularly SME’s (the construction sector less so). This will be supported through the Toolkit that has been developed.

In our previous self-assessment, we identified an area for improvement in respect of the carbon footprint that is attributed to the Council’s procured goods and services:

We need to rollout our carbon toolkit across key contracts with a view to moving from Tier 1 to Tier 2 reporting to Welsh Government.

An update on the work taking place to review the carbon footprint associated with procured goods and services was reported to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee at its meeting held on [3rd July 2025](#). At the meeting Members were informed of the slow progress in relation to the rollout of the carbon toolkit during 2024/25, as the efforts and resources of the Team needed to focus on getting the Council ready for the new Procurement Act during 2024/25. During 2025/26 work will take place to review the toolkit and then target suppliers with the highest spend in each of the top categories to determine if we can move these to Tier 2 reporting. This will provide a more accurate assessment of the carbon impact and will also allow us the opportunity to have constructive discussions with suppliers to identify opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions.

The Council’s procurement and commissioning arrangements are well embedded, and we have a good track record of supporting the delivery of projects. We also have a good track record of being innovative (carbon toolkit and social value for example). But given the slow progress made during 2024/25 in respect of rolling out the carbon toolkit, this is an area that we know we need to deliver during 2025/26 and beyond:

A: We need to rollout our carbon toolkit across key contracts with a view to moving from Tier 1 to Tier 2 reporting to Welsh Government.

7. Partnerships

The Council continues to build on its positive track record of partnership working and collaborating with others. Examples range from formal regional partnerships like [Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB](#) described below; working in local place-based partnerships e.g. working with key local stakeholders to develop a draft [Tonypany Town Centre Strategy](#); and subject specific partnership arrangements e.g. Sustainable Food Network in developing a [5 year Sustainable Food Strategy](#) and playing a leading role across Wales in respect of sourcing Connecting Care the replacement for our WCCIS system. We also work with community groups to meet a particular and immediate need, or to bid for and deliver specific time limited grant funded projects. There are many examples of collaborative arrangements in place within the Council in our [Working with Others](#) page and through [RCT Together](#).

The duty to collaborate is a one of the five Ways of Working that public bodies need to implement to demonstrate they are meeting the Sustainable Development requirements set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). However, we work in partnership because it is the right thing to do to improve outcomes for people and communities and maximise our collective resources. We

are keen to ensure that any work with Partners delivers value, outcomes and positive impacts for our residents and communities.

Our Corporate Plan '[Working with our Communities](#)' is clear that '*with budgets under pressure and demands on our services increasing we need to develop and manage realistic expectations through a strengthened partnership approach*'. The Plan embeds partnership approaches to delivery throughout the four Well-being Objectives and the underpinning Priorities. The Plan also sets out our clear commitment to partners

'.... We will be committed and active partners in our work with others, seeking and challenging where we can add more and better outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses by working together'.

[Our Rules of Procedure](#) within the Constitution sets out the definition of formal partnerships and the associated responsibilities and controls in place.

The changes to the strategic partnership landscape across our region continues to progress. Some of our major partnership changes include:

- The Council's Chief Executive was appointed as the new Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board (CTMPSB) in March 2025. The CTMPSB is continuing to progress the delivery of its [CTM Well-being Plan](#) with the Scrutiny arrangements for the CTMPSB supported by this Council. Key work in 2024/25 has been the development of a regional Climate Change Risk Assessment which was reported to the CTMPSB meeting in December 2024. As well as supporting the delivery of the regional Well-being Objective 'Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods', it will also inform the Council's local work to manage and mitigate Climate and Environmental risks.
- We are strengthening our arrangements in our work as part of the CTM [Regional Partnership Board](#) (RPB).
 - The [2023-28 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Area Plan](#), informed by the [Population Needs Assessment](#) has been implemented by the CTM Regional Partnership Board.
 - Progressing the integration of Health and Social Care has been slower than anticipated. A Regional Director is in place to manage the implementation of the new regional model and an Integrated Community Care System (ICCS) 'target model' and a Regional Partnership Agreement have been drafted and will be progressed, subject to Cabinet approval, in Summer 2025.
 - Scrutiny of the work of the Regional Partnership Board will now be undertaken by the [CTM PSB Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) (CTMPSB JOSC) as agreed at the meeting on the [17th December 2024](#). The JOSC will provide assurance that the work of the RPB continues to provide value for money and in the interests of good governance.
- A single regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has now been established following the review commissioned by the Council on behalf of its partners. One of the recommendations of the review was that the structure of the regional Community Safety Partnership dovetails into the PSB and its scrutiny arrangements, i.e. that PSB Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee be used to scrutinise regional CSP activity. The JOSC considered and agreed the additional proposals at its meeting held on the [4th September 2024](#) which reflect the scrutiny arrangements of the regional Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and updated its terms of reference accordingly. A progress report was presented to the JOSC on [17th December 2024](#) which provided an update on the CTM Community Partnership, how it determined its priority areas to make the greatest impact and make the best use of resources.

