APPENDIX 1

Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Self-Assessment 2025-26

1. The purpose of this report

Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to continually improving the services we provide, making the best use of public resources and being open and accountable to the people we serve.

This Corporate Self-Assessment is an important part of that commitment. It provides an honest assessment of our performance during 2025–26, recognising where we have delivered well, where we have made progress, and where further improvement is needed. It demonstrates our commitment to learning, continuous improvement and good governance. This is a year of transition with a new approach to performance to be launched in 2027 alongside a whole new corporate planning framework linked to the new vision we are developing throughout the rest of this year. A new transformation team with programme and project management capacity is in the process of being established – these will be underpinned by a new workforce and digital strategy early in 2027 as the two new Heads of Service in these areas establish themselves.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires every council in Wales to publish an annual self-assessment considering whether it is:

- exercising its functions effectively;
- using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
- maintaining effective governance arrangements.

This report also fulfils the Council's annual reporting responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, bringing together our assessment of performance, governance and organisational improvement into a single document.

This is our fifth annual self-assessment and, each year, our approach has evolved and matured. We continue to strengthen the quality of evidence we use, broaden the range of insight that informs our judgements and improve the way we evaluate our performance. Increasingly, our self-assessment is not simply about measuring what we have achieved, but understanding what we have learned and how we can improve.

Throughout the year we have drawn upon performance information, financial monitoring, regulator findings, resident feedback, partner engagement, service self-evaluations and scrutiny to develop a balanced assessment of how we are performing.

Above all, this report is intended to provide transparency. It explains to residents, members, businesses, partners and Welsh Government how we are performing, the challenges we face and the actions we are taking to build an even stronger Bridgend County Borough.

2. Looking Ahead – A Year of Reflection and Transformation

2025–26 has been a significant year for Bridgend County Borough Council.

It has been a year of reflection, learning and preparing for the future.

The appointment of a new Chief Executive has provided fresh impetus for organisational change and has prompted us to take a longer-term view of the future for the county borough. During the year we have reflected on our strengths, listened carefully to residents, staff, members and partners, and considered how we must continue to evolve to take the opportunities and meet the challenges of the decades ahead. We have reflected that this council had become too defined by COVID and austerity and that despite having good services we were at a crossroads in our development.

Key external regulatory reports have given us confidence that many of our key services are in a very strong place. After some challenging years and considerable investment, the CIW reported that we now have strong and improving Children's Services with demand being manged well. Youth Services are judged by Estyn and HMI Probation as excellent and our education services are high performing with our schools amongst the best in Wales.

These external reviews confirmed the findings of our first Panel Performance Assessment coordinated through the Welsh Local Government Association that we are a good performing authority. However, whilst performing well in these key statutory areas it is evident that there are areas that will need to change if we are to be fit for purpose in the future.

Regeneration activity has increased alongside the risk appetite for the council to prioritise the development of our towns. The purchase of the Rhiw Shopping Centre will be a catalyst for the regeneration of Bridgend Town and have, alongside ambitious plans for Porthcawl and investment in capacity to improve our public spaces, set the tone that this council intends to be increasingly proactive at intervening to improve our county.

Internally, we introduced new style Service Self-Evaluations across our major service areas, creating a more consistent and evidence-based understanding of performance.

These assessments across 20 key service areas found a broad spread of performance from adequate to excellent. Crucially self-awareness and capacity to improve was high where services, even those struggling could articulate a clear view of what they needed to do to get better.

Importantly, it has started the process that will embed a stronger culture of learning, accountability and continuous improvement across the organisation.

At the same time, the environment in which local government operates continues to change rapidly.

Demand for services continues to increase while financial pressures remain constant. Technology, digital transformation and artificial intelligence are reshaping how residents expect to access services and how organisations operate. Four AI projects – expanding the use of Co-pilot, Assist Legal services, Social work recording and improving customer service are going ahead whilst we deploy our investment in capacity and implement new systems for Education, Social Services and Finance.

Extreme weather events, demographic change, ongoing financial constraints, international conflicts, and national socio-economic conditions as well as increasing complexity in areas such as social care, homelessness, housing and additional learning needs continue to place growing pressure on all public services.

The future world of work is also changing rapidly. Advances in technology, automation and the transition to a greener economy are creating new opportunities while changing the skills that future generations will need. Preparing our children and young people for that future, whilst supporting our existing workforce to develop new skills and adapt to change, will be increasingly important.

