

# Public Document Pack

## Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

### Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.  
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich  
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please  
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



#### **Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate**

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 /  
643694 / 643513

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

**Dyddiad/Date:** Tuesday, 23 July 2024

Dear Councillor,

#### **TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM**

A meeting of the Town & Community Council Forum will be held remotely - via Microsoft Teams on  
**Monday, 29 July 2024 at 16:00.**

#### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence  
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest  
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 6  
To receive for approval the Minutes of 11 03 2024
4. Budget Update 7 - 16
5. Street Lighting Columns 17 - 20
6. Self Assessment 2023/24 21 - 68
7. Urgent Items  
To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you would like to view this meeting live,**

**By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £1.36 in printing costs**

please contact [cabinet\\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk) or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

H T Bennett

S J Bletsoe

C Davies

C L C Davies

M J Evans

N Farr

P Ford

Councillors

J Gebbie

RM Granville

P W Jenkins

M R John

M Jones

JC Spanswick

I M Spiller

Councillors

JH Tildesley MBE

MJ Williams

R Williams

E D Winstanley

T Wood

Including a representative from  
each Town & Community  
Council

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2024 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor J Gebbie – Chairperson

H T Bennett  
B Doughty  
RM Granville  
M Jones  
JC Spanswick  
E D Winstanley

J Coles  
S Easterbrook  
J Holmes  
S Parker  
Y Walton  
T Wood

C Davies  
M J Evans  
P W Jenkins  
J Perren  
MJ Williams

P Deenik  
P Ford  
M R John  
I M Spiller  
R Williams

Apologies for Absence

HJ David

Officers:

Stuart Baldwin  
Nimi Chandrasena  
Rachel Keepins  
Richard Matthams  
Janine Nightingale  
Louis Pannell  
Jonathan Parsons  
Finola Pickwell  
Adam Provoost  
Oscar Roberts  
Mabyn Thomas

Climate Change Response Officer  
Democratic Services Officer - Support  
Democratic Services Manager  
Development Planning - Team Leader  
Corporate Director - Communities  
Senior Strategic Planning Policy Officer  
Group Manager Development  
Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer  
Senior Development Planning Officer  
Business Administrative Apprentice - Democratic Services  
Clerk – Coychurch Lower Community Council

Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Evans declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6 as a Pencoed Town Councillor.  
Councillor R Williams declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6 as a Pencoed Town Councillor.

**28. Approval of Minutes**

Decision Made	<b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of a meeting of the Town and Community Council Forum dated 1 September 2023, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	11 March 2024

**29. Armed Forces Covenant**

Decision Made	<p>The Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer delivered this report outlining the details and importance of the Armed Forces Covenant, which is a scheme designed to highlight struggles veterans face in transitioning away from Forces work, and to enable organisations to meet their unique requirements. This report was delayed briefly due to IT difficulties.</p> <p>Members posed questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharing the presentation for easy distribution</li><li>• Focusing on allotment allocation for ex-service personnel use</li></ul> <p>These questions were addressed by the Chairperson and the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer, with the Chairperson looking forward to potential utilization of the Covenant by local Councils.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> The Forum noted the report, acknowledging that BCBC has an excellent record of assisting former Armed Forces personnel and that there is lots to do for further accommodating ex-Forces people's transition into civilian life.</p>
Date Decision Made	11 March 2024

**30. Invasive Species**

Decision Made	<p>The Climate Change Response Officer presented a report on the INNS (invasive non-native species) to the UK such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, ways of identifying and managing their spread alongside recording the effects of their presence.</p> <p>Questions were posed on the subjects of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to raise invasive species reports for members inside and outside BCBC</li> <li>• Options for offline methods of communication for residents and members</li> <li>• BCBC’s record of INNS control on their own premises</li> <li>• BCBC Contractors’ understanding of Invasive Species prevention methods</li> </ul> <p>These questions were addressed by the Climate Change Response Officer and the Corporate Director for Communities, with the Corporate Director for Communities asking for records of incidents of incorrect INNS removal.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> The Forum noted the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	11 March 2024

**31. Replacement Local Development Plan Update**

Decision Made	<p>The Senior Strategic Planning Policy Officer delivered this report covering the updated Local Development Plan which covers placement, preparation and support for large-scale planning projects from a Borough level and serves as a strategic land use plan going forward.</p> <p>Members had questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters relating to the Pencoed level crossing amid increased track usage to Maesteg</li> <li>• A change in material used for street lighting columns, which was clarified to be an operational matter and not relating to the item.</li> </ul> <p>These queries were answered by the Group Manager Development and the Corporate Director for Communities.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> The Forum noted the report.</p>
---------------	--

**TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2024**

Date Decision Made	11 March 2024
--------------------	---------------

**Urgent Items**

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	11 March 2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 17:15.

# Agenda Item 4

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>29 JULY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>BUDGET UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>DEBORAH EXTON DEPUTY HEAD OF FINANCE</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The net revenue budget for 2023-24 is £342.334 million. The overall outturn at 31st March 2024 is a net over spend of £7.054 million which was funded from the unwinding of earmarked reserves and a draw down from the Council Fund.</li><li>• The overall over spend on the Council budget is primarily due to ongoing pressures within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, Home to School Transport, Homelessness and Legal Fees.</li><li>• The Council’s budget for 2024-25 is £360.671 million, and is based on a council tax increase of 9.5% and achievement of £13.045 million of budget reductions.</li><li>• The current projected over spend for 2024-25 is £9.212 million.</li><li>• Going forward there are projected budget reductions of around £10.8 million for 2025-26, and similar levels in future years.</li><li>• Due to the need for a comprehensive spending assessment after the General Election in July 2024 it is likely that the provisional local government settlement for 2025-26 will not be published until later in the calendar year again so the Council needs to engage with Town and Community Councils earlier to determine if there are any services or functions that can be transferred to them to support the Council’s budget position for 2025-26 onwards.</li></ul>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Town and Community Council Forum with an update on the Council’s budget, specifically the revenue budget outturn for 2023-24, the approved budget for 2024-25 and future budget projections, budget pressures and anticipated timescales.

## 2. Background

### 2023-24 Revenue Budget Outturn

- 2.1 On 1st March 2023, Council approved a net revenue budget of £342.047 million for 2023-24 based on the provisional local government settlement received from Welsh Government (WG) in December 2022. The Welsh Government announced its final settlement on 28th February 2023 which included an increase in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for the Council of £287,106, as a result of the transfer into the final local government settlement of a grant in respect of the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA), which the Council would be responsible for then paying over as part of the FRA levy. This resulted in a final net revenue budget for 2023-24 of £342.334 million, and this was reported to Council on 15th March 2023.
- 2.2 Cabinet has received quarterly monitoring reports on the revenue budget during the 2023-24 financial year, and the outturn report was presented to Cabinet on 23rd July 2024 and Council on 24th July 2024. The high level outturn summary for the financial year is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1 - Comparison of budget against actual outturn at 31st March 2024**

Directorate/Budget Area	Budget 2023-24 £'000	Final Outturn Q4 2023-24 £'000	Final Over / (Under) Spend 2023-24 £'000
<b>Directorate</b>			
Education and Family Support	145,861	147,214	1,353
Social Services and Wellbeing	99,386	111,213	11,827
Communities	34,382	34,502	120
Chief Executive's	25,410	25,949	539
<b>Total Directorate Budgets</b>	<b>305,039</b>	<b>318,878</b>	<b>13,839</b>
<b>Council Wide Budgets</b>			
Capital Financing	7,142	3,063	(4,079)
Levies	9,189	9,181	(8)
Apprenticeship Levy	750	831	81
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	16,054	15,567	(487)
Insurance Premiums	1,363	764	(599)
Repairs & Maintenance	460	0	(460)
Pension Related Costs	430	457	27
Other Corporate Budgets	1,907	2,153	246
<b>Total Council Wide Budgets</b>	<b>37,295</b>	<b>32,016</b>	<b>(5,279)</b>
<b>Net Council Tax Collection</b>		<b>(1,506)</b>	<b>(1,506)</b>
<b>Transfers to / from Earmarked to Reserves</b>		<b>(6,952)</b>	<b>(6,952)</b>
<b>Transfer from Council Fund</b>		<b>(102)</b>	<b>(102)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>342,334</b>	<b>342,334</b>	<b>0</b>

- 2.3 The overall outturn at 31st March 2024 was a net over spend of £7.054 million comprising £13.839 million net over spend on directorates and a net



under spend of £5.279 million on Council wide budgets. The outturn position also takes into account additional council tax income collected over budget of £1.506 million during the financial year, of which £516,000 was in respect of empty property premiums. The net over spend at year end has been met from the net unwinding of earmarked reserves to the value of £6.952 million and the transfer of £102,000 from the Council Fund.

- 2.4 The full report, along with detailed explanations for the variances against budget by directorate, can be viewed on the Council's website as part of the Cabinet and Council agendas for those dates outlined in paragraph 2.2. However, in summary, the main pressures arising during 2023-24 were in the service areas of Social Services and Wellbeing (SSWB), Home to School Transport (HtST), Homelessness and Legal Fees.
- 2.5 With regard to Social Services, budget growth of £8.174 million was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023-24. However, a significant proportion of this was to address the implementation of the Real Living Wage for care workers. The directorate continues to see an increase in demand and this budget growth was insufficient to meet the increase in demand, particularly in children's social care. There were also increases in the number of independent residential placements in children's services, along with pressures in learning disabilities and older persons' residential placements. The outturn for the directorate shows an over spend of £11.827 million in 2023-24. However, on 20th September 2023 a 3 year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for children and family services in Bridgend was approved by Council, with an immediate budget virement of £1 million approved for children's services. Council also noted the additional use of up to £2.5 million of earmarked reserves in 2023-24 to support the service whilst a more permanent funding solution was sought, and this has been drawn down in full in 2023-24 or the social services outturn position would have been an over spend of £14.327 million. A recurrent budget of £2.5 million was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) budget setting process in February 2024 to provide this as a permanent budget to Children's services in 2024-25.
- 2.6 There has also been a significant over spend on home to school and college transport of £1.780 million in 2023-24, due to the impact of retendering exercises on the cost of the service. Higher fuel costs, shortage of drivers and escorts have been common since the pandemic. To try and mitigate this going forward Council approved budget growth of £1.2 million for 2024-25 when the budget was approved in February 2024.
- 2.7 The other main area of budget over spend for 2023-24 was in respect of homelessness. Council has approved budget growth of almost £2.9 million in previous years to meet the rising pressures on the homelessness budget, but the Council continues to see a significant increase in the provision of temporary accommodation, from 601 households and 965 individuals between April 2022 to March 2023, to 659 households and 1,034 individuals between April 2023 and March 2024. There is an over spend on housing and homelessness of £240,000 in 2023-24.

- 2.8 Finally, legal fees continued to be a pressure in 2023-24, specifically in relation to public and private law childcare cases, along with an increase in the volume of complex cases that have required King's Counsel. The net over spend in Legal, Democratic and Regulatory services is £553,000. Budget growth of £300,000 was approved by Council as part of the MTFs budget setting process in February 2024 towards the increase in legal fees for children's services.

### **2024-25 Revenue Budget**

- 2.9 Council approved the budget for 2024-25 at its meeting on 28th February 2024 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28. This, again, was based on the Welsh Government's provisional local government settlement, which was only received by Councils on 20th December 2023. The final local government settlement was only published by Welsh Government on 27th February 2024 and the headline figure was an overall increase in Aggregate External Finance (AEF) across Wales, after taking into account new transfers into the settlement, of 3.3%, compared to 3.1% in the provisional settlement. This was attributed to an additional £14.4 million of Revenue Support Grant announced on 7 February 2024 in respect of social care and education. For Bridgend this meant a 3.2% increase in AEF, compared to a 3.1% increase reported in the provisional settlement. In cash terms this was an increase in funding of £649,540. There was also additional funding in respect of some small grants that had transferred into the settlement, which were passported to the services affected.
- 2.10 The employer contribution to teachers' pensions has increased by 5% in 2024-25, an increased cost of around £3.3 million to £3.5 million to the Council. With regard to funding to meet these costs, in the final settlement the Minister for Finance and Local Government re-stated that funding for this is expected to be provided by UK Government during 2024-2025 and that she had written to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to press for assurances on the level and timing of this funding. No provision has been made in the budget for this expense and, to date, no funding has been received by the Council from UK or Welsh Government for it.
- 2.11 The Council's net budget requirement for 2024-25 is £360,671,417 and is allocated as outlined in Table 2, and funded as outlined in Table 3.

**Table 2 – Net Revenue Budget 2024-25**

	Revised Budget 2023-24	Specific Transfers to/ (from) WG	Inter-Directorate Transfers	Pay / Prices / Other pressures	Budget Pressures (Appendix C)	Budget Reduction Proposals (Appendix D)	Opening Revenue Budget 2024-25
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Service Directorate Budgets:</b>							
Central Education & Family Support	29,400		0	177	2,200	-1,560	30,217
Schools	114,740		0	1,969	0	-3,441	113,268
<b>Education and Family Support</b>	<b>144,140</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,146</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>-5,001</b>	<b>143,485</b>
<b>Social Services &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<b>98,436</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8,330</b>	<b>-2,248</b>	<b>104,575</b>
<b>Communities</b>	<b>32,283</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2,460</b>	<b>30,704</b>
<b>Chief Executives</b>	<b>25,338</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>-3,246</b>	<b>22,425</b>
<b>Total Directorate Budgets</b>	<b>300,197</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>2,490</b>	<b>10,860</b>	<b>-12,955</b>	<b>301,189</b>
<b>Council Wide Budgets:</b>							
Capital Financing	7,142					-90	7,052
Levies	9,189				446		9,635
Repairs and Maintenance	670						670
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	16,054						16,054
Apprenticeship Levy	750						750
Pension Related Costs	430						430
Insurance Premiums	1,363						1,363
Other Council Wide Budgets	6,539	0	-300	16,739	550		23,528
<b>Total Council Wide Budgets</b>	<b>42,137</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-300</b>	<b>16,739</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>-90</b>	<b>59,482</b>
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>	<b>342,334</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19,229</b>	<b>11,856</b>	<b>-13,045</b>	<b>360,671</b>

**Table 3 – Funding of Net Revenue Budget**

	£	%
Revenue Support Grant	205,952,692	57.10
Non Domestic Rates	52,971,909	14.69
Council Tax Income	101,746,816	28.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>360,671,417</b>	<b>100%</b>

2.12 Some of the main features of the budget include:

- The budget is set based on a council tax increase (Bridgend County Borough Council element) of 9.5%.
- Provision for pay and price pressures of £19.229 million has been included in the budget. This includes pay pressures for teachers and other council employees, and unavoidable inflationary increases for both council run and commissioned services.
- In addition, funding for other unavoidable budget pressures of £11.856 million is included in the budget, comprising:
  - £2.2 million for education services (including £1.2 million for home to school transport and £500,000 for additional learning needs)
  - £8.33 million for social services (including £3.36m for pay and prices within commissioned services towards the cost of the Real Living Wage and inflationary pressures, £2 million for Children’s services (linked to paragraph 2.5) and £2.97 million towards increased costs of home care for adults with learning disabilities and additional residential / nursing placements.
  - £300,000 towards legal fees for Children’s services.