- Following transition from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to the South-East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), we established scrutiny arrangements for the CJC through an SLA. The work of the [Joint Scrutiny Committee](#) is still in its infancy as it sets out its inaugural year of being. It has however, taken forward a productive work programme, agreed at its meeting on the [10th October 2024](#), which involves both pre-scrutiny opportunities, Portfolio lead scrutiny and establishing its first working group. Going forward the development of the scrutiny processes taken forward by the Council has provided greater opportunity for scrutiny and challenge alongside development sessions outside of formal committee meetings, to enhance members understanding of the functions led by the CCRD programme office.

The RCT Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) is an initiative supported by the [National Institute for Health Research](#) (NIHR) to help RCT County Borough Council (CBC) to become more 'research-active'. The RCT HDRC is one of 30 HDRCs in the UK, funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), and the first fully funded HDRC in Wales.

The [RCT HDRC](#) is led by RCT CBC, in partnership with Cardiff University, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM UHB), Interlink RCT and third sector partners, and Public Health Wales. RCT HDRC aims to create a culture where decisions about health and Well-being are evidence-based, and communities within RCT have a say on how research can and should be used to reduce health inequalities across RCT. Work in the first year of delivery has focused on reviewing the culture of evidence with Chief Officers across the Council, establishing a baseline from which to measure progress, providing support during the development of Service Self Evaluations to ensure evaluations are utilising the six identified types of evidence and engaging with Elected Members. Project work has also begun in the areas of preventative spend, child poverty and digital exclusion, where the HDRC is assisting Council services to gather and interpret evidence and support putting findings into practice to improve services. Training opportunities, workshops and clinics have also been offered to all levels of management and staff within the Council to raise awareness of the project and the importance of evidence based decision making.

The Council has a good track record of working in Partnership. We will continue this work and will ensure that these arrangements effectively deliver outcomes that benefit our communities.

No areas for improvement identified at this stage.

8. Involvement and Engagement

We have continued to widen and strengthen our engagement, involvement and feedback channels, to find out what matters to people and also to make better use of the information we receive from the various feedback channels to shape and inform service delivery, plans and policy. This entailed talking directly to residents in various locations across RCT, conducting face to face and online surveys and via our online engagement platform '[Let's Talk](#)'.

The '[Let's Talk](#)' platform allows us to collect and analyse information and helps to show what we have done as a result of what people tell us, although we are continuing to strengthen our approach. The platform provides good analytics data for all engagement tools as well as the rates of visits including

a breakdown of total visits, informed visits and engaged visits. Using this focussed data has improved our ability to provide information arising from consultation and engagement projects in order to plan future work with a better understanding of successful engagement approaches.

Over 10,900 total visitors have been logged across Let's Talk and Dewch i Siarad in 2024. 39.8% of visitors reached Informed status, meaning that they viewed multiple pages and followed links to documents or other resources listed on a page, whilst 13.5% of visitors were Engaged, meaning that the visitor took part in surveys, polls or other points of interactivity on the page/s they visited. Overall, our use of 'Let's Talk' has demonstrated a decrease in rates of engagement and site traffic, however there were significantly fewer consultation and engagement projects launched by other services via Let's Talk this year. Whilst the number of projects is lower, the level of site traffic and engagement has not decreased proportionately – with a 73.3% decrease in projects, we have seen only a 19.6% decrease in traffic and a 46.9% decrease in engagement. This demonstrates that Let's Talk is still a high-impact tool for engagement when used, but that departments across the Council need to be further encouraged to make good use of the tools available to them. The most visited page in 2024 was our '[Let's Talk Eisteddfod 2024](#)'. The top five most viewed projects this year totalled over 7,000 page views and over 2,000 individual points of engagement.