These challenges cannot be addressed by the Council working alone. Success will depend upon strong partnerships with communities, recognised trade unions, businesses, public services and the voluntary sector, alongside greater collaboration across the organisation itself.

These factors have been the catalyst for developing our new Vision and Transformation Strategy 2027–2040.

The strategy will set out an ambitious long-term vision for Bridgend County Borough: **a county borough where people thrive, places are vibrant and prosperity grows for everyone.** It will provide the framework for how we will continue transforming the Council, investing in our communities and building confidence in the future of Bridgend County Borough.

The work undertaken during 2025–26 marks the beginning of that journey.

During 2026–27 our focus will be on translating this long-term ambition into practical transformation priorities, working collaboratively with residents, members, staff, recognised trade unions, partners and businesses to shape the next phase of our organisational and community transformation.

A governance framework will be developed for cabinet and Scrutiny to ensure there is oversight of the transformation of our county borough and council.

3. Our progress against last year’s areas for improvement

In our 2024-25 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that needed specific improvements in 2025-26. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken in these areas during 2025-26. More detail is provided on actions to date, and those that are still planned in each detailed section of this report.

APPENDIX 1

Wellbeing Objective One - A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable

What did we say we would do to improve?	What we did in 2025-26
Continue implementation of the Children's and Adult Services three-year strategic plans.	Strong progress was made across Children and Adults Services. In children's services, improvements to workforce stability have reduced reliance on agency staff, supported by training initiatives like the "Grow Your Own" programme and strong support for international staff. Quality assurance is developing, with increased focus on learning from feedback and strengthening the voice of children, although more work is needed in this area. Progress has also been made in family support and early help services, helping to safely reduce the number of children requiring care, but further work is needed around mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and advocacy. Efforts to recruit foster carers continue, with improved retention seen this year. In adults' services, an independent review confirmed a strong, outcome-focused approach is in place. Work is ongoing to further embed this model, improve quality assurance, and deliver financial efficiencies, alongside continued improvements to systems and processes. Overall our children and adults are performing well.
Implement the Early Help Commissioning Strategy.	A Family Support Commissioning Strategy has been agreed, with a new multi-agency board created to oversee delivery and ensure partners work together effectively. Early progress has been made, particularly on early help and re-commissioning key services, but further work is needed in areas such as mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse. Ongoing coordination across local and regional groups will be important to ensure actions are delivered
Create a Strategic Carers Group to ensure unpaid carers' views are heard.	We have started a Carers Steering Group to deliver improvements in our internal systems and processes and increase the offer of assessment to unpaid carers. This includes every social work team having a link worker to cascade and promote best practice in relation to unpaid carers. We have also undertaken a series of listening events with unpaid carers during February and April 2026. From this feedback, we are developing an action plan and operating guidance for staff which we will take back to carers for their input.
Take part in Welsh Government's Local Authority Benefit Take-up Pilot to identify residents who are missing out on entitlements to financial	Take-up was concentrated on Pension Credit and Free School Meals (FSM): Pension credit: out of 165 households contacted throughout the year, 39 households (24%) were awarded

support and undertake targeted campaigns to help them	Pension Credit. Adding this to all campaigns undertaken since 2023, brings the total claimed to over £616k per annum (calculated as initial award x 52 weeks). Free School Meals (FSM): 781 households were contacted, with 172 children qualifying for FSM. All campaigns undertaken also promoted the School Essentials Grant and where appropriate, included a leaflet promoting the support that the Employability Team can provide, including helping people back into work. In partnership with Welsh Government's Nest Warm Home Programme, letters to promote awareness were sent to 2,837 households in September 2025 identified as those that could potentially benefit from the Nest scheme.
Develop and consult on a new social housing allocation policy.	Consultants have been engaged to lead on the development of a new Social Housing Allocation Policy. A consultation exercise has taken place with statutory and not statutory partners, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and a 12-week consultation for members of the public despite the only duty to consult being with RSLs. External counsel was also consulted who made recommendations for changes requiring a further consultation period with RSL's. The Policy was approved by Cabinet and is in the process of being implemented.
Maximise the budget for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) so that we can complete as many projects as possible in 2025-26	The core capital budget for DFG's (£1.75M) in 2025-26 reached full spend, along with both ENABLE and Housing with Care Fund (HCF) grants claimed in full. A total of 205 jobs were completed. Further work is needed to improve the timeliness of works in this area.
Identify schools to host three new learning resource centres – a Foundation Phase Observation Class, a Foundation Phase Nurture Class for pupils with Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD) and a Secondary Communication, Autism Resource Education (CARE) base. Open these provisions in September 2025.	Porthcawl Comprehensive School has been identified for a secondary CARE base and Tondu Primary School for a Foundation Phase observation class. Both schools have accepted pupils as part of an early transition, with agreed funding allocated to support the temporary provision. Nottage Primary School was identified for the Foundation Phase ESBD class, but the governing body did not approve the proposal, so alternative settings are being explored for a September 2026 opening. Due to delays in the public consultation process, the official opening of the provisions will not take place until the consultation is finalised.
Stay on track to meet the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) commencement orders by 31 August 2025.	This was completed by 31 August 2025.
Host a session on the online Individual Development Plan (IDP) system for Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) at	An overview of the IDP system was presented at the ALNCo Forum in May 2025 in preparation for rollout of the system to schools. All settings are now enabled to use the