- £446,000 for the increase in the Fire and Rescue Authority levy.
- The budget is predicated on the achievement of £13.045 million of budget reductions including:
  - £3.441 million reduction in school budgets (3%);
  - £1.560 million central education budget reductions;
  - £2.248 million social services and wellbeing budget reductions;
  - £2.460 million communities directorate budget reductions;
  - £3.246 million chief executive directorate budget reductions.

Included in these budget reductions each directorate is tasked with achieving vacancy management savings of at least 3% of eligible posts (excluding grant funded and income generating posts), and staff mileage savings (£198,000). There are also a wide range of service reductions and service restructures, all of which will impact upon the ability of the Council to respond to requests for information and other queries or requests from members of the public and elected members. Full details of all approved budget reductions are included in the MTFS papers to Council on 28th February 2024.

- 2.13 Progress against achievement of these budget reductions will be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet before scrutiny by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The quarter one revenue monitoring report will be presented to Cabinet on 23rd July 2024. The financial position for 2024-25 is already serious with a number of budget reductions not likely to be achieved in part or full, and a range of budget pressures still arising in social services and wellbeing, home to school transport and homelessness services. The current projected over spend for the Council for 2024-25 is £9.212 million.

### **3. Current situation / proposal**

#### **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28**

- 3.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 outlined a range of funding scenarios for future years, based on limited known information to date. Welsh Government has not provided any indications of future funding, however, discussions between Welsh Government and the Society of Welsh Treasurers have made it clear that the financial position will be no less challenging, potentially with a 0% change to AEF for 2025-26, and that Councils should plan accordingly.
- 3.2 On this basis the Council has set out a number of funding scenarios for 2025-26 to 2027-28 (ranging from +1% increase in AEF under the best case scenario to -1% reduction in AEF under the worst case scenario) taking into account provisions for pay, prices and other unavoidable pressures, along with a potential council tax increase per year of 4.5%. The impact of this in terms of likely levels of budget reduction are set out in Table 4.

**Table 4 – Future Funding Scenarios – Projected Budget Reductions**

	<b>2025-26 £'000</b>	<b>2026-27 £'000</b>	<b>2027-28 £'000</b>	<b>Total £'000</b>
<b>Best Scenario</b>	8,242	8,010	7,768	<b>24,020</b>
<b>Most Likely Scenario</b>	10,822	10,615	10,400	<b>31,837</b>
<b>Worst Scenario</b>	13,402	13,169	12,928	<b>39,499</b>

- 3.3 Based on the Most Likely funding scenario of 0% change to AEF, it is projected that there will be a requirement to make £10.822 million of budget reductions in 2025-26, with similar amounts in future years. However, if any additional funding is required to meet further budget pressures, on top of the limited funding already included in the assumptions, then these budget reduction requirements could increase.
- 3.4 The Council cannot present a draft budget for consultation until it has received the provisional local government settlement from Welsh Government. This usually follows the Welsh Government’s publication of its own draft budget. In recent years, due to a number of reasons, including the pandemic, spending reviews and the general election in 2019, Welsh Government has not published its provisional local government settlement for the following financial year until late in December. This has impacted considerably on the amount of detail that can be published to support a public budget consultation and consequently on the time available to consult. Welsh Government have then not published their final local government settlement until the end of February, only a few weeks before the start of the financial year.
- 3.5 With the general election on 4th July 2024, and the subsequent spending review that needs to take place before the end of this calendar year, it is difficult to say whether or not the timeframe for publication of Welsh Government’s budget, and thereafter the provisional local government settlement, will remain as in recent years. The UK government’s spending plans for 2025-26 need to be announced before November of this year, so it is likely that the provisional local government settlement will once again be published in December.

### **Town and Community Precepts**

- 3.6 Town and Community Councils set a precept each year which is collected by the county borough council along with the council tax for the county borough and for the precept for the Police and Crime Commissioner. The council tax for the county borough is approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and this is then included in a report to Council in February prior to the start of the financial year outlining the aggregate charge for each town and community council area for each tax band for the forthcoming financial year.
- 3.7 Town and Community Councils are required to notify the Council of their precept by a specified date in January to enable the council tax reports to be collated and the detailed council tax calculations to be undertaken in readiness for the council tax bills to be issued early in March. Given the late

announcements of the local government settlements in recent years, and the subsequent delays in the publication of the draft budget and budget reduction proposals by the Council, which has not been until January for the last few years, there has been no time available for town and community councils to review the Council's proposals and engage with them on opportunities for taking on the provision of specific services from the Council and build the proposals into their precept considerations.

- 3.8 However, the financial outlook is very challenging and the amount of savings the Council needs to make is unlikely to reduce. It is likely moving forward that the Council will be unable to deliver all of the services it has done historically, or certainly not to the same level or frequency. Careful prioritisation will be necessary with an inevitable focus on those services that are statutory and often only the Council can provide, and also those preventative services that can help reduce demand on our main statutory services. There is unprecedented demand for services such as social care and those related to homelessness and for those that are most vulnerable in our communities, which is taking an increasing proportion of the overall budget. However, it is recognised that local residents quite rightly also highly value the visible services within the County Borough that make Bridgend an attractive place to live, work and visit. The Council's capacity and resourcing to deliver all of these services to meet expectations has gradually been diluted and compromised from over a decade of budget cuts. Therefore, it is clear moving forward that we need to seek new ways of delivering some services, partnering with other relevant organisations when appropriate and enabling and facilitating others to take on some additional responsibility.
- 3.9 In order to plan and hopefully co-produce some solutions to these challenges the Council and town and community councils need to engage as early as possible to discuss the potential for the transfer of services to town and community councils, giving sufficient time for proper engagement and planning, and ideally for town and community councils to build the costs of these services into their precept for the following financial year. The process should be two-way, not driven solely by proposed budget reductions. Town and community councils could propose to take on specific services which could then lead to budget savings for the Council. This engagement should take place as soon as possible and then be built into budget reduction proposals by the relevant directorates in readiness for the draft budget for 2025-26 and beyond .
- 3.10 It is proposed that a 'Summit' is arranged in September to which representatives from all town and community councils would be invited, with the specific purpose to discuss and agree which areas of service could realistically be candidates for town and community councils to take on or help deliver, and set out an agreed action plan to progress matters. It is recognised that while some changes could be made in time to set the relevant precept for 2025-26, others may require a longer lead in time and more realistically may be achieved for 2026-27. It is acknowledged that town and community councils will need to think carefully about their ability and capacity to take on some services, but if some valuable services are to continue to be delivered in local communities, town and community councils will play an important part, and their close relationship with their local communities may mean that in some cases they can deliver services more effectively than this Council.

3.11 Additionally, the current review of town and community councils that will conclude later this year after consultation, and subject to Council approval, may help produce a tier of government better able to consistently address some of these challenges by creating town and community councils of sufficient size and capacity while retaining the 'localism' that also often defines some of our most successful councils.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

#### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

#### **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **9. Recommendations**

9.1 That the Town and Community Council Forum notes the update on the Council's budget position and actively engages with the Council on opportunities for taking on Council services going forward to support the budget planning process.

#### **Background documents**

None

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>29 JULY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>STREET LIGHTING COLUMNS</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>COLIN HILL STREET LIGHTING MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect to the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>Outline of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Street Lighting standard specification for the use of Street Lighting Columns as part of new and existing works</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the two common types of street lighting columns is use within the county borough.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Street lighting is beneficial to road users and road safety whether as pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, public transport providers or haulage operators.
- 2.2 It provides illumination to footways and highways during the hours of darkness and over recent years has been upgraded to energy efficient luminaries thereby making a saving to carbon emissions as well as financial energy savings. This is more important now as the cost of energy has increased.
- 2.3 A fundamental part of street lighting are the columns themselves which are either typically of aluminum or steel construction and their use is dictated on the basis of safety and also cost. Aluminium columns typically having a longer life span, safer in instances of vehicular impact, but can be more expensive than their steel alternatives.
- 2.4 Aluminium columns are specified for section 278/38 agreements works under the Highways Act 1980 (new developments) and where there are legislative requirements for them to be installed on high speed roads due to their passively safe qualities. However, aluminum columns have less structural strength than steel and is a softer material. They are not designed to have external attachments such as hanging baskets or drilled holes in for the addition of festive lighting. Not only do they have a passively safe quality but have double the life expectancy over steel, and they are also 100% recyclable. They are however generally twice the cost of steel which is why the Street Lighting Section typically uses steel based on the budgets available.

2.5 Passively safe means the columns would cause less damaged if struck by a vehicle and would snap under impact making them a legislative requirement when placed on high speed roads.

### **3. Current situation/ proposal**

3.1 The BCBC Street Lighting Section typically seek to replace with steel columns due to the higher cost of aluminium, unless there is a legislative requirement for them to be fitted, or to match within existing streetscape.

3.2 Whilst the benefits of aluminium columns are understood, their composition dictates that loadings or drilling must be carefully managed so that the structural integrity is not compromised.

3.3 Where third parties wish to erect items on columns these need to be advised to the Street Lighting Section (Streetlighting@bridgend.gov.uk) to ensure the loading and attachment method is not going to compromise the safety of a column.

3.4 If a Town or Community Council wish to enhance their community with additions to street lighting in their locality they will need to contact the BCBC Street Lighting Section as above so that any request can be agreed and recorded in advance of any installation.

### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 Aluminium columns have generally twice the longevity of a steel column, the columns are 100% recyclable, have a lower CO2 footprint from manufacture and are passively safe when in an accident scenario.

### **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 As identified in the report aluminum columns typically have twice the life span of steel columns, therefore having a smaller overall impact in terms of resources to both manufacture and install, as well as being recyclable.

### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

**8. Financial Implications**

8.1 The replacement of columns is provided within existing budgets.

**9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Town and Community Council Forum note the report.

**Background documents**

None

This page is intentionally left blank

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>29 JULY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>ALEX RAWLIN POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>The Performance Framework (of which self-assessment is part) forms part of the Policy Framework.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>This report seeks Town and Community Council Forum’s view on the Council’s self-assessment 2023/24. Key points are –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This is the first-year judging performance against the Council’s new Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives (WBOs).</b></li> <li>• <b>All WBO scores are yellow (good) and amber (adequate).</b></li> <li>• <b>Use of resources score is amber (adequate).</b></li> <li>• <b>Governance score is yellow (good).</b></li> <li>• <b>The draft report summarises the views of others expressed throughout the year, rather than trying to consult on the self-assessment report itself.</b></li> </ul>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Town and Community Council Forum’s view on the draft self-assessment for 2023/24.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which received royal assent in January 2021, set out a new local government improvement regime. One of the requirements of the Act is for the council to make and publish a self-assessment report once each financial year. The self-assessment report has to set out conclusions on whether the council met the ‘performance requirements’ during that financial year, and actions needed to improve. The ‘performance requirements’, focus on -

- Is the council exercising its functions effectively;
- Is the council using resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- Is the council’s governance strong.

- 2.2 The Council published its first self-assessment in October 2022 based on performance in 2021/22. The process was new, but the self-assessment was based on existing data, reports and meeting fora where possible. The Council published its second self-assessment in December 2023 based on performance in 2022/23. Reflecting on the first self-assessment some improvements were made. Many parts of the self-assessment process have been embedded into the council's regular performance management process, for example the regulatory tracker, inclusion of consultation, engagement and involvement exercises in the quarterly dashboard, and reporting performance against wellbeing objectives rather than directorates.
- 2.3 The first performance requirement is about how council services are performing. Existing end of year performance processes and timelines have been used to capture Directorate performance information to satisfy the first performance requirement (as in 2022/23). Through end of year performance dashboards directorates were asked to provide realistic Blue, Red, Amber Yellow, Green (BRAYG) ratings for commitments and performance indicators and use plain English to outline their performance challenges and achievements. The performance team have used this information to develop clear judgements for each aim and each wellbeing objective and a short narrative for each aim.
- 2.4 The second performance requirement, on use of resources, also followed a similar process to previous years. The 7 use of resources templates were reviewed and updated by the lead officers. All of the 7 areas have been included in the work of Audit Wales in the past two to three years, and in many cases reviewed and discussed by the Governance and Audit Committee, or Scrutiny Committees, so there is significant additional evidence to draw on. These 7 were then collated by the Performance Team for scrutiny and challenge.
- 2.5 The third performance requirement, on governance, is largely covered by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is scrutinised and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. This document was summarised and used to inform the self-assessment.

### **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 This third self-assessment is the first that will review performance against the Council's new Corporate Plan 2023-28, so a new process for the performance element of self-assessment was required. The main changes made were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on 18 April 2024 and are –
- Presenting a performance summary section which uses summary graphs to show performance against each wellbeing objective at a glance.
  - Using a more objective methodology (as outlined to CMB in March and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee in April) for scoring aims / wellbeing objectives based on progress on commitments and performance targets, then moderating these scores with Heads of Service,

Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Cabinet / Corporate Management Board (CCMB).

- Summarising the views of others that have been gathered and used throughout the year within in the report, rather than trying to consult on the self-assessment report itself.

3.2 The draft findings from each of the three performance requirements were pulled together into a single presentation where the narrative and judgements were tested at Heads of Service Board (26 June), CMB (3 July) and CCMB (9 July) and discussed at Governance and Audit Committee (19 July) and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (29 July). Comments and changes from these fora have been used to inform the draft self-assessment report included at **Appendix 1**.