Feedback from our customers, residents, businesses as well as our visitors is valuable to us as we strive to continually improve the services we provide. We have good evidence of using individual feedback to inform service change. However, we also recognise that we need to more effectively maximise the strategic value of available data/information and to establish the difference our work is making to people and communities. This was reinforced by the findings emerging from the [Audit Wales report Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes](#). An update on our progress against recommendations was reported to the [Governance and Audit Committee on 29 April 2024](#). As part of developing the 2024-25 Corporate Plan, priority action plans, work focussed on setting more clear outcomes, a suite of underpinning performance measures which include service user perspective and key actions to support the delivery of intended outcomes, focussing on identifying existing data within services. The format of the quarterly report to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny was also amended to a Health check style report which focuses on outcomes delivered including quantitative and qualitative data and case studies. This is an area of work that continues to be further developed with individual services to ensure that data that is already being collected within services can be integrated within the quarterly Council Performance Report so that Elected Members, and Senior Leaders are provided with a wider set of outcome and service user perspective data that can further support informed decision making. We have also engaged in the early development work of the WLGA 'Community of Practice' which is focussing on addressing the recommendations of the National Audit Wales [Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes Report](#) on a collaborative basis across all 22 Local Authorities.

The Council values insight from across our communities, as well as digital engagement methods. We also provide a free post and telephone option and continue to improve our face-to-face engagement techniques to ensure that residents are not digitally excluded. This has included regular attendance at Neighbourhood Network meetings in RCT as well as utilising the Network Leaders to send information out to their Networks via email and encourage them to share information via their community contacts.

We produce accessible engagement materials, such as easy read versions of our consultation documents e.g. the Annual Budget survey (Phase 1 and 2), [Involvement and Engagement Strategy](#), [Residential Care Consultation](#).

Our plans for 2024/25 included continuing to talk to and involving residents and communities in matters that affect them and to encourage them to get involved so that more voices are heard in Council decisions. Examples of how we did this are:

- Let's Talk Budget 2025/26 [Phase 1](#) and [Phase 2](#)
- [Involvement & Engagement Strategy](#)
- Heritage Strategy – [Heritage in RCT – Have your say](#)
- [Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2030](#)
- [Residential Care 2025](#)

The [Residential Care consultation](#) attracted a large number of representations with responses primarily raising the genuine concerns and anxieties of the people affected. The key concern themes had been collated via surveys (paper and online) and from those attending public and staff meetings held by the Council.

It was acknowledged in the Cabinet meeting that the vast majority of respondents to the consultation were passionately opposed to the proposed decommissioning of either care home (Ferndale and Cae Glas). Following the consultation, looking at the responses and listening to the concerns of the respondents, the majority of the [Members had advocated for the continuation of the care home](#) until the new care home development within Ferndale was available; and the need for maintaining the expertise of current staff within Ferndale House, to allow a smoother and consistent transition for the benefit of its residents to the new development once available.

Our stakeholder database is continually being refreshed to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose so that it can maximise our reach in respect of key engagement projects. We reviewed the arrangements for our long-standing Citizens' Panel in April 2024 and are considering setting up a Citizens' Panel Working group to invite members to quarterly meetings about current consultations. We continue to recruit members by adding in a 'Join our Citizens' Panel' question to other surveys and we plan to carry out a campaign and registration events later this year. The Council works with 'Age Connects Morgannwg' to support active engagement and involvement with older people in RCT, through the Older People Advisory Group, on the full range of the Council's engagement programme.

The Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) records all Comments, Compliments and Complaints received by both residents of RCT and those people visiting, who access the Council's facilities. The Scheme does not cover complaints where there are other statutory arrangements in place such as complaints about Social Care or School complaints. The 2023/24 [Customer Feedback Scheme – Comments, Compliments and Complaints 2023/24](#) Report was presented to Cabinet in October 2024. The [Public Services Ombudsman for Wales \(PSOW\) report](#) and letter for 2023/24 was also considered by [Cabinet in October 2024](#). The 2023/24 report from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) referenced that 64 complaints were received by the PSOW relating to RCT (54 for 2022-2023). The total number of complaints equates to 0.27 complaints per 1,000 residents, below the Welsh average of 0.36 per 1,000 residents, and fifth lowest in Wales.