the next forum in May, testing the system before rollout in schools.	online IDP system, with 100% of new Early Years IDPs created digitally.
Complete actions from Day Opportunities and Accommodation Based Service reviews.	The programme for remodelling our day opportunities is established with four key workstreams; remodel internal services, develop external provisions, pathways to work project for working age adults, and develop social enterprise opportunities. A project plan is in place with key milestones and targets agreed for the programme. We have begun to see the positive impact on people who use the services where support is tailored to their specific needs. This has been co-produced with people and their families within the Integrated Demetia Service.
Complete a deep dive into Adult Safeguarding.	A deep dive has been completed by the Transformation Principal Officer. Forms and practice models have changed, and a consultation process has been introduced. Daily allocations meetings are now held, to consider all referrals within 24 hours. We have introduced standard formats for how we respond to ensure consistency and proportionality, which includes the standard format for determinations. The impact of this has been consistent improved performance in all areas.

Wellbeing Objective Two - A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns

What did we say we would do to improve?	**What we did in 2025-26**
Continue our comprehensive Employability Programme.	Employability Bridgend continued delivering tailored, community-based support for unemployed and under-employed residents, exceeding engagement targets. Programmes included mentoring, training, job search support, and in-work progression. The new Bridgend Employer Support Training (BEST) project offered 6-month paid placements in local businesses, benefiting both participants and employers, with achievements recognised at the 2026 awards. The Bridgend Employability Network expanded, including a health-focused subgroup to improve referrals across health and social care, and remains a regional best practice model. Becoming an Agored Cymru centre enabled continued Essential Skills delivery alongside development of new vocational courses aligned to participant needs.
Award grants from Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns	We have secured over £5.1m of Transforming Towns grant funding from Welsh Government in 2025-26 used across

Scheme, to contribute towards regenerating our town centres.	three grants - placemaking grant, development funding, and strategic funding. The placemaking grant funding secured was £822,098, with two BCBC projects and eight private projects supported in high street or commercial property projects. The development funding was used to match-fund feasibility work or development work and £170,673 was secured for four BCBC projects and one for Valleys to Coast. Strategic grant funding secured £4,127,457 towards the acquisition of The Rhiw Shopping Centre, and the Wyndham House project on behalf of Valleys to Coast.
Further develop plans for the Porthcawl waterfront regeneration area.	Extensive work to complete an aspirational masterplan which aims to bring together local needs and aspirations has taken place. A lengthy consultation exercise was completed between November 2025 and January 2026 as part of the pre-application consultation process. This now has been submitted for outline planning consent with a further commitment to deliver a LIDO on the sea front.
We are running Business Start-up Grants and a series of engagement events through Bridgend Business Forum.	A total of 52 start up grants were awarded during 2025-26. A number of engagement events took place as planned along with growing the Bridgend Business Forum through empowering the members in the organisation of the events.
Provide opportunities for short-term, test trading through ‘For a Limited Time Only’.	Maesteg Pop-Up Shop scheme offered a free trading space in Maesteg Market for businesses to test their trade in a market environment. It ran from May to December 2025 and attracted 89 applicants and provided space for 12 businesses on an individual basis. Maesteg Market Square hosted a Pop-Up Food and Drink Market on Saturday 25 October 2025, bringing together the very best of the Borough’s food and drink producers. Christmas shoppers enjoyed ‘A Very Merry Maesteg Christmas Market’, on Saturday 13 December 2025 in Maesteg Market Square. The festive event transformed the square with local stalls, handmade gifts, and seasonal food and drink, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for families, residents, and visitors.
Execute the package of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) activities for the transition year, 2025-26, as agreed by Cabinet in January 2025.	The programme of projects that was agreed by Cabinet was delivered successfully throughout the year with achievement of outputs being delivered.
Bridgend Music Service will further develop links with partners to broaden the learning offer including members of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales visiting Bridgend in May 2025 to deliver two concerts to pupils.	BBC National Orchestra of Wales visited Bridgend Music Service in May 2025, who delivered an orchestra concert to seven primary schools in the Maesteg Area. Bridgend Music Service combined Youth Orchestra (Primary, Secondary and Senior Orchestras) performed at the National Music for Youth festival in Birmingham Symphony Hall in July 2025. Three Music Service pupils have been accepted into the