3.3 The Council's proposed self-assessment judgements for 2023/24 are –

1	Protecting our most vulnerable.	<b>GOOD</b>
2	Fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns.	<b>GOOD</b>
3	Thriving valleys communities.	<b>GOOD</b>
4	Helping people to meet their potential.	<b>ADEQUATE</b>
5	Responding to the climate and nature emergency.	<b>GOOD</b>
6	Helping people feel valued, heard & part of their community.	<b>ADEQUATE</b>
7	Supporting people to be healthy and happy.	<b>GOOD</b>

3.4 The Use of Resources judgement remains at 'Adequate'.

3.5 The Governance judgement remains at 'Good'.

3.6 TCCF may want to reflect on the main changes since the 2022/23 self-assessment which are -

- 7 separate judgements for individual wellbeing objectives (based on the BRAYG status of the commitments and performance indicators that support them, tested and moderated by Heads of Service, CMB and CCMB).
- All 7 judgements being made are yellow (good) or amber (satisfactory). This reflects the cross-directorate range of commitments and Performance Indicators (PIs) being measured across the Council.
- Change to the financial management judgement (beneath the overall use of resources judgement) from good to adequate based on the Council's challenging financial position and the associated risk to financial sustainability. This does not affect the overall use of resources judgement of adequate.

## Next Steps

3.12 Following its consideration at the Town and Community Council Forum, the Council will discuss the draft document with partners / other local authorities at the Public Services Board (PSB).

3.12 Following discussions at the Governance and Audit Committee (19 July), Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee (25 July) and Town and Community Council Forum (29 July) the performance team will make improvements over the summer, translate and design the document and present the final draft self-assessment 2023/24 to Cabinet and Council in September 2024.

## **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

## **5. Wellbeing of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Wellbeing Objectives**

5.1 This report reviews the Council's progress against the following corporate well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that form part of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-28:-

1. A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable
2. A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns
3. A County Borough with thriving valleys communities
4. A County Borough where we help people meet their potential
5. A County Borough that is responding to the climate and nature emergency
6. A County Borough where people feel valued, heard, part of their community
7. A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives

5.2 The 5 ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act have also contributed to the Council developing its own five ways of working. Progress on these 5 ways of working is also summarised in the draft self-assessment.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no specific implications of this report on climate change. However, the self-assessment helps the Council to assess performance on areas including climate change.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**



7.1 There are no specific implications of this report on safeguarding or corporate parenting. However, the self-assessment will help the Council assess performance on areas including safeguarding and corporate parenting.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that the Forum -

- Review the draft self-assessment at **Appendix 1** and provide comments, feedback and improvements.

## **Background documents**

None

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Corporate Self-Assessment 2023/24**

### **1. The purpose of this report**

In January 2021, the Welsh Parliament passed a new law that changed the way councils work. Every year, we must publish a self-assessment report. This report covers 6 April 2023 to 5 April 2024.

We want the report to assure Welsh Government that we are performing well. We also want it to tell them that we are using our money and other resources properly and making decisions in a sensible, open way. Most importantly, the report must tell local residents, businesses and all stakeholders how we are doing.

Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association published guidance that told us how to develop our self-assessment and what evidence to use to judge ourselves.

### **2. The changing world for local government**

The world has changed a lot since the pandemic, and it is having a big impact on the way the Council works. The cost-of-living crisis is making things difficult for you as residents and businesses, and it is making it harder for the Council to manage too. Some of the challenges your Council faces are –

- Increasing energy costs for community centres, leisure centres and schools
- Increasing fuel costs for school transport, home carers and recycling vehicles
- Changes to the cost and availability of goods like food for residential homes and building materials for new schools
- Pay rises for our staff who provide indispensable services
- Government asking us to run more services e.g. distribute cost-of-living payments
- Impacts on residents that add demand to services, including increased homelessness and safeguarding referrals
- Funding for the Council not increasing at the same rate as prices.

### **3. Our progress against last year's areas for improvement**

In our 2022/23 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that needed specific improvements in the 2023/24 year. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken in these areas. More detail is provided on actions to date, and those that are still planned in each detailed section of this report. In 2023/24 we have –

#### **Priority One**

- Using the Post-16 Improvement Plan (PIP), we've developed a consistent approach to post-16 education across our 9 secondary schools, including a hybrid approach to A-level subjects to improve subject choice.
- Developed an action plan with schools and an exclusions task and finish group to tackle the use of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- Developed Welsh Medium webpages and improved communications to promote Welsh Language education.

- Delivered 53 face-to-face adult community learning sessions and increased enrolment numbers.
- The Bridgend Business Forum has delivered 6 large events, attended by a total of 293 delegates from the business community.

### **Priority Two**

- Increased the number of adult learners in Bridgend.
- We are on track with all of the actions in the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Implementation Plan.
- Worked with ALN coordinators and headteachers to give training on ALN reform.
- Developed Welsh-medium childcare in Bettws and in the Ogmores Valley, although timescales have slipped to November 2024.
- Made universal free school meals available for nursery, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils.
- Completed the merger of the community safety partnerships.
- Developed and published a new homelessness strategy.
- Worked with Welsh Government and other authorities on our approach to housing refugees (including Ukrainian refugees)
- Improved our work with Registered Social Landlords to improve housing options.
- Improved learning and development for newly qualified social workers.
- Embedded the Signs of safety model in social care.
- Launched our Strength Based, Outcome-Focused model of social work practice.
- Opened our new children's residential care service and implemented enhanced therapeutic support for all our residential care and inhouse fostering services.
- Completed and published our new Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Work on admission avoidance and discharge services with the NHS through the development of network multi-disciplinary team.
- Developed capacity in reablement services through a locality operating model to help people who are able to be supported to retain or regain independent living skills.
- Coproduced the new Bridgend carer's wellbeing service with unpaid carers.
- Supported 237 people via community co-ordinators, 111 via community navigators.
- Developed a learning disability transformation programme.
- Raised awareness of the Bridgend Biodiversity Duty through newsletters.
- Completed 7 Community Asset Transfers.

### **Priority Three**

- Developed and implemented a Strategic workforce Plan.
- Improved the way we manage performance.
- Embedded our new Corporate Plan, Delivery Plan and Performance Framework.
- Improved the way we manage our assets and reduced our maintenance backlog.
- Improved our Statutory Building Compliance, with Big-5 Compliance now at 94%.
- Embedded our updated Corporate Risk Management approach.
- Developed longer-term and multi-year savings options.
- Reviewed and updated the council's hybrid working policy.

- Made progress on building rationalisation with teams being transferred to the Civic Offices. Ravens Court will then become available for disposal or lease.
- Reviewed several HR protocols including on redundancy and redeployment.

#### 4. How is the council performing in 2023/24?

Every 5 years the council publishes a new Corporate Plan. A new Corporate Plan was published in April 2023 to cover a 5-year period. It describes the council’s priorities, why they are important and how progress will be measured. The priorities, or well-being objectives, show our commitments to citizens and our contribution to Wales’s seven well-being goals –

National Well-being Goal	Your Council's Well-being Objectives						
	Protecting our most vulnerable	Fair work, skilled, jobs and thriving towns	Creating thriving Valleys communities	Helping people meet their potential	Responding to the climate and nature emergency	Making people feel valued, heard and connected	Supporting people to be healthy and happy
A prosperous Wales							
A resilient Wales							
A healthier Wales							
A more equal Wales							
A Wales of cohesive communities							
Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language							
A globally responsible Wales							

In line with the Future Generations Act, when we developed this corporate plan, we thought hard about how we could work differently to respond to short- and medium-term issues, like the financial crisis, while protecting our natural environment and helping young people meet their potential for the long-term. We have a process for measuring how we are doing on these priorities. We use –

- performance indicators,
- evidence on delivery of our projects,
- feedback from residents, businesses, and partners, and
- the views of our regulators and auditors.

Each part of the council pulls this information together and presents it to councillors who look at the data, check it and ask questions. This was done for the year 2023-24 in June 2024. We use this information to make a judgement using this scale -

<b>EXCELLENT</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>GOOD</b>	Strong features, minor aspects may need improvement
<b>ADEQUATE</b>	Needs improvement. Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects need improvement

**UNSATISFACTORY**

Needs urgent improvement. Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

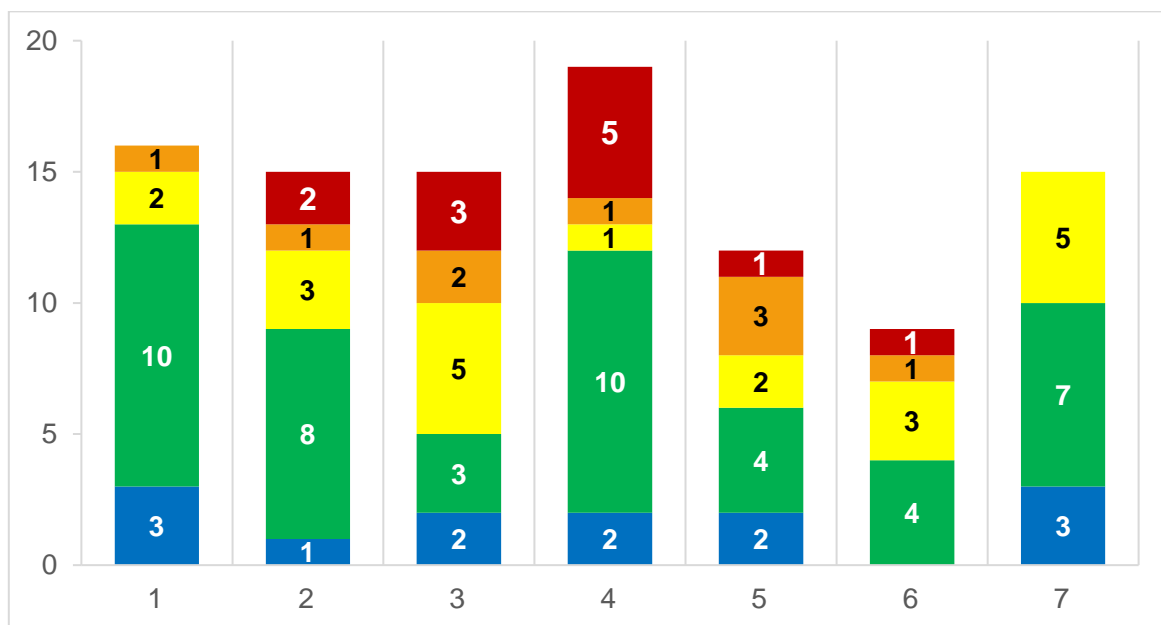
### Performance Overview

To support the new, 5-year Corporate Plan, we developed a 1-year delivery plan for 2023/24. The plan includes –

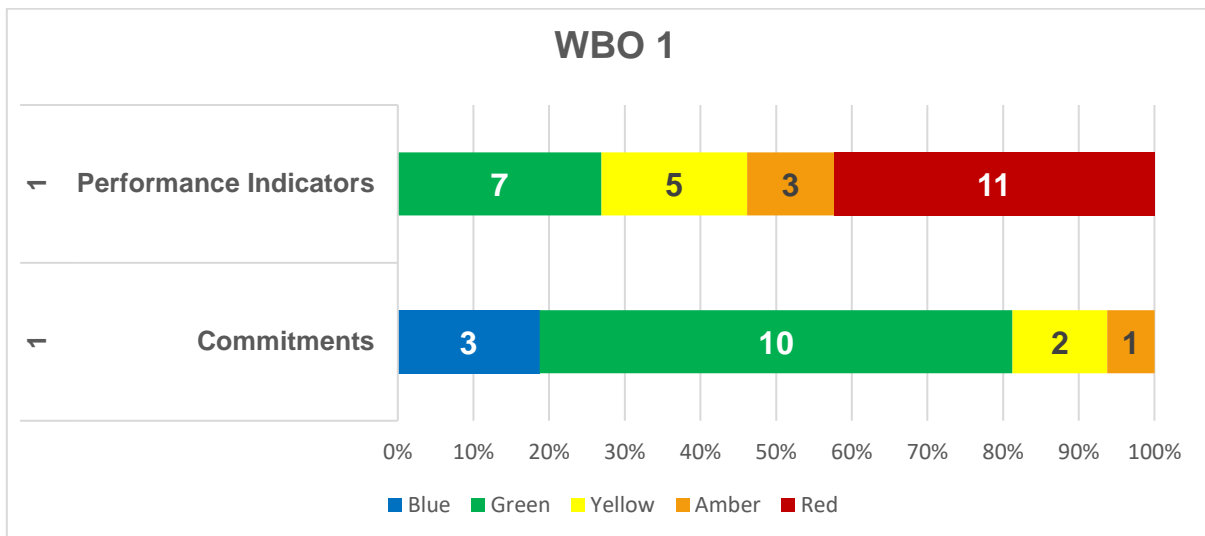
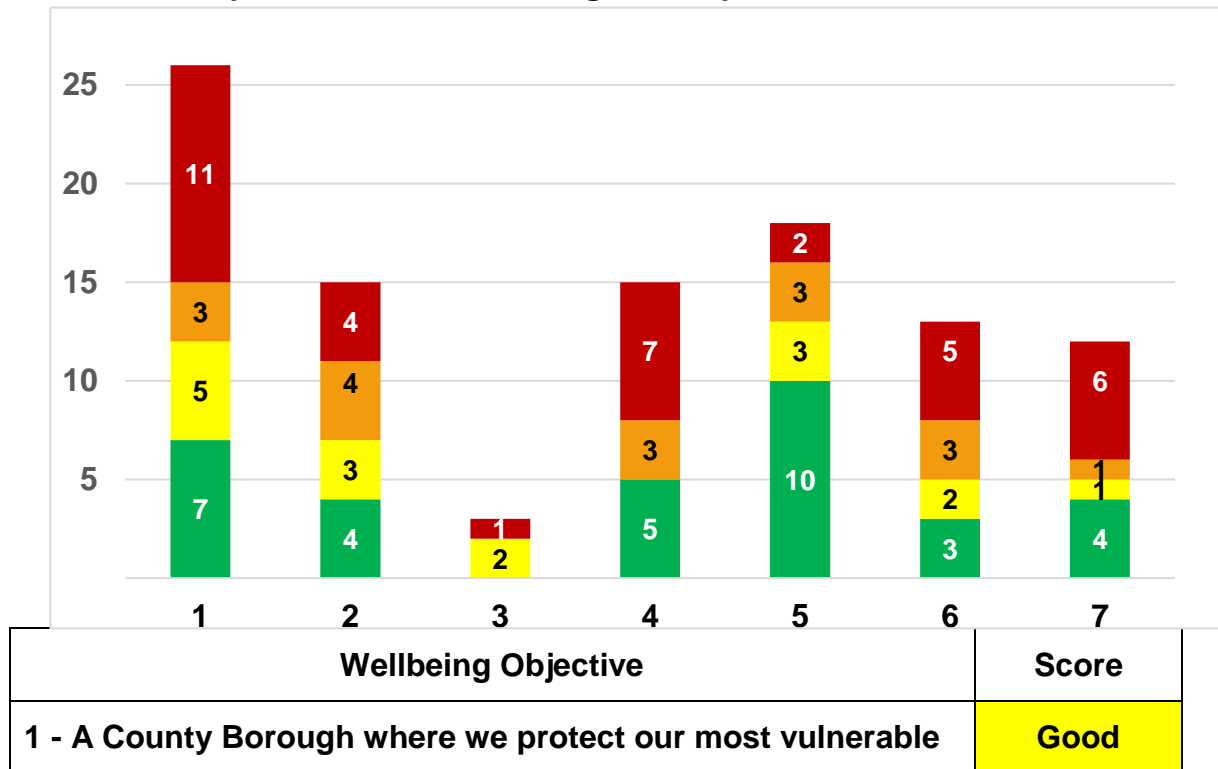
- 101 commitments (projects) the council will do to help us achieve our aims, for example, opening a new recycling centre at Pyle.
- a list of 99 performance indicators to measure our day to day activities, for example, collecting and recycling your household waste.