The Council's Involvement and Engagement activities have been developed and continue to grow. We engage with a wide range of individuals and groups, but we now need to develop our processes further to demonstrate the impact that we are having on our communities. The Council's new involvement Strategy and action plan will take this forward once agreed in 2025. In July 2025, we will be undertaking a Residents Survey, as part of a national all Wales approach, working with Data Cymru.

Area for improvement:

A: The data returned from the Residents Survey should be used to further understand our communities, this will allow more informed decision making across the Council and we will be able to regularly access and use valuable, benchmarked data.

9. Welsh Language

Rhondda Cynon Taf was one of only four local authorities to see an increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the most recent Census. However, language skills across the workforce are not currently in line with the agreed aim of reflecting the proportion of Welsh speakers in the local community in our workforce. Consequently, focus on the development of Welsh language capacity continues through a variety of ways.

Our policies and progress are set out in more detail in the [Welsh Language Standards Report 2024-25](#) which was approved for publication by the [Welsh Language Cabinet Sub Committee](#) on 19th May 2025.

The Council has strong governance and accountability arrangements through the [Welsh Language Cabinet Sub Committee](#) and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who monitor and scrutinise progress against the [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27](#) and its underpinning [action plan](#) and the closely linked [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32](#) (WESP) which together aims to increase the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough.

Progress against the Promotion Strategy was [reported to Cabinet Sub-Committee in October 2024](#) and [Overview and Scrutiny in January 2025](#) and highlights positive progress across a number of areas, although effective monitoring and improvements across partnership working remain challenging. This work will be supported going forwards by the Welsh language strategy Community co-ordinator, who commenced in post April 2025 and will lead on the delivery of the strategy with partners and strengthening community involvement.

Continued good progress on delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was reported to [Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in December 2024](#), and the Year 2 annual review report received positive feedback from Welsh Government. However, this has yet to translate to an increased uptake in Welsh medium education and as a result progress overall has been rated as amber. Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language is one of the four Well-being objectives for the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-30 'Working with our Communities' and the promotion and use of Welsh is integrated within the plan which is a key document setting the strategic direction of the Council. Following Overview and scrutiny observations at the January meeting and an audit recommendation arising from the Audit Wales review of the Council's Setting of Well-being Objectives (as reported to [Governance and Audit](#)

[Committee on 29th April](#)), further work is planned to strengthen the use of both local and partnership data in evaluating the Council's progress towards our promotional strategy and Well-being Objective.

The Welsh Language and Education Bill is due to be introduced in late 2025. The Bill contains provision for a review of the Welsh Language Standards and will contain statutory targets for language use. Closely monitoring and responding to the impact of the Bill will be a significant work area within 2025/26.

Currently 8.01% of the Council workforce has Level 5 Welsh speaking ability, 2.51% at Level 4 and 2.27% at Level 3. All these show an increase from previous years data, bringing us close to our target of 12.4% of Welsh speakers in the workforce (in line with the percentage in the community). Following initial approval by the [Welsh Language Cabinet Sub-Committee](#) in October 2023, a guaranteed interview scheme for Welsh-speakers was introduced across the Council in July 2024. The scheme, which provides a guaranteed interview for Welsh speakers who meet the essential criteria of a vacancy, is aimed at removing barriers to improved recruitment of Welsh speakers. The first scheme of its kind in Wales, the approach has been welcomed as innovative by the Welsh Language Commissioner, who have asked the Council to prepare a good practice case study. The impact on recruitment will be evaluated fully in the summer 2025 and a report presented to Cabinet Sub-committee in October. However, initial data as at January 2025 is very positive, with 50 applicants either offered employment or begun working for the Council via the scheme. Monthly data indicates that the number of Welsh speakers appointed to new posts has almost doubled compared to the months prior to the implementation of the scheme.

Increasing the number of teaching staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh also forms part of our WESP. 127 current staff attended various levels of Welsh language training, including the new Bitesize Cymraeg Gwaith course (see [Welsh Language Standards Report](#)). Following inclusion of Welsh language in updated management of change processes in the previous financial year, 5 service areas who have undergone management of change processes have been reviewed to ensure that language skills were retained where possible. The new Welsh Language Bill is likely to change the way Welsh language skill levels of staff are measured which will require changes to Council processes.

'Bitesize' sessions delivered in 2023/24 strengthened staff awareness of the Welsh Language Standards, and we continue to support follow up requests. Specific sessions on arranging bilingual meetings and events have been held with SLT and a number of management teams, resulting in increased clarity of the Standards and support and training options available.

Planned work to consider an integrated impact assessment process for the Council was not progressed in 2024/25. However, the Welsh language impact assessment process has been reviewed, with guidance strengthened through drawing on learning from the first 3 years of implementation and following advice from Kings Counsel stemming from high profile tribunals.

Complaints relating to Welsh language standards reduced considerably in comparison to the previous year. 5 complaints relating to Welsh language standards were received in 2023/24 (vs 21 in 2022/23), of which 4 were found to be valid and action undertaken, and 1 was not valid.

To provide assurance on the progress of our work promoting the Welsh language, information reports have been introduced to the [Welsh Language Cabinet Sub Committee](#) which will provide an overview of work being undertaken by services. An [update on progress within Arts, Libraries, One4All and](#)

[Community Development](#), was presented in May 2024 and a report on the Welsh language commissioner's strategic plan was presented in May 2025. We also aim to build on our promotional work through involvement in a project to promote use of specific local services through the Welsh language, for example promotional work has resulted in an increase in borrowing Welsh language books from libraries.

RCT hosted the National Eisteddfod from 3 – 10 August 2024, with extremely positive feedback received for the first 'urban Eisteddfod'. Partnership working and use of grant funding enabled thousands of residents of all ages to experience the festival, with 13,507 free entry tickets provided to local families and 150 young people supported to attend the event through our Youth Engagement Service. 264 RCT residents volunteered at the Maes, and 250 young people were involved in the Council's music service that performed in the Eisteddfod. Feedback from the Council's Education stand at the Eisteddfod was that school representatives saw a positive shift in parental attitudes to sending their children to Welsh medium schools. Actions to support the legacy of the Eisteddfod will be embedded in the Action plan to deliver the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy going forwards. Further detail on The Overview of the Impact and Legacy of RCT National Eisteddfod are contained in the [report to Cabinet in February 2025](#).

Areas for development include our response to the new Welsh Language and Education Bill; evaluation of the guaranteed interview scheme; strengthening the use of data and supporting the delivery of the 5-year Welsh Language promotion strategy action plan and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. These areas are included within the Service Delivery Plan with planned actions and milestones in place.

Further Welsh Services information is available through the [Council's Website](#) and also the Community and Welsh Language Services, Service Self Evaluation.

The Council continues to promote and support the use of the Welsh language across its services. We have a well-resourced and experienced team of Officers that help support the development of the language across our organisation as well as managing our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. This has been enhanced by the appointment of the Welsh Language Strategy Community Co-ordinator to lead on community involvement following the positive legacy of the Eisteddfod. Positive work to increase staff skill levels, including the Guaranteed interview scheme, has seen an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers in the workforce. The upcoming Welsh Language and Education Bill is likely to have a significant impact on the Council's approach to Welsh language following introduction later in 2025 and this will be closely monitored.

No areas for improvement identified at this stage.

10. Equalities Diversity and Inclusion

The Council continues to strengthen its arrangements to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to fairness and equality. Our [new Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28](#) (SEP) was agreed by [Cabinet in March 2024](#). The strengthening of our values and commitment to our staff in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion have been reinforced in the new Plan which sets out our equality objectives,

supporting us to provide equality of opportunity for all and where all staff feel valued and can reach their full potential.