Each one of these has been given a blue, red, amber or green rating to show you whether they are completed, on target or if we are struggling to achieve them.

**Graph 1 – How we are doing on our commitments / projects**



**Graph 2 – How we are doing on our performance indicators.**



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective

Aim	Status	Description
Providing high-quality children’s and adults social services and early help services to	Good	There have been some significant successes in social services this year. We are making good progress against the 3-year children’s services strategic plan, including development of an engagement framework, workforce plan, commissioning strategy, signs of safety model of social work practice, corporate parenting board and improvements to data and information. The number of children on the child protection register has

<p>people who need them</p>		<p>steadily reduced and is on target. We have achieved a safe reduction in the number of care experienced children. 100% of carers (in children's services) have been offered a carer's assessment. There have been improvements of the timeliness of visits to children who are care experienced and on the child protection register.</p> <p>We are making good progress in developing a 3-year plan for sustainable care and support for adults. We are embedding the new practice model. There have been several training sessions on strengths based, outcome focused practice. 377 reablement packages have been completed, supporting people to retain or regain their independence, although the percentage that mitigated the need for support has got slightly worse. Community coordinators have supported 395 people and community navigators supported 517 people to develop confidence and connect them to community-based support.</p> <p>The new carer's wellbeing service provides information, advice and assistance, and signpost to support services as well as specialist support for young carers.</p> <p>Numbers of people accessing independent advocacy both in children's and adult's social care is well below target and we are working to better promote and record interventions.</p> <p>We have completed more team around the family support plans and the percentage of plans closing with a successful outcome has increased to 83%.</p>
<p>Supporting people in poverty to get the support they need / help they are entitled to</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>We are supporting some people with direct financial support, for example through the Energy Bill Support Scheme which ended earlier in the year, for which all payments have been made. Our Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) is efficient, with applications dealt with promptly. We also provide advice and support through our financial advice and assistance service (FASS). This service provides advice and support in managing or reducing household debt to 93% of the people who have contacted it. It is also helping people access benefits and allowances, and 92% of people using the service saw an increased income through claims for additional / increased benefits and allowances. We also work closely with citizens advice bureau (CAB) who have developed an outreach and drop in service, raising awareness of the support on offer.</p>
<p>Supporting people facing homelessness</p>	<p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>We have developed a new homelessness strategy, which outlines our priorities, objectives and what we will do with partners over the next 4 years to tackle</p>



to find a place to live		homelessness. Changes to Welsh Government legislation means there is a crisis of housing supply and demand across Wales. Demand is very high for homelessness services and our supply of accommodation (particularly specific types of accommodation like large homes and accessible homes) is very low. This means we aren't able to help people as quickly as we should, and we are relying on temporary accommodation more than we would like.
Supporting children with additional learning needs to get the best from their education	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>All schools have additional learning needs (ALN) practice embedded in their teaching and learning policies. Headteachers and ALN coordinators (ALNCos) in all schools have had detailed training on ALN reform.</p> <p>Support and training are available from the Central South Consortium, with support material on Hwb. Training and information help make sure there is support available for children with additional learning needs.</p> <p>But significant cuts to service delivery, especially in respect of managing challenging pupil behaviour, have impacted on the level of support available. This has resulted in significant waiting lists for specialist provision across all areas. There has been a substantial increase in requests for support and specialist placements as a result of exclusions and behavioural challenges in mainstream settings. Early years settings are requiring a higher level of support for children with increasingly complex medical needs. Similarly, there are pressures on the availability of specialist home-to-school transport to meet the needs of learners.</p>
Safeguarding and protecting people who are at risk of harm	<b>Good</b>	<p>We have a regular, corporate safeguarding board. Our Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report was approved in January.</p> <p>Almost all children's safeguarding referrals decisions are made within the 24-hour target. 78% of child protection investigations are completed within required timescales.</p> <p>Average waiting time on the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) waiting list has reduced to 16 days now we have got rid of the waiting list backlog. The percentage of adult safeguarding inquiries which receive initial response within 7 working days is slightly below target.</p>

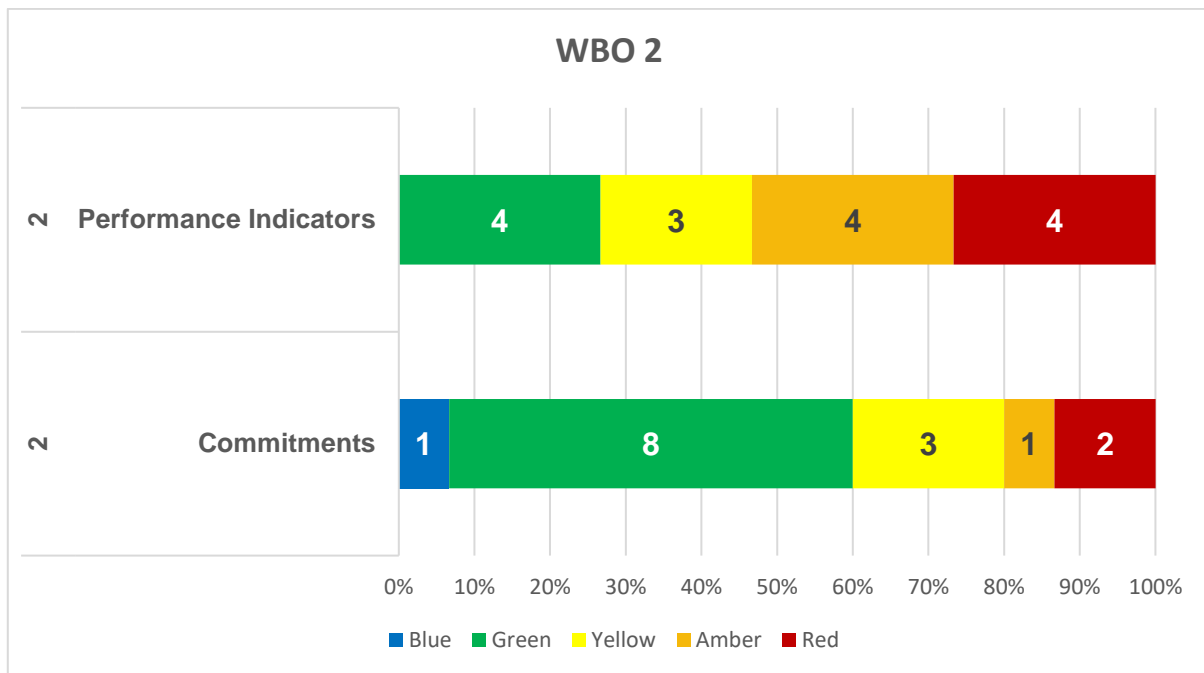
		Not all staff are using the safeguarding e-learning module, but we are changing the system to recognise prior learning.
Help people to live safely at home through changes to their homes	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	We are still clearing a backlog of historical disabled facility grants, so the waiting times are still long. But the total number of jobs completed is high, we have spent all of our budget, streamlined the process for applying for a DFG and improved payment to contractors and budget management. A new DFG Caseworker will help coordinate progress and improve communication with the applicant. We now expect waiting times to start to reduce. All residents receiving a service were satisfied with the adaptations made to their homes and felt they helped them to remain in their own home independently and safely.
Support partners to keep communities safe	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>Safer streets funding has been used to install new fixed CCTV cameras, re-deployable CCTV cameras and new signs, to deter bad behaviour, provide evidence and reassure communities. The council's CCTV system and operatives have reported 944 incidents to South Wales Police to help them deal with incidents and keep the public safe.</p> <p>We are working with partners to identify children who need support to reduce offending behaviour in a multi-agency prevention panel. A new prevention assessment tool has been created by the Youth Justice Board to help us understand the needs of children at risk of entering criminal justice services.</p> <p>Women's self-defence classes have been delivered to individuals and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. Around 75% of council staff have completed Violence Against Women training, but this is below target.</p>

### What will we do to improve?

- Restructure the family support service
- Prevention and wellbeing service will work with an extra 380 young carers
- Bring in 'what matters' conversations and proportionate carers assessments
- Develop a young carers network group
- Review the children's services 3-year strategic plan and deliver the year 2 objectives
- Finalise and implement the adult services 3-year strategic plan
- Develop working groups on the future operating model for children's services
- Widen training for strength-based outcome focused practice to front line social care staff.
- Work with corporate procurement to deliver the actions in the commissioning plans.

- Implement the action plan from the housing support programme strategy.
- Undertake directorate self-evaluations on safeguarding competencies.
- Additional signs of safety training sessions and safeguarding training for school governors.
- Review mandatory eLearning modules for staff.
- Work with partners to develop a regional model of practice for safeguarding and exploitation
- Reducing the backlog of historical disabled facilities grants

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>2 - A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns</b>	<b>Good</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

Aim	RAYG	Performance this year
Helping our residents get the skills they need for work	<b>Good</b>	Employability Bridgend provides support to unemployed people, and those in work but struggling with low skills or in-work poverty. This year, 366 people (above the target of 350) from the Employability Bridgend programme went into employment and 93 people (just below the target of 100) improved their Labour market position. A number of grant schemes have been launched successfully, and we continue to work in partnership with public and third sector groups to deliver the employability programme, including Careers Wales, BAVO, DWP and Bridgend Employability Network. 213 people have been referred to the employment service in Assisting Recovery in the Community (ARC) for support with mental health issues.
Making sure our young people find jobs, or are in education or training	<b>Good</b>	76 young people on the Employability Bridgend programme have been supported into education or training (against a target of 727), as we are just starting new projects and funding eligibility criteria and dealing with staff capacity issues. A marketing campaign has been developed for young people, to

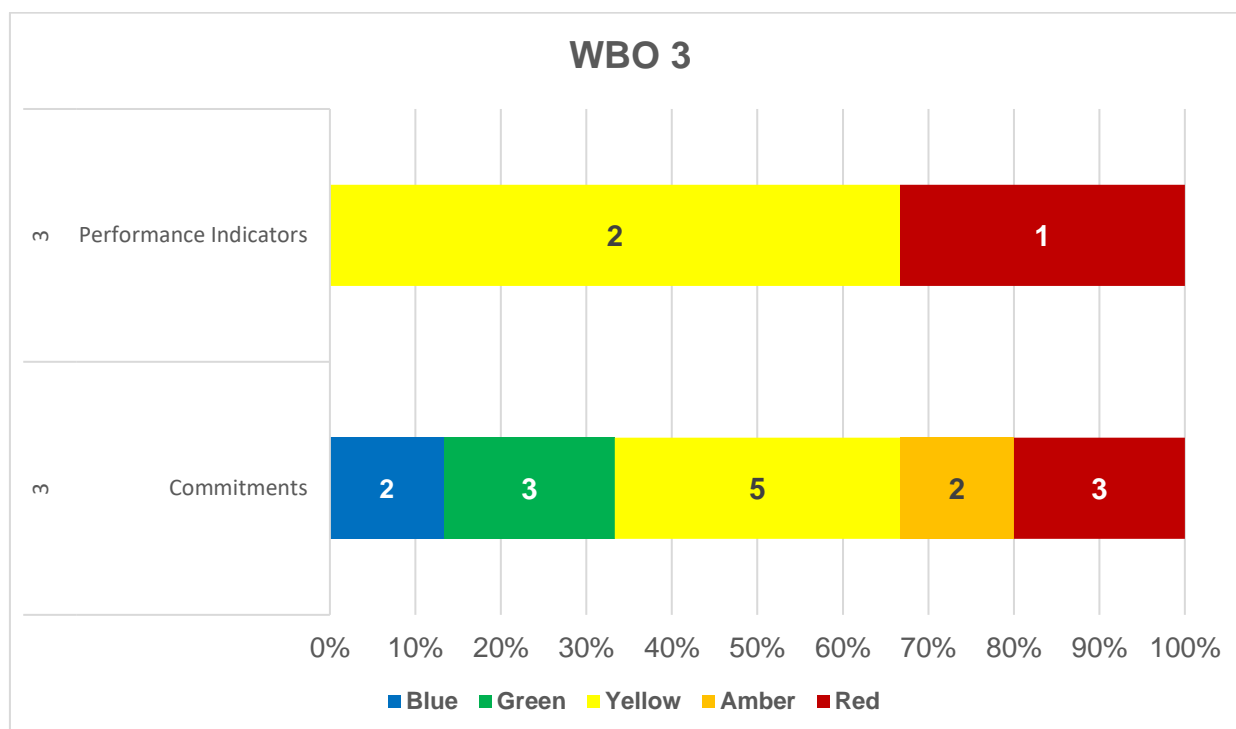
		<p>raise awareness of employment and training opportunities.</p> <p>The percentage of year 11 school leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) is better than the Wales average, 4<sup>th</sup> in Wales and better than last year at 1.4%.</p> <p>The Council's vacancy issues have been addressed through grow your own schemes, flexible working, and leadership development. We have got 8 social work trainees into posts.</p>
Improving town centres, making them safer and more attractive	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>We have developed two placemaking plans – for Maesteg and Porthcawl – engaging with local people and businesses to reflect their priorities.</p> <p>Two commitments under this aim have not been able to progress due to lack of funding. This has had an impact on achievement against the aim as a whole. There is no progress on Penprysg Bridge as we did not receive funding from UK government. There is no progress on Bridgend Central Station improvements, but we will keep looking for sources of funding.</p>
Attracting investment and supporting new and existing local businesses	<b>Good</b>	<p>219 business startups (compared with a target of 52) have been supported through advice, grant bids, web material, face to face networking and event opportunities. 25 businesses have received support through the shared prosperity fund, which is a higher demand than we expected.</p> <p>The Council has done more of its purchasing and contracts under £100,000 through local businesses.</p> <p>Work continues on the Supplier Relation Management [SRM] project to help local businesses tender for public sector work. A new webpage has been developed but has not been promoted and supplier workshops have not yet taken place due to staffing issues.</p> <p>There has been regional engagement with Cardiff Capital Region [CCR] to monitor developments, disseminate information and progress grant funding schemes including the Metrolink and Ewenny Road, Maesteg.</p>
Making the council an attractive place to work	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>We have renewed staff policies, implemented the real living wage and continued to promote health, wellbeing and self-care.</p> <p>A new Employee Assistance Programme was launched in December 2023. Work continues on the menopause and carers protocol. Further positive progress continues with the "Grow your Own" programme. We continue to promote savings that</p>