The SEP integrates within the framework set out within the Council's new Corporate Plan 2024-30 'Working with our Communities' approved by [Council in April 2024 and which also contains our commitment to fair and equal treatment for our staff and residents.](#)

The new Equality Plan sets out three new Equality Objectives, what we will do to achieve the objectives, how we will monitor progress and what success will look like for both our residents and our staff:

- 1. We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery.**
- 2. We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions.**
- 3. We will respect, value and listen to all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.**

Our work to deliver the new Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) will be monitored through the newly constituted bi-annual Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group. Chaired by the Deputy Leader we continue to sharpen the governance of EDI and focus on the use of timely data to demonstrate progress and the impact of our work through the annual Equality Monitoring report as required by the duties emerging from the [Equality Act 2010](#). [Feedback emerging from pre-scrutiny](#) by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, also sets out the Committee's wish to revisit/review progress in the implementation of the plan.

Encouraging progress has been made in respect of the delivery of the SEP.

Each individual service area has their own priorities around EDI. Whilst a number of service areas are proactively developing Anti-Racist actions, others are working on becoming more disability confident. A revised set of questions in the Self Service Evaluation (SSE) will aid our monitoring of EDI commitments in individual service area delivery plans. The SSE process provides a timely and transparent vehicle for strategic challenge and support of our services. We will be in a better position next year to report on this.

We are undertaking a review of the recruitment policy and processes from an EDI perspective. This review will provide the foundation of appropriate actions moving forward.

Our zero-tolerance approach towards discrimination, bullying and harassment has been communicated throughout the organisation as well as the delivery of mandatory EDI training. It will take us some time to deliver training to all of our staff, particularly to those who work on the front-line, however, arrangements are being made.

We have work plans to review our Reasonable Adjustment process and implement the revised legislative changes in respect of Sexual Harassment.

The Annual Equality Report continued to be reported a year in arrears. The most recent, i.e. 2023/24, was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on [19 March 2025](#), following pre-scrutiny at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on [27th January 2025](#).

The annual equality report outlined the work undertaken in 2023-24 in engagement and evidence gathering to support the development of the new Corporate Plan and Strategic Equality Plan, which are now aligned as set out above. It outlines the 3 new equality objectives and underpinning priorities.

The report also provided an overview of how we continued to meet the 5 equality objectives contained in the Strategic Equality Plan 2018-22, during the development of our new plan. Overall, it highlighted the significant progress the Council has made to meet the Public Sector Equality Duties and equality objectives contained in the [Strategic Equality Plan \(SEP\) 2019-2022](#).

It is recognised that many challenges existed during the period covered by the previous plan, and there was much change in the way we delivered our services. We did not make as much progress as planned in reviewing our recruitment and selection processes to increase the diversity of applicants; or developing awareness around sexual harassment. We also recognise further work is required around reasonable adjustments and further improving equality monitoring data for staff. Where expected progress has not been made, or where priority areas remain, this work has been included in the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

The Equalities and Diversity Service continues its good work to promote and support equality and diversity across our organisation and they also help to ensure and monitor our compliance. Clear arrangements and plans are in place to support this work.

No areas for improvement identified at this stage.

11. Regulators Feedback

The Council continues to maintain constructive and productive relationships with its Regulators. Our approach to responding to Regulators' reports is open and transparent, with reports considered by the relevant committees.

Details can be found [here](#).

Positively, the Regulators feedback throughout the year reinforced the Council's own assessment of its strengths and areas for further work, particularly in the context of the significant financial and other challenges ahead.

12. Climate Change and Carbon Reduction in RCT

The Council's [Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan](#), agreed by the former Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in March 2023 continues to direct carbon reduction in the Council's operations to meet the target of a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030. In December 2024, an [update](#) of progress of the Decarbonisation Strategy and Plan was considered by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan is due to

undergo a full review during 2025. This will involve reviewing the progress made since 2023 and updating the Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan to focus on 2025 – 2030.

The 2023/24 [Welsh Government's Net Zero Reporting Guide](#) was used to calculate the Council's Carbon 2023/24 Carbon Footprint. The Council's 2023/24 Carbon Footprint was calculated to be 116,640.64 tCO₂e. The detailed findings for the 2023/24 Footprint as ratified by Welsh Government were considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee at its meeting [in March 2025](#). This information has also been included on the Council's '[Our Carbon Footprint](#)' Webpage.

The Council has invested in its Carbon Reduction Programme (CRP) since the FY 2009/10. Information to date:

- The total CRP investment all years to date: £13,111,791
- Total savings since FY 2009/10: £ 2,907,667
- Total CO₂ reduction 6,513 tonnes CO₂e

In addition, grants have been secured to support climate change/decarbonisation initiatives including the ULEV Transformation Fund, Low Carbon Heat Development Grant and the Asset Collaboration Programme Wales Grant. The table below provides additional information.