		<p>come from Brivilege rewards to help with the Cost of Living.</p> <p>Our staff survey took place in Feb/March 2024 but had a poor response rate of only 24%. Responses were slightly less positive than in 2023 for most of the tracker questions. We will run focus groups to get underneath the headline figures and poor response rate.</p>
<p>Ensuring employment is fair, equitable and pays the real living wage</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>We have worked with our supply chain, encouraging employers to offer training and working with our suppliers to find out if they are real living wage employers. 250 employers in the Borough are Real Living Wage accredited.</p>

**What will we do to improve?**

- Deliver the 2024/25 shared prosperity fund programme.
- Improve the employability offer to people with care and support needs.
- Develop a local and regional plan to help people with support needs overcome barriers to work.
- Learning and development training to support newly qualified social workers.
- Run the transforming town grant funding scheme.
- Work with Transport for Wales, Network Rail and Welsh Government to assess funding options for the Penprysg road bridge, Pencoed level crossing and Central Station redevelopment.
- Update our procurement strategy, action plan and CPRs based on the new UK government legislation.
- Run focus groups to better understand the results of the staff survey and develop an action plan to address them.
- Encourage our suppliers to become real living wage employers

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>3 - A County Borough with thriving valleys communities</b>	<b>Good</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

Aim	Status	Description
Investing in town centres, including Maesteg town centre	<b>Good</b>	A Placemaking Plan for Maesteg has been developed and consulted on. It will guide investment and policy decisions which will shape the town's future. The Commercial Property Enhancement Grant has been developed and marketed. 1 project is underway and we have already helped 4 commercial properties through the enhancement grant scheme.
Creating more jobs in the Valleys	<b>Amber</b>	We have bid for a large grant from the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Northern Valley's Initiative. If successful we will be able to develop a range of industrial premises in the Valleys.  We are working with Awen to provide new facilities for supported training for people with learning disabilities at Wood B and B-Leaf in Bryngarw. The tender was awarded and design work is progressing.
Improving community facilities and making	<b>Good</b>	Only 3 Community Asset Transfers (CATs) of our target of 5 were finalised (Bettws, Llangynwyd & Garth Park, Maesteg). The number of transfers were impacted by property issues and staff capacity issues.

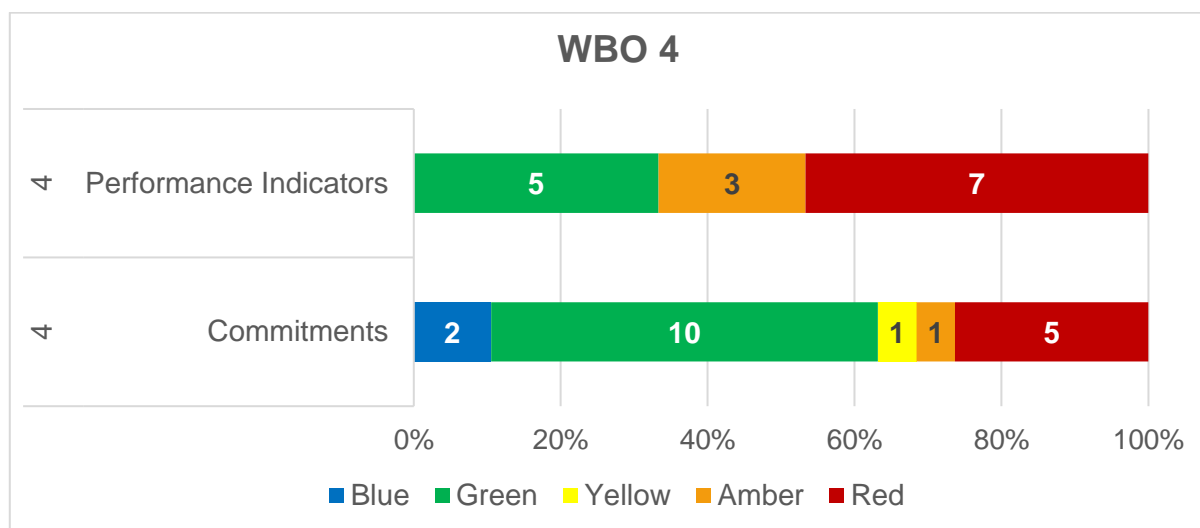
<p>them more accessible</p>		<p>£296,662 has been invested with Community Asset Transfers (CATs) in Valleys.</p> <p>There has been significant progress on the redevelopment of the Ewenny Road site, with planning permission granted for a mixed-use development, (including new and affordable homes, an enterprise hub, open space and green infrastructure) and the site being marketed for sale.</p> <p>There have been 353,782 visits to Maesteg Town Hall, Garw and Ogmore Valley Life Centre, Maesteg Swimming Pool and Maesteg Sports Centre. We are increasingly trying to focus on actions that build social connections / mental wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. There is a digital development plan in 5 community venues, identifying how staff / volunteers can use digital approaches including streaming activities.</p>
<p>Improving education and skills in the Valleys</p>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p>	<p>Flying Start Nurseries at Pontycymmer, Nantymoel and Ogmore Vale are now operating morning and afternoon sessions with a total of 60 children.</p> <p>There is interest from childcare providers at the Bettws and Blaengarw settings, but the lease documentation is not complete, so neither can yet be opened to tender.</p>
<p>Investing in our parks and green spaces and supporting tourism to the valleys</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>There has been good progress in developing the Valley Regeneration Strategy, with engagement throughout the 3 valley areas. A draft strategy is being prepared for consultation.</p> <p>The Cwm Taf Nature Network (CTNN) completed its delivery during 23/24 and the evaluation report demonstrates the project has been a success.</p>
<p>Encourage the development of new affordable homes in the valleys</p>	<p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>The Council meets Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Welsh Government regularly to promote and encourage the development of new social housing in the valleys. A funnel of opportunities is being developed.</p> <p>Only 2 (against a target of 20) additional affordable homes have been provided by Registered Social Landlords in the Valleys this year. There have been external factors affecting the delivery of new sites, including NRW objections which we haven't been able to resolve within the year.</p> <p>There has been no progress on encouraging the development of self-build homes on infill plots, to increase the range of housing, as there are no resources or funding available.</p>



## **What will we do to improve?**

- Complete and publish the placemaking plan for Maesteg.
- Improve marketing for the commercial property enhancement grant.
- Bid for funding to bring premises and land forward for business growth in the Valleys
- Work with Awen to progress the new facilities for people with learning disabilities at wood-B and B-leaf.
- Increase investment in Community Asset Transfers in the Valleys.
- Sell the Ewenny Road site for a mixed-use development including new and affordable homes, an enterprise hub, open space and green infrastructure.
- Deliver additional activities in community venues in the Valleys.
- Develop and promote library use in Valleys communities.
- Implement the digital development project in 5 community venues.
- Invest in programmes that focus on social connections / mental wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Complete the lease document for Bettws and Blaengarw childcare facilities so they are operational in November 20224.
- Consult on a regeneration strategy for the Valleys in summer 2024.
- Implement the green spaces enhancement project.
- Work with RSLs, Welsh Government and other partners to resolve external factors affecting the delivery of new affordable housing sites in the Valleys.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>4 - A County Borough where we help people meet their potential</b>	<b>Adequate</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

Aim	Status	Description
Providing safe, supportive schools with high quality teaching	<b>Adequate</b>	Schools have been given tools to help improve Estyn inspection outcomes, including self-evaluation toolkits, reviewed school development plans, and support with post inspection actions. All schools have completed safeguarding audits, with 95% rated as “green”. Three schools rated amber with areas of improvement to address. Additional digital learning opportunities have been available to schools via Central South Consortium, including digital competency training, google classroom and digital platform training, Curriculum for Wales skills mapping, and online safety training (also provided to governors). The Young Editors Group have co-developed website content for an interactive youth-led website. Our social media channels have proved an excellent way to engage with young people. Engagement with young people has identified that “Tik Tok” is the preferred social media platform, which Bridgend Youth Support will trial in the coming months.
Improving employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities	<b>Adequate</b>	We are doing a review of day opportunities to give young adults with learning disabilities a chance to try activities, gain new skills and fulfil their potential. Links with our Employability Team are in development, and there have been a small number of volunteering opportunities in the Day Service.

		<p>A regional working group has been established for Neuro Diversity and Learning Disability, with a stakeholder meeting held in February 2024 to identify current provision and networks between providers.</p>
<p>Expanding Welsh medium education opportunities</p>	<p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>There are a variety of groups, projects and initiatives in place to increase opportunities for children to use the Welsh language, but targets we have set have not been achieved in all areas. The percentage of year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh is 8.56% and continues to show an improving trend, but the percentage of learners studying for assessed qualifications through the medium of Welsh at the end of Key Stage 4 has fallen slightly to 6.62%, indicating a smaller proportion of children studying at a Welsh-medium secondary school. The number of students who were entered for an A level examination in Welsh second language remains the same as last year, although is almost double those that sat A level Welsh first language.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy is on target – we have developed Welsh-medium webpages and have been planning the promotion of Welsh-medium education.</p>
<p>Modernising our school buildings</p>	<p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>Each of the five schemes are in design / development phases and have experienced delays throughout 2023-2024, including significant increases in projected costs, with a big impact on project timescales, consideration of options and decision making.</p> <p>The replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr timescales have been impacted due to a review of the car park and school transport parking design layout (to ensure pupil/user safety) as well as ecological issues at the new, Ffordd Cadfan site. A strategy for undertaking the work is being developed with input from the ecologist.</p> <p>The replacement Heronsbridge School has seen significant cost increases and a delayed decision in terms of the preferred option, which has impacted on the timescale for delivery of the project.</p> <p>The replacement Mynydd Cynffig Primary School planning application is yet to be submitted, as the preferred option for the highway infrastructure needs to be confirmed.</p> <p>The PAC process for Bridgend West (the replacement Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr and the new English-medium school) has concluded and a cost plan developed, reviewed in conjunction with Welsh Government / Welsh Education Partnership Company (WEPCo), and value engineering has been undertaken. Welsh Government reviews have impacted on timescales for delivery.</p>

<p>Attract and retain young people into BCBC employment</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>We have engaged with schools through the termly Director Reports and have attended jobs fairs, options and careers events at comprehensive schools to promote the apprenticeship offer, delivering workshops on applying for apprenticeship jobs and improving interview skills.</p> <p>The number of apprentices employed by the council has increased from 36 in 22-23 to 46 in 23-24, with 90% of those concluding their apprenticeships in 23-24 going on to obtain a non-apprentice role.</p>
<p>Offering youth services and school holiday programmes for our young people</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>130 children took part in the Food and Fun Programme, where children attended 12 sessions to support their physical health and emotional wellbeing and received a healthy breakfast and lunch.</p> <p>19,659 children in the County Borough took part in the national free-swimming initiative for 16 and under.</p> <p>Discovery programmes supported around 50 families with young people with higher levels of additional needs, with activities for the young people and respite for the families.</p> <p>22 families have been referred and 70 individuals supported in our “step up and step down” approach for low level social care.</p> <p>Programmes have been delivered with halo and community groups with youth activities for more vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Using funding from Town and Community Councils / Welsh Government there has been free holiday activity programmes for 8-11 year olds in 8 locations including leisure centres, secondary school sites and community settings.</p> <p>357 people with additional or diverse needs have taken part in targeted activities including Summer of Fun / Winter of Wellbeing.</p>
<p>Work with people to design and develop services</p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>The Feel Good for Life programme delivered by Halo Leisure has used peer review panels to engage with service users to plan for improvements. A dementia planning working group has been established to share insight and opportunities to collaborate between partner organisations.</p> <p>We work with Cwmpas and carers to make improvements to how they can access the information they need, and how use of a range of short breaks could improve their resilience to care.</p>
<p>Supporting and encouraging lifelong learning</p>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p>	<p>There were a number of promotional exercises to engage with residents about the Adult Community Learning (ACL) service. 53 face-to-face courses/sessions delivered, including accredited courses, one-off taster sessions and regular digital drop-ins. A successful partnership has developed with a</p>

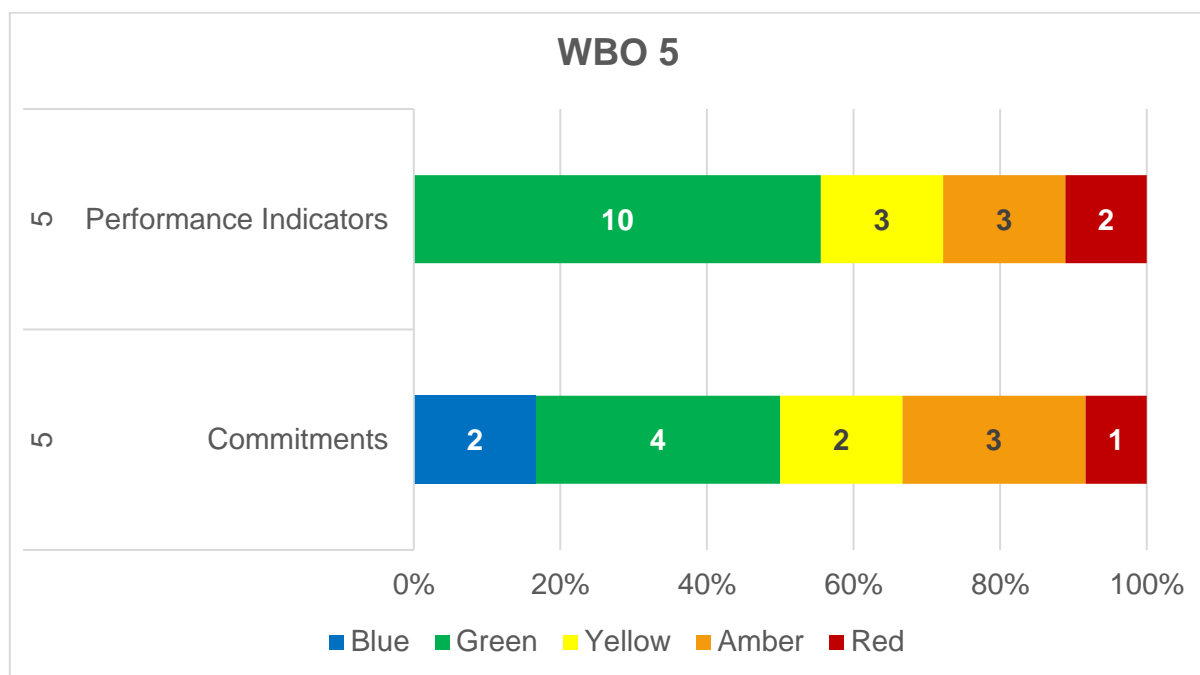
		number of primary schools and effective recruitment campaigns were run. This year has seen increased enrolment numbers compared to previous years however we did not reach our target as active engagement campaigns ended due to the approved proposal to deprioritise ACL funding in February 2024.
Being the best parents we can to our care experienced children	<b>Good</b>	<p>Joint working in the 16+ team has led to a fall in the number of care leavers who experience homelessness. Social Services and Housing are working together to provide care leavers with the skills needed for independent living.</p> <p>The number of care leavers completing 12 months consecutive employment, education or training (EET) since leaving care is improved to 68.97%, but there is a slight decrease in those completing 13-24 months. There has been a notable decline since the Basic Income Pilot was introduced.</p> <p>We have published our new Corporate Parenting Strategy with board member agencies now asked to sign up to the Welsh Government Corporate Parenting Pledge.</p> <p>We have set up a fundraising page for an awards event for care experienced children, young people and care leavers aged 5-21.</p> <p>Care experience will now be recognised as a protected characteristic to make sure their needs are taken into account in all our decision making.</p>

### What will we do to improve?

- Support schools (working with Central South Consortium) to implement Curriculum for Wales and assessment, encouraging high-quality teaching and learning.
- Implement the Trauma-Recovery Model (TRM) of practice across the Youth Justice Service to better support children and their families.
- Ensure children are diverted from the criminal justice system through appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity (working with the police and courts).
- Streamline youth justice referrals, through Prevention and Diversion Panel, ensuring smooth handoffs to other agencies for cases where criminalisation can be avoided.
- Increase education, training and employment support to children not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or with reduced timetables.
- Develop and implement a digital platform to capture the voice of young people, especially those who have been in receipt of services.
- Complete a governor skills audit to inform their self-evaluation process.
- Organise additional safeguarding training for school staff and governors.
- Provide schools with additional digital learning training.
- Launch the new website and tiktok account to keep young people informed.
- Develop a local and regional plan for young people with learning disabilities.
- Enact the communications plan for Welsh-medium education.

- Complete the review of the car park and school transport parking design layout at the replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr and develop a strategy for accessing the site and undertaking the work with input from the ecologist.
- Proceed with work on the replacement Heronsbridge School 'do maximum option (that is, school and the school's residential provision) plus a swimming pool' following Cabinet approval of the way forward in March 2024.
- Submit the planning application for the replacement Mynydd Cynffig Primary School.
- Await Welsh Government signoff for the Mutual Investment Model (that is, revenue funded) scheme for the PAC process for Bridgend West (that is, the replacement Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr and the new English-medium school).
- Review the action plan on support for care experienced children through corporate safeguarding board.
- Education and Engagement team / Social Services will continue to work closely to provide care-experienced children with support and put personal education plans in place as soon as possible.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>5 - A County Borough that is responding to the climate and nature emergency</b>	<b>Good</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

Aim	Status	Description
Moving towards net zero carbon, and improving our energy efficiency	<b>Adequate</b>	Overall, a 4.3% reduction in emissions was achieved in 23-24, slightly less than our 5% target but a positive step in our 2030 obligations, with reductions in electricity and gas consumption and CO2 related energy consumption across our buildings. There are significant cost barriers to moving fleet vehicles from traditional petrol/diesel to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV), but we have used Welsh Government funding to procure 6 electric vehicles, used by the Social Services Support at Home Service. The average nitrogen dioxide level in Park Street, Bridgend has improved. Measures in the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) have developed and refined, which will reduce levels further once implemented. Modelling now forecasts the likely year of compliance as 2026 with all measures in place.
Protecting our landscapes and open spaces and planting more trees	<b>Good</b>	The Local Places for Nature project successfully delivered its 23/24 work programme which included biodiversity enhancement schemes at Heol Y Cyw Playing Fields and land behind Pyle Swimming Pool and habitat connectivity schemes at Sarn, Brynmenyn, Newbridge Fields, Cefn Glas, Aberkenfig, Bryntirion and Newcastle.

		<p>The Cwm Taf Nature Network (CTNN) project completed its delivery during 23-24 and the evaluation report demonstrated the project had been a success, improving access to green spaces for local people, improving the quality of the environment of those green spaces, and connecting up green spaces.</p> <p>Our commitment to plant a further 10,000 trees could not be achieved. Feasibility work for the schemes was completed, but further investigation of the preferred site option is needed and funding must be secured before this can progress further. 3 beaches at Rest Bay, Trecco Bay and Porthcawl Marina retained their blue flag status, and 3 parks at Bryn Garw Country Park, Coychurch Crematorium and Maesteg Welfare Park maintained their status as green flag parks / green spaces.</p>
Improve the quality of the public realm and built environment through good placemaking principles	<b>Good</b>	<p>The Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in March 2024 after an extensive examination in public in Spring 2023 by a Welsh Government Appointed Inspector. We will now progress work on the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) which enhances the policies in the LDP.</p> <p>The Planning Department have implemented a restructure during this year resulting in new posts being created, and an improvement in the percentage of planning appeals dismissed from 64% to 87% and planning applications determined with 8 weeks from 64% to 68%, however this is still lower than target.</p>
Reducing, reusing or recycling as much of our waste as possible	<b>Excellent</b>	<p>Our high standards in recycling have continued, with the percentage of street cleansing waste being recycled increased to 41.12%, the percentage of municipal waste collected that is prepared for re-use, recycled, or biowaste that is composted increased to 71.94% and the amount of residual waste generated has decreased further to 119.8 kg per person.</p> <p>The percentage of highways land found to be of acceptable or high level of cleanliness also improved to 99.97%.</p> <p>Work has begun on our future waste services model, engaging an industry expert to outline our options based on analysis of data from our current model – potential future options.</p> <p>The new Community Recycling Centre (CRC) opened in Pyle on 14th March 2024.</p>
Improving flood defences and schemes to reduce flooding of our homes	<b>Excellent</b>	<p>New flood prevention and culvert schemes have been completed in Station Street, Nantymoel, and Queen street, Blaengarw and monitored for effectiveness over the winter period. Bids for Welsh Government funding have been approved for schemes identified for 2024/25. There was additional gully clearance work targeted at historical flooding locations, and ditch cleaning operations to improve flood risk in rural areas. More culverts have been added to monitoring</p>

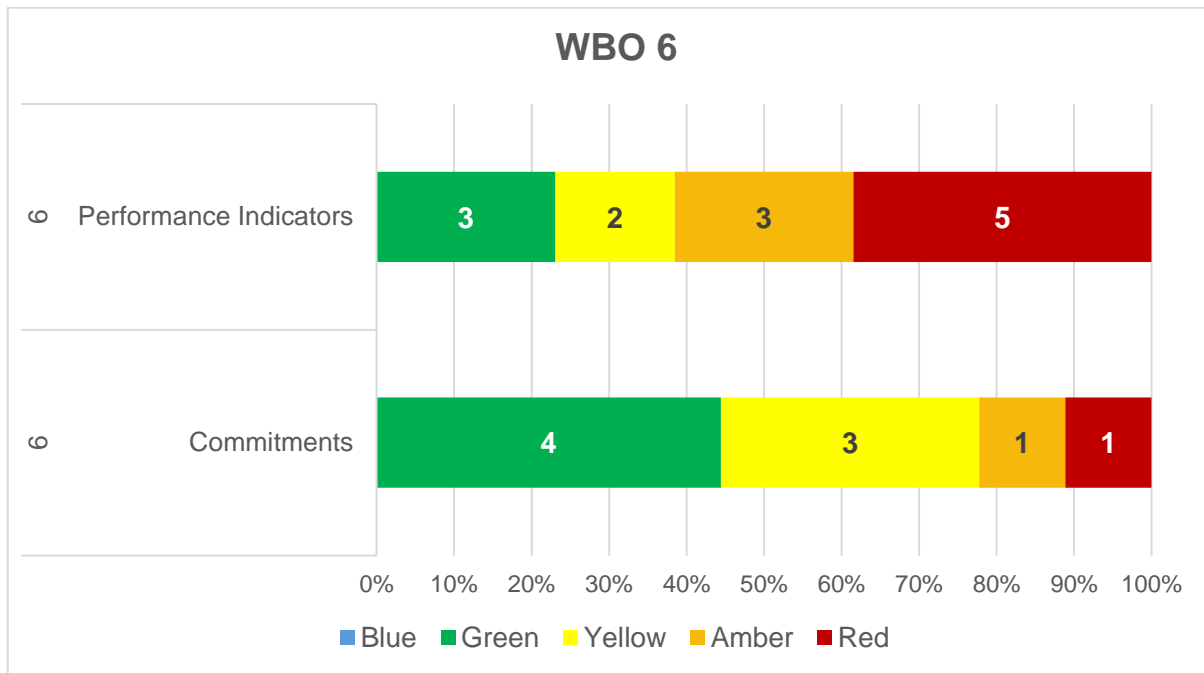


and businesses		regime, with more frequent inspections of the high-risk culverts, and replacement/upgrading of warning sensors at some locations. Improvements have been made to the statutory sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) application process, with 100% of applications being processed within 7 weeks.
----------------	--	---

### What will we do to improve?

- Review our fleet transition strategy to meet the target of 2035 for net zero
- Agree and publish the final air quality action plan (AQAP).
- Install electric car charging points at the social services support at home base
- Develop and explore funding for energy efficiency improvements for council buildings.
- Develop supplementary planning guidance to support our new LDP
- Further improvements to our landscapes and green spaces through the new Green Spaces Enhancement project.
- Further work on the future waste model and a decision on new model will be made in 2024/25.
- Decommission the outdated CRC at Tythegston.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>6 - A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community</b>	<b>Adequate</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

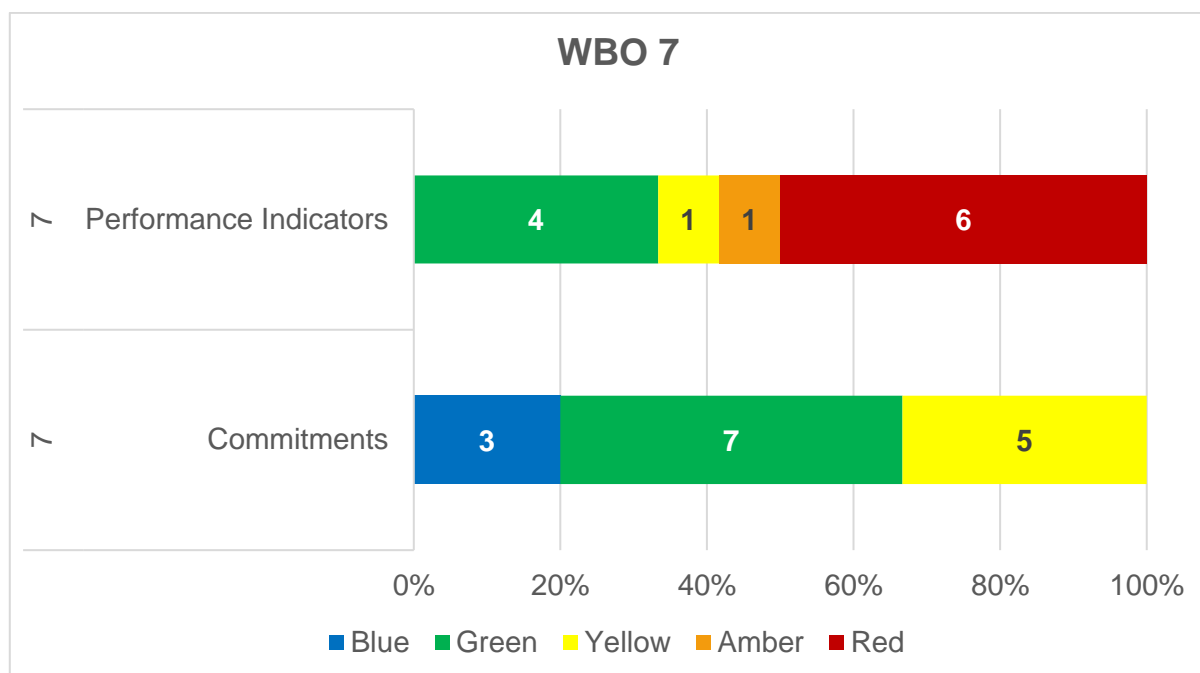
Aim	Status	Description
Celebrating and supporting diversity and inclusion and tackling discrimination	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>The new Strategic Equalities Plan (SEP) for 2024-28 has been consulted on and will be approved and published early in 2024/25.</p> <p>Only 48% of council staff have completed introduction to Equality and Diversity training, below the target of 100%.</p> <p>The staff survey has identified interest in staff groups focused on groups including LGBTQ+, mental health and ethnic minority. Groups will commence in 2024.</p>
Improving the way we engage with local people, including young people, listening to their views and acting on them.	<b>Good</b>	<p>The percentage of consultation participants who believe we have been effective at meeting our aim of being citizen-focused over the last 12 months has improved slightly to 49.7% against a target of 50%.</p> <p>The level of engagement with residents, using the digital communications platform and across corporate social media accounts has increased and the targets have been achieved. The level of engagement on corporate consultations has reduced and target has been missed.</p>

		We have not developed the Bridgend County Borough Council Climate Citizens Assembly, as this has been deprioritised.
Offering more information and advice online, and at local level, and making sure you can talk to us and hear from us in Welsh	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<p>We have not quite achieved our targets for first call resolutions or number of transactions using the digital platform and performance is down since last year. The number of online transactions decreased in comparison to previous years, due to the previous figures being inflated as they included the online forms that were temporarily made available to residents to apply for various cost of living schemes, especially the Winter Fuel payments. But the number of hits on the corporate website has increased and met the target, with awareness raising communications, new pages and people being directed to using the website for online transactions.</p> <p>Work continues with Awen to extend customer services in local community facilities. A pilot has been undertaken in Garw and Ogmere Valleys' libraries, but it showed that demand for the service was low.</p> <p>Staff with Welsh language speaking skills has increased to 27% but this is still below target. Only 48% of council staff have completed Welsh Language Awareness E-Learning, more than last year but still below target.</p>
Helping clubs and community groups take control of and improve their facilities and protect them for the future	<b>Good</b>	<p>Our progress with community asset transfers (CATs) is mixed. 7 CATs were completed against a target of 15 for the year, as a result of some complicated property issues and staff capacity. But the level of investment in CATs has exceeded our target as we have fully spent our own budget and brought in external funds.</p> <p>395 people have been supported to have their needs met in their communities by local community co-ordinators and community navigators. This is well above target for the new roles. Community network building approaches are being used to bring partners and stakeholders together who support people to understand services / gaps.</p>
Becoming an age friendly council	<b>Adequate</b>	Bridgend is participating in an all-Wales programme supported by Welsh Government. We are developing our baseline assessment and action plan, looking at transport, housing, community support and health services, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information.