Summary	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25	Totals
Requested	£293,050.25	£773,206.40	£1,108,319.00	£2,174,575.65
Awarded	£293,050.25	£773,206.40	£858,589.00	£1,924,845.65
Claimed	£289,859.00	£773,206.40	£812,748.88	£1,875,814.28

The Council continues to make positive steps to reduce carbon emissions within the Council and the County Borough, to meet the Council's climate ambitions that mirror the Council's priorities and to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition for a Net Zero Public Sector. Despite our positive progress this year, we know there is much more to do to accelerate the scale and pace of work, strengthen integration with the range of emerging Welsh Government and regional carbon reduction initiatives.

To meet these challenges, our work in 2024/25 included:

- Continuing to report climate change and decarbonisation related updates for consideration to the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) and the [Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Scrutiny Committee](#).
- Continuing to embed carbon reduction and our work to respond to the Welsh Government declared Climate and Nature emergencies into the business of the Council through the [quarterly monitoring](#) of the Council's [Corporate Plan](#).
- Continued to implement the Council's Decarbonisation Strategy that provides the framework for reducing our own carbon footprint, agreed by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee on [23 March 2023](#).
- [Our](#) fourth annual Carbon Footprint calculation that will enable us to better monitor our progress and the effect of the Decarbonisation Strategy, was considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee at its meeting in [March](#) 2025. The reported Carbon Emission calculation for 2023/24, was 116,640.64 tonnes CO₂e.

- [RCT Schools Eco Award progress report presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in March 2025.](#)
- Working as part of the Cardiff Capital Region to develop a Local Area Energy Plan ([LAEP](#)), endorsed by Cabinet [September 2024](#), for the geographical area of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough, outlining the transition to a zero-carbon energy system by 2050.
- Continuing to develop and implement a range of energy generation Projects as reported to the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee on 28th November 2024.](#)
- Progressing a range of projects including the [Living Landscape Project](#) and the [Peatbog Project](#) which were presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in March 2025.
- Progression of Project Outreach, highlighting key activities and progress towards Climate Change and Carbon Reduction awareness, presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee [March 2025.](#)
- Contributing to development of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Climate Risk Assessment as part of the CTM Well-being Objective for 'Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods' as contained within the [CTM Well-being Plan 2023-28](#). Update report taken to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub committee [28th November 2024.](#)
- Progressed the first '[Passivhaus](#)' primary school project in [Glyncoch](#) through the Welsh Government funded [Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme](#) to meet [Welsh Government's](#) requirements that '*all new school and college buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects will be required to meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1 2022*'.
- Continued to progress EV charging across the County Borough with regular updates on progress available on the Council's [EV Charging Points](#) webpage
- More widely, RCT residents were enjoyed [subsidised bus fares](#) throughout Easter, the school summer holidays and December, funded via the Shared Prosperity Fund, to enable more people to access public transport.

There are two specific Climate related risks in the [Council's Strategic Risk Register](#) Risks 24 and 26, with controls and actions in place, see update in Quarter 4 report to Cabinet on [7th July 2025](#) for completeness.

The Council has a good track record of dedicating resources to tackle climate change and identifying and delivering 'green' alternatives to reduce or offsetting our carbon footprint. Detailed Strategies and plans are in place to help deliver the required change needed to meet the ambition to be Carbon Neutral Council by 2030.

No areas for improvement identified at this stage.

13. Corporate Safeguarding

The Council's [Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#) has been in place for a number of years and underpins the arrangements in place across the Council. The Policy provides a framework setting out how we can be assured that we are fulfilling our duties to safeguard the people that live across our communities and takes account of the [Corporate Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance](#)

commissioned by the Welsh Government in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association. The Policy is subject to continuous review.

A Corporate Safeguarding Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, is responsible for ensuring that the Council carries out its responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, as set out in the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

The Group ensures that robust arrangements for safeguarding are in place across the Council. This includes seeking assurances that the Council has effective performance management processes in place to fulfil its duties corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies. The Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements are over and above the statutory requirements within the Education and Social Care Sector.