## **What will we do to improve?**

- Publish our new Strategic Equalities Plan
- With our partners, develop an action plan to deliver the Strategic Equalities Plan
- Arrange staff groups for people with protected characteristics.
- Develop a communications plan, corporate narrative and public engagement.
- Engage in the 2030 net carbon agenda.
- Find ways to progress with community support in Garw and Ogmore Valley libraries.
- Continue to build community networks and grow prevention and wellbeing network meetings in partnership with Bavo and the third sector.
- Continue to work with Welsh Government and the Older People's Commissioner network to inform planning and development around age friendly councils.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
<b>7 - A County Borough where we support people to be healthy and happy</b>	<b>Good</b>



The information below gives you more detail on how we are doing on each aim under this wellbeing objective.

Aim	Status	Description
Improving active travel routes and facilities so people can walk and cycle	<b>Adequate</b>	Construction of the Metrolink bus facility has progressed well throughout the year but has not opened for commercial use within the year as planned. Welsh Government have significantly reduced the money available to implement additional Active Travel Routes, which has had a dramatic impact on schemes achieved, with only 0.4km of new route added.
Offering attractive leisure and cultural activities	<b>Excellent</b>	The Grand Pavilion refurbishment project is underway, with a specialist project management team and planning and listed building consent in place, and work on designs in progress. The tender process will commence in Summer 2024. Welsh Government and Sport Wales have supported improvements to the active leisure offer for older adults, to improve physical / mental wellbeing. We have promoted use of our leisure facilities and community settings, and activity programmes that benefit older adults. The National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) operated beyond capacity with referrals totalling 1658

		<p>across 20,729 sessions. 416 people completed 16-week programmes.</p> <p>Refurbishment of Pencoed library was completed. During 23-24 there have been 26,620 library visits, 2,361 children participated in the summer reading challenge, (slightly below target), and almost 56,000 children participated in children's events in libraries - slightly below previous years.</p>
Improving children's play facilities and opportunities	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>The refurbishment of play areas has not progressed as far as planned, with slow progress during the complex procurement work. Contracts have now been awarded and work has commenced on refurbishing 22 play areas across the borough working with members and Disability Wales.</p> <p>Following successful pilots in Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen and Cynffig Comprehensive School, the "Dare2Explore" project has been rolled out to all secondary schools.</p> <p>Bridgend Music Service developed a new training brass ensemble, senior wind band, and string ensemble and will be recruiting new members.</p>
Providing free school meals and expanding free childcare provision	<b>Good</b>	<p>Universal primary free school meals (UPFSM) were implemented for Year 3, 4 and Nursery pupils.</p> <p>There has been a further increase in children accessing Flying Start funded childcare through the expansion programme, with 272 additional children accessing childcare between in 23-24 and a total of 530 children now registered.</p> <p>The percentage of non-maintained settings judged by Care Inspectorate Wales as at least 'good' was 76.5% which was below the target of 100% we have set.</p>
Integrating our social care services with health services so people are supported seamlessly	<b>Adequate</b>	<p>104 people were delayed on the national pathway of care, which exceeds our target. Implementation of 'Discharge to Recover and Assess' pathways has not led to the improvement anticipated.</p> <p>We have worked closely with the NHS on Dementia mapping and linking needs around the Complex Dementia Day Service and the new Memory Assessment Service. CIW have evaluated this service as 'excellent'.</p> <p>We have successfully mobilised the Age Connect Morgannwg contract with the new Dementia Connector role for Bridgend, and the Alzheimer's Disease contract for the Dementia Link Workers.</p>
Improving the supply of affordable housing	<b>Yellow</b>	<p>64 additional homes were delivered, over £11.8 million Welsh Government Social Housing Grant was committed and an additional £4 million Transitional Capital secured for the year.</p> <p>The Welsh Government Leasing Scheme has been adopted with a small number of units already in use.</p>

		<p>A housing and support needs assessment was undertaken during the development of the Housing Strategy, and we have engaged with all RSL's and Welsh Government to discuss general housing needs, temporary accommodation and supported housing schemes.</p> <p>The Empty Properties Loan Scheme is nearing completion. 6 empty properties have been brought back into use through local authority intervention. By targeting the Top 20 empty properties - 2 have been sold, 3 are being renovated, and 2 completing probate. Enforcement notices have been served on 2 properties, successful prosecutions on 3 with another prosecution pending, and 1 work in default completed.</p>
--	--	---

### What will we do to improve?

- Open the new metrolink bus facility.
- Start the tender process for Porthcawl Grand Pavilion.
- Improve the active leisure offer in the Valleys for older adults.
- Develop a plan for the long-term active Bridgend plan and leisure strategy.
- Develop a new play sufficiency assessment.
- Deliver phase 3 and 4 of refurbishing 22 play areas across the borough.
- Roll out free school meals for Year 4 pupils (from April 2024) and Year 5 (in June 2024) and Year 6 (in September 2024).
- A delivery plan has been submitted and agreed for a small Welsh Government funded expansion (26 additional Flying Start childcare places) in 24-25.
- Continue to develop network multidisciplinary teams with the NHS
- As part of a much larger 5-year programme, the £11.8 million committed in Social Housing Grant will deliver approximately 119 new homes.
- The £4 million secured through Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding Programme (TACP) will add approximately 33 affordable homes.

## 5. How is the council using its resources?

We have always had to report how well we are using our resources. For example, telling Audit Wales about our spending, workforce and buildings. Until recently, we did not have a process for reviewing how we are managing all our different resources. To help us write this report, we developed a process to look at:

- Finances and risk management,
- Commissioning and procurement,
- corporate planning and performance management,
- workforce planning, and
- asset management.

To come to our judgements, we used:

- performance indicators e.g. staff vacancy levels and building maintenance,
- evidence on delivery of our projects and improvement plans,
- feedback from customers, staff and trade unions, and
- the views of regulators e.g. Audit Wales report on workforce planning

We asked questions based on the Well-being of Future Generations Act, including:

- Do we focus on prevention, not just putting things right when they go wrong?
- Are we making strong long-term plans?
- Do we share ideas, plans and resources with partner organisations?
- Are we making links and doing things consistently across the council?
- Are we involving the community and customers in key plans and decisions?

We presented findings to councillors who scrutinised them, checked and asked questions, and used the same judgement scale from excellent to unsatisfactory.

### Overall judgement

<p><b>Use of resources</b></p>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p>	<p>For the third year in a row, our use of resources is adequate. Some things have got better – we have implemented our performance management improvement plan, improved our statutory building compliance in asset management, and embedded and communicated the new Corporate Plan, Delivery Plan and Performance Framework.</p> <p>Other things have got worse – due to the increased demand, increased prices and significant financial situation we are facing. We have significantly overspent on our budget and used reserves to balance the budget. The worsening financial situation, and risk to our financial sustainability, has an impact on workforce across corporate teams and staff and managers across all of our directorates, with increasing vacancies and capacity issues. We have brought in a 5-point plan to try and help us save money.</p> <p>We have got strong frameworks and robust processes for the day-to-day management of resources, with clear and agreed working models and strong, working relationships between corporate teams and directorates. But longer-term planning, proactiveness and improvement will be challenging with the resource issues we are facing.</p>
--------------------------------	------------------------	---



## Theme judgements

Our overall judgement looks at use of resources of all types. We also have a specific judgement for each resource type, to help us with our improvement planning.

<p><b>Finances</b></p>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p>	<p>Financial Planning is adequate. Judgements from regulators are generally positive, we balance our budget every year, and have unqualified Statements of Accounts from the Auditor General. The council's financial framework is robust, with strong governance arrangements which drive the budget and spending decisions of the Council. The financial position is set out in detail in regular reports. We have a high level of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, Principles and Standards. In recent years the Council's financial position has become more challenging, with higher than anticipated pay / price increases and service pressures. This year we have significantly overspent on our budget and used reserves to balance the budget putting the financial sustainability of the Council at risk.</p>
<p><b>Corporate planning</b></p>	<p><b>Good</b></p>	<p>Corporate planning is good. The new Corporate Plan is becoming more embedded, and forms part of induction and manager training, with communication activities on the plan and priorities taking place in autumn 2023. The Corporate Plan is supported by a 1-year Delivery Plan. It is also supported by Directorate Business Plans which are all accessible on the Council's intranet. An updated performance framework has also been developed. In the staff survey in February 2024, 70% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they are aware of BCBC's priorities, up from 68% in 2022.</p>
<p><b>Risk management</b></p>	<p><b>Good</b></p>	<p>Risk management is good. Our updated Corporate Risk Management Policy has been embedded in the Authority. Reports and the reporting process for risk are straightforward and accessible, including for members. Through a review by internal audit of the Council's Corporate Risk Management, completed in March 2024, a Reasonable Assurance opinion has been given and the recommendations for improvement will be implemented in 2024/2025.</p>
<p><b>Procurement</b></p>	<p><b>Adequate</b></p>	<p>Procurement is good. We have embedded the new Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, delivery plan and updated Contract Procedure Rules. We have run training sessions to help stakeholders understand responsibilities and requirements. We have embedded the real living wage into our tender process and have a database of accredited suppliers. We have also worked with Cwmpas and suppliers around carbon reduction planning. We have made some changes to our processes including a price cap and authorisations for purchasing card spending. Our judgement is adequate based on the need for an improved and more consistent approach to commissioning.</p>

<b>Performance management</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	Our Performance management approach is adequate but we have made significant improvements in the last 18 months. We have developed a new 5-year corporate plan and 1-year delivery plan and performance framework to support them. We have appointed a new corporate performance manager. We have improved arrangements for data quality and accuracy. Performance reporting to scrutiny has been improved with summaries and graphs. Our overall judgement is adequate as improvements to our challenge culture, roles, responsibilities and timeliness of information, data accuracy and use of service user perspectives still needs improvement.
<b>Workforce planning</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	Workforce management is good. Feedback from employees, managers, trade union representatives and internal audits is positive. Managers are assisted to deal effectively with people issues through support from the HR / Organisational Development service. We are developing an increased focus on longer-term workforce planning and engagement and retention activity as well as supporting services who have to identify staff reductions. The overall judgement is assessed as adequate based on the need for added capacity amongst managers and in the HR team, an increased focus on strategic workforce planning across the council which will consider longer range workforce needs and succession planning.
<b>Asset management</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	Asset management policy is good with good engagement from directorates. The asset management strategy is dynamic and undergoes regular reviews with services / partners. The overall judgement is adequate, as we need to address the continued resource challenges that prevent us from planning strategically, and result in a reactive approach. Over the last year we have developed and completed 4 new Net Zero Carbon assets and continued to look at ways to reduce carbon and energy usage across the whole estate. Our management of Statutory Building Compliance has improved, with Big-5 Compliance now at 94%. We have also improved collaboration with public sector partners and continued our work on the Integrated Works Management System (IWMS).

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve wider understanding, internally and outside of the Council, of the Council's budget including how it is set, where the funding comes from and how the funding is spent.
- Improve processes for identifying future years savings proposals.
- Wider consultation, improving engagement, to contribute towards the budget setting process.
- Closer monitoring of budget, including deep dives, to target key overspend areas.
- Review working arrangements with, and Terms of Reference of, the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP).

- Develop an approach to better communicating information about our priorities in the Corporate Plan.
- Support Governance and Audit Committee to scrutinise the Corporate Risk Assessment.
- Standardise risk reporting across directorates and integrate risk reporting with performance and finance across all service areas.
- Consider whether we are overly risk-averse at a corporate level.
- Assess the impact of the procurement price cap and changed authorisations for purchasing card spending.
- Rollout additional procurement training sessions to help stakeholders understand responsibilities and requirements.
- Update our procurement strategy, action plan and CPRs based on the new UK government legislation.
- Develop an improved and more consistent approach to commissioning across directorates, in particular in analysis and review.
- Develop a stronger challenge culture for using performance information.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities around performance information and improve timeliness of reporting.
- Improve data accuracy of performance information through PI audits.
- Enhance our use of service user perspectives to inform decision making.
- Develop Strategic workforce planning supported by the introduction of planning guidance which will support longer term planning, in a consistent manner across the council, aligned to financial planning.
- Tackle capacity issues in senior management and elsewhere and inform national discussion.
- Further development of HR policies and procedures which are co-designed and focus on proactive HR services.
- Continuation of the automation and streamlining of HR processes.
- Introduction of Leadership and Resilience development.
- Support and inform the Welsh Government work on the social care progression framework to tackle divergence in terms and conditions.
- Adopt the new strategic asset management Plan.
- Continue to make improvements in the maintenance backlog and statutory building compliance.
- Procure and implement the IWMS to improve information, data and benchmarking around assets.
- Improve asset management workforce capacity. We will also work closely with the decarbonisation team to enhance our asset management approach.

## 6. How good is the council's governance?

Organisations that have good governance use clear decision-making processes and communicate openly about what they are doing. They work well with their stakeholders, manage the risks they face, and take responsibility for their assets.

We have always had to report on our governance, to Audit Wales. There is a clear process for developing an 'Annual Governance Statement' (AGS) that has existed for many years. The information below summarises the Council's AGS for 2023/24.

### What is our judgement?

<b>Governance</b>	<b>Good</b>
-------------------	-------------

Our governance arrangements are good, and work well.

### Decision making

Our Governance Framework, Code of Corporate Governance explain how we work, how we are accountable and how decisions are made. In 2022 we developed a new constitution with a simple guide to help members of the public understand it. Through these documents (along with the Member's Code of Conduct, Standards Committee and role of Internal Audit) the Council operates with integrity, ethical values and within its legal powers.