The Council's strategic importance of corporate safeguarding has also been incorporated into the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-30, approved by Council on [24 April 2024](#). The Council's Corporate Plan, 'Working with our Communities' contains four Well-being Objectives that are supported by underpinning Priorities, and a section that identifies the robust governance arrangements that need to be in place for our Council to be considered a 'Well-run Council'. Corporate Safeguarding is a key element of the Council's robust governance arrangements.

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy establishes a framework within which the Council can continue to discharge its safeguarding responsibilities to keep the most vulnerable people in our communities safe. The new Corporate Safeguarding Framework comprises four areas of activity:

- **Leadership and Culture**
- **Professional Practice and Standards**
- **Workforce, Recruitment and Selection**
- **Governance, Scrutiny and Performance Management**

At its meeting held on [18 September 2024](#) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report that summarised the work delivered in respect of the Council's [corporate safeguarding arrangements for 2023/24](#). The report considered by the Committee concluded that:

The Council continues to have robust and effective arrangements in place in respect of its corporate safeguarding arrangements. Good work has been delivered during 2023/24 to strengthen our arrangements, but we know further work is required.

[A 2024/25 delivery plan](#), focused on the four areas of activity identified in the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, was developed and incorporated areas of work that were not fully implemented during 2023/24.

The Corporate Safeguarding Group met 4 times during the year, a key focus of the Group was to review progress against the agreed [2024/25 delivery plan](#). The delivery plan was monitored and reported using the Council's Performance Management Framework. A report that summarises the work delivered in respect of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements for 2024/25 will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2025 but some of the specific deliverables are listed as follows:

- **Leadership and Culture**
 - Put in place a range of communication activities to ensure all staff and Elected Members are advised and reminded of their responsibilities in respect of Corporate Safeguarding and in

particular the [Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#) approved in February 2024. For example, staff newsletter, posters, improved web site presence, social media.

- Reviewed and refreshed the Council's existing [Social Media Policy](#) to ensure it identifies and addresses safeguarding risks.

■ **Professional Practice and Standards**

- Continued to ensure that safeguarding is included within tender packs and on procurement policy web pages, e.g. keeping people safe, whistleblowing and tackling modern slavery.
- Ensured that relevant contracts are subject to ongoing cyber security risk assessments.

■ **Workforce, Recruitment and Selection**

- 'Keeping People Safe' mandatory training launched in November 2024 and rolled out to all staff with IT access. Staff will require refresher training every 3 years.
- Established a mechanism whereby staff failing to comply with mandatory training requirements are identified and managers are notified via RCT Source.
- Confirmed RCT Source will be used to act as a central data repository to record all safeguarding training delivered to staff.

■ **Governance, Scrutiny and Performance Management**

- Reviewed the Corporate Safeguarding element of the Service Self-Evaluation to strengthen service assurance with compliance with corporate safeguarding arrangements for the 2024 SSE.
- Reviewed the Corporate Safeguarding Policy as part of continuous review cycle and agreed it is fit for purpose.

A delivery plan detailing the work that will be delivered in 2025/26 has been prepared which incorporates those areas that have not been fully progressed in 2024/25. This will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2025 alongside the annual progress report for 2024/25.

The Council continues to have robust and effective arrangements in place in respect of its corporate safeguarding arrangements. Good work has been delivered during 2024/25 to strengthen our arrangements further and a delivery plan is in place for 2025/26 that aims to build on these strong foundations.

No areas for improvement identified at this stage.



OVERALL CONCLUSION

Based on the review undertaken and the evidence in place, the Council's arrangements have provided the basis to maintain the organisations' financial stability and resilience, during a period of significant financial pressures and constrained funding, through robust planning, prioritisation and management of scarce resources. This position was underpinned by sound scrutiny and decision-making processes and well-established self-assessment arrangements, and supported Corporate Plan priority areas, wider service delivery and improved outcomes for service users.

A small number of areas for improvement have been identified to further strengthen existing processes. Accordingly, based on the self-assessment process the Council has demonstrated that it has exercised its functions effectively; used its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and that governance arrangements were effective for securing the above.

Our annual self-assessment has identified areas for improvement, and these areas will be monitored throughout 2025/26 as part of the Council's performance management arrangements.