Governance arrangements are reviewed each year and included within the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which is reviewed and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

We are committed to ensuring we have good governance principles and management practices. These are used right across the councils to make sure we have the public's trust. The arrangements the Council has for Corporate Governance are set out below.

1	Bridgend County Borough Council Code of Corporate Governance	The Council's Code of Governance provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the Council meets and demonstrates compliance with the CIPFA Governance principles.
2	The Governance Framework	The Council's Code is underpinned by a Governance Framework which comprises the policies, procedures, behaviours and values by which the Council is governed and controlled.
3	The Annual Governance Statement	The Annual Governance Statement provides assurances regarding the Council's Governance arrangements, together with identifying areas of future focus and improvement. The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to

		report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with its Code of Corporate Governance. It identifies those areas which have been identified as needing improvement following self-assessment.
4	Annual Governance Statement Action Plan	The Council continues to review the areas for improvement identified within the Annual Governance Statement which are monitored through the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

A number of significant issues were identified in the Council's 2022-23 AGS, to be taken forward during 2023-24, so in the past year we have made improvements including –

- Developing workforce planning activities, some that focus on specific challenge areas, for example social care and school catering. Others are more universal, like looking at new ways of working and developing a new employee assistance programme.
- Improvements to Asset management including work to improve the Council's statutory compliance in the "Big 5" areas of compliance.
- Improvements to the Disabled Facilities Grant service including new procedure guidelines, working with external surveyors to make progress with existing grant applications, the introduction of a new software system and improved tendering processes.
- Improvements to our medium to long-term financial management processes including providing Capital Strategy training for all members, training for schools on the closing of accounts process, regular reviews and reporting on the level of reserves, quarterly budget reporting and monitoring of budget reduction proposals.
- Providing additional training for Members to support their role in ensuring proper financial management of the Council including on Treasury Management and Earmarked Reserves.
- Implementing our performance management improvement plan and embedding the new Corporate Plan, Delivery Plan, Performance Framework and reporting mechanisms. Improvements to data quality and accuracy are ongoing.
- Started a review of the Decarbonisation 2030 strategy in line with Welsh Government changes.

### **Listening to the views of others**

The council provides services to all residents of Bridgend. Some of our services are universal – used by all residents – like roads and pavements, and waste and recycling. When we are developing, reviewing and changing these services, we need to try and talk to the whole population of Bridgend to help us decide what to do. We have a range of different methods for doing this, from formal consultations on major changes, public drop-in sessions and discussions, and the regular, day-to-day engagement from our social media.

Other services are more specialist – and used by smaller numbers of residents – like school transport and services for people with learning disabilities or young people leaving care. When we are developing, reviewing and changing these services, we need to try and talk to the people who rely on those services and their families to help us decide what to do. We have a range of methods for doing this, from consultation and engagement sessions, to coproducing those services directly with the users and their families.

In Spring 2023, Audit Wales reviewed the way we use service user perspectives to inform decision making. The review was published in April 2024 and concluded that, *'The Council's performance information does not enable senior leaders to understand the service user perspective and progress towards intended outcomes, restricting their ability to understand the impact of the Council's services and policies.'* We have a plan to improve this in the coming year working with, and reporting to the Council's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Over the last year, we have completed a huge range of activities to understand and use service user perspectives, and the opinions of our regulators. The main ones are summarised below.

### **Consultation and engagement**

Corporate consultations are promoted bilingually to the council's social media channels, shared through weekly resident bulletins and weekly staff messages throughout the consultation period. Up to three consultations a year are shared with our citizen panel to raise awareness and encourage participation. Face to face engagement sessions are held where necessary and our Youth council are involved with relevant consultations.

We consulted on a number of our key strategies and reports, for example the Director of Social Services annual report, Self-assessment, 3 Year Strategic Plan - Childrens Social Care, Housing Strategy Policy, Engagement and Participation Strategy – included face to face engagement drop-in sessions (Citizen Panel included), Strategic Equality Objectives (including public drop-in sessions and focus group with a school) – (Citizen Panel included).

Other key strategies are coproduced with service users and their families. For example, the corporate parenting strategy was co-produced with care experienced children and young people, who also led the launch of the strategy in May 2023. We are now working with Cwmpas to co-produce the carers strategy.

We also consulted on some significant proposed changes to the way the council or our services work. Some of the main consultations in 2023/24 were –

- Our **20mph Scheme** was tested in April 2023, to look at which roads should be exempt from the reduced speed limit. As a result, a small number of roads were added to the speed limit exemptions and a similar number removed, based on the sound reasons given by residents of the Borough.
- **Dog fouling** was the subject of consultation in April 2024, proposing to renew our dog control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) where dog walkers can be fined

if they fail to pick up after their pets in public areas. There was wide support for the proposals from town councils, residents and groups including the Dogs Trust and the RSPCA, with over 379 survey responses and 77 comments on social media channels. As a result of this positive endorsement the PSPO is now progressing.

- Changes to **Community Recycling Centres** were tested July to September 2023, when the public were asked for their views on CRCs, their use of them and the potential one day a week closure of each site. Feedback from the public was mixed with 56% of the public that responded that they didn't agree that the CRC sites should be closed whilst 44% did agree. Ultimately Cabinet considered the public view alongside the need of the authority to generate the savings and approved the day closure that has since been implemented.
- **Maesteg Town Centre Placemaking Plan** was tested through consultation (including face to face engagement sessions) in September / October 2023, to assess whether the plan was robust enough to reach the town's full economic potential and encompass community well-being and cultural history. Residents and Businesses were positive about the plans and continuing support for business growth and retail improvements through the grant funding and advice. They were all positive about Maesteg Town Hall and welcomed the opening of this refurbished facility. Many asked that heritage information be more prominent to attract tourism to the Llynfi Valley. These comments and others are now being considered.
- The public were asked for their views on the **Valley Regeneration Strategy** and plans for future improvements in the Valleys (included face to face engagement sessions) in January / February 2024. Residents were keen to see improvements to the public realm, including parks, open spaces and car parking. There were conversations about transport links, including active travel and employment opportunities and training. All of this is being considered for inclusion in the Strategy, including how it will be delivered and over what timeframe.
- **Porthcawl Town Centre Placemaking Plan** was the subject of public consultation in March / April 2024 (including face to face engagement sessions). Residents and Businesses were positive about plans for the town centre and regeneration work in Porthcawl. There was some concern over parking, so we have committed to reviewing parking policies. Plans to promote the town centre offer across the waterfront and looking to increase footfall, with the development of the Dock Street Link were also well received.
- Our **Annual Budget consultation** included engagement with the Citizens Panel and face to face engagement sessions in January / February 2024. Respondents were asked about budget principles, reducing / closing services, new charges, asset review, external contracts for leisure services, council tax and citizen focus. Over 80% of respondents agreed with budget principles. Following this consultation and recommendations from scrutiny, a number of budget reduction proposals totalling £2.994 million were removed or amended, including a 3% reduction to schools delegated budgets (from 5%).

## Complaints and compliments

We have a clear and agreed two stage process for dealing with complaints -

- **Informal Complaint Stage**

Informal complaints should be dealt with quickly and where possible informally. It advises customers to contact the office responsible for the service to provide an opportunity to solve the problem. Informal complaints are logged in the Corporate Complaints office and we report on them every quarter to the Public Services Ombudsman. In 2023/24 we had the following informal complaints –

	Number	Resolved	Upheld	Discontinued / withdrawn	Ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	6	5	0	1	0
Children's Social Services	1	0	1	0	0
Community Facilities	15	13	0	2	0
Complaints handling	3	2	1	0	0
Education	23	20	0	3	0
Environment	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	33	29	4	0	0
Housing	22	22	0	0	0
Planning / Building Control	16	16	0	0	0
Roads & Transport	48	41	3	4	0
Various/Other	48	36	7	5	
Waste & Refuse	60	56	3	1	0

- **Formal Complaint Stage**

Formal complaints can be done by email, telephone, letter or online complaint form. All formal complaints with the exception of schools and social services (which have their own statutory procedures) are received, logged and acknowledged centrally by the Information Team within 5 working days. These complaints are sent to a Head of Service who appoints a senior officer e service to investigate the complaint and respond directly within 20 working days. The Information Team is provided with a copy of the response. We monitor numbers of complaints, time to respond, category of complaint, where in the Borough they come from, The Information Team has received, logged, acknowledged and referred a total of 67 formal complaints for the period for 2023/24 –



	Number	Resolved	Upheld	Discontinued / withdrawn	Ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	1	1	0	0	0
Children's Social Services	1	1	0	0	0
Community Facilities	4	2	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0	0
Education	8	8	0	0	0
Environment	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	6	6	0	0	0
Housing	14	13	0	1	0
Planning & Building Control	12	12	0	0	0
Roads & Transport	8	8	0	0	0
Various/Other	10	6	3	0	1
Waste & Refuse	4	3	0	1	0

We don't currently have a way of reviewing all of our corporate complaints to see what impact they have had on our services.

### Regulator views

Engagement with regulators is strong and systematic. Regular meetings take place between regulators and senior officers in the Council to discuss regulators' work and the council's improvement plans. We regularly test our progress against the views and recommendations of our regulators, through a regulatory tracker. This is reported to Governance and Audit Committee every January and July. The following new reviews were published in 2023/24.

Audit Wales' review of Service User Perspectives (SUPs), published in January 2024. Summarised above.

In June 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn undertook a Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Bridgend. The inspection noted a number of areas of **positive practice** and a number of **areas for improvement**. A **multi-agency action plan** was developed in September 2023. In the Council progress is overseen by the Social Services Improvement Board and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (RSB).

Care Inspectorate Wales undertook 8 inspections of regulated services. In Adult Social Care, there were 5 inspections of regulated residential establishments and domiciliary support services. All inspections identified there is a good standard of care and support provided across the services, previous areas of improvement had been addressed and no priority action notices for 2023/24 were noted. However, 1 area for improvement was identified, which is being addressed.

In Children's Social Care 3 regulatory inspections took place, 2 within residential establishments and 1 with Foster Wales Bridgend. For the residential establishments, key strengths were highlighted and no priority action notices were identified, with only 2 areas for improvement being identified which are being addressed.

In November 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales undertook an inspection of Foster Wales Bridgend. The inspection acknowledged the current context, *'the number of children who are referred to the service, outnumbers foster carers available'* but highlighted a number of key strengths. It noted 8 areas for improvement around the matching of children with complex needs, safe care arrangements, timeliness of responses to allegations and improvements to systems to ensure policies and procedures are evidenced in practice. Action plans are monitored via the fortnightly Children's Social Care Pressures meeting and quarterly performance management meetings.

### **Staff and Trade Union views**

We have positive and constructive social partnership arrangements. We work with recognised Trade Unions (TU's), with clear and regular arrangements for consultation and engagement. Local and regional TU representatives meet HR officers monthly. Other officers are brought in as needed, for example the Chief Executive on future service delivery and the Section 151 Officer on the budget. Two Cabinet members attend bi-monthly so TU representatives can talk to them directly. There are separate meetings for schools. TU representatives play an important role in decision making and organisational change. They contribute different ideas and perspectives and support their members at meetings which focus on the workforce impacts of any changes. All HR policy reviews are done with full consultation with TU's.

As well as regular staff and trade union engagement, we run an annual staff survey. The last one, in February / March 2024 had 707 responses. This is lower than in recent years. The survey contained many questions which repeated previous surveys so we can see how we are doing over time. Overall satisfaction with BCBC as an employer increased in recent years but reduced over the last two years, from 59% in 2018, 66% in 2020, 73% in 2021, 67% in 2022 and 49% in 2024. A detailed feedback report was developed, staff focus groups will be held to better understand the results and then an action plan will be developed to act on issues from the staff survey.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Implement the action plans developed to address areas for improvement in our regulator reviews.
- Develop a small suite of service user perspective performance indicators.
- Develop a new digital strategy for 2024/28
- Make improvements to the way we engage with people, including directing a new group of people to be involved with current consultations through a widget in MyAccount and developing links with organisations to reach protected groups.
- Focus better on schools / young people's voices by establishing links with schools and youth services.
- Improving the way we provide feedback to respondents (and others) following consultation and engagement.

- Respond to the internal audit review of the council's use of complaints information.
- Undertake a climate change risk assessment with the public service board.
- Working with shared regulatory service on an Empty Property Consultation.
- Work with WLGA / Data Cymru on the development and implementation of the National Residents Survey
- Develop a place narrative and communicate it widely.
- Development of staff forum for staff with protected characteristics
- Improvements to medium to long term financial management, reviewing the BREP process and starting budget setting earlier.
- Improvements to recruitment with targeted recruitment in key areas, and bespoke recruitment packages. We continue to work regionally and nationally to develop solutions that will not destabilise the job market.
- Review of the Decarbonisation 2030 strategy.
- Improvements to our use of service user perspectives information in our performance management process.
- Improved financial management including a review of financial procedures and policies, additional training for members and schools, developing budget reduction proposals and improving the reach of the budget consultation.

## **7. Our Strategic Equality Plan**

Our new Strategic Equality Plan has been developed and consulted on and outlines our six strategic equality objectives, which will shape how we plan, provide, and deliver our services to reflect the diversity of our communities. We are developing a Strategic Equality Action Plan which will detail the actions we will take to realise the equality objectives. Progress on the plans is regularly reported to the Corporate Equality Network, and responsibility for operational delivery lies with all service areas and teams. Our Cabinet Committee Equalities monitors and scrutinises delivery against the objectives.

### **How do we identify and collect relevant information?**

We are committed to collecting and using data to identify where some protected characteristic groups experience a disproportionate impact or where we could deliver services in a different way. We collect data on customers and residents via our consultation and engagement activities and on our employees via our own internal systems. We will collect and use the following equality data:

- Employment profile data for all protected characteristics;
- Service user data to understand the characteristics of our service users;
- Job applicants for all protected characteristics.

This data will be published annually as part of our Strategic Equality Plan annual reporting process. In addition we will publish annually:

- The Full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken;
- The Strategic Equality Plan action plan review;
- The Strategic Equality Plan annual report.
- Welsh language standards annual report

### **How effective are the council's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information?**

Each year we try to improve the Equality Monitoring Data we hold for employees, revising the data capture to include more characteristics. We encourage employees to update information regularly through communications, appraisals and other methods.

### **What do our arrangements tell us regarding the equality of access to employment, training and pay?**

Every year, we report our 'equalities in the workforce' report to Cabinet Committee Equalities. This tells us about a range of things including the numbers of employees with protected characteristics where declared. It also tells us about pay, recruitment and training of employees with protected characteristics. This is all put together and included in the strategic equality Plan. Areas for development are included in the strategic equality plan action Plan.