	National Youth Orchestra of Wales and two pupils have secured reserve places in the National Youth Choir of Wales and the National Youth Orchestra of Wales.
Complete the change to a biannual staff survey supported by surveys tailored to frontline staff at different times of the year.	Ahead of the planned staff survey launch for 2026, managers across all directorates were consulted to identify the most suitable timing and any additional support required for frontline staff. The survey ran from April to July 2026 and was promoted through staff emails, Managers Forum, the intranet and the Chief Executive’s staff video messages to maximise awareness and participation.

Wellbeing Objective Three - A County Borough with thriving valleys communities

What did we say we would do to improve?	What we did in 2025-26
Approve and adopt the Placemaking Plan for Maesteg.	The Placemaking Plan is complete and will be considered for adoption.
Continue to award Commercial Property Enhancement Grants to enhance and consolidate high street in commercial areas across our valley areas.	Properties were invested in as part of the Valley High Street Property Improvement Scheme, through the Shared Prosperity Fund. In 2025-26, 9 grants were awarded totalling £130,931, including properties in the Garw, Nantymoel, Ogmore Vale, Kenfig Hill – Please see the promo video link below which demonstrates the impact the grants can have in local commercial areas. https://vimeo.com/1179219277?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci
Complete and adopt the Valleys Regeneration Strategy.	The Valley's Regeneration Strategy is complete and will be considered for adoption. In the meantime, the plan is already being utilised to support funding conversations and to ensure we are able to prioritise investment when it becomes available.
Keep working on the release of funds for business units in the valleys through the Northern Valleys Initiative (NVI).	Following a change in staff in the Northern Valleys Initiative project, further meetings with Cardiff Capital Region have taken place and positive progress has been made. Negotiations will continue to deliver the new business units.
Implement the proposed delivery plan for the universal expansion of Flying Start childcare (phase three) from April 2025.	We implemented two years of the delivery plan within 12 months, meaning that Flying Start expansion is a year ahead of schedule.
Complete the tender process for Welsh-medium childcare provision in Blackmill.	The tender process for the Blackmill hub concluded in August 2025 and the successful provider has since been appointed to run the site.
Complete the sale of the Ewenny Road site to a housing developer.	The development of the Ewenny Road Site is continuing. A sale to a housing developer has been agreed and remediation work is nearing completion, and a planning application for the site is currently being considered, as a condition of the sale.

Wellbeing Objective Four - A County Borough where we help people meet their potential

What did we say we would do to improve?	What we did in 2025-26
Work to increase governor engagement with safeguarding training.	Regular safeguarding training is delivered to school governors through a comprehensive, structured and multi-format programme designed to ensure that governing bodies fully understand their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. This training is offered both online and

	face-to-face, enabling accessible, flexible learning and ensuring that governors across all school phases can participate regardless of availability or location. The current school year has seen a notable increase in governor participation in Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) safeguarding training delivered by the Education Engagement Team.
Support the school in 'special measures' to enact the post-inspection action plan.	When a school is placed in special measures, the improvement partner works with the school leadership team to develop the post inspection action-plan. This plan addresses the inspection recommendations. The Performance and Financial Monitoring board and School Improvement Group receive updates on the progress of schools causing concern. Where necessary additional actions are considered to secure improvement and appropriate progress. Bridgend County Borough has amongst the lowest proportion of its schools in any form of Estyn monitoring of any authority in Wales.
Through the 'Weapons-Related Incidents in Bridgend Educational Settings Strategy Group' look at the use of violence and weapons within schools, to identify trends and themes including areas of best practice to address violence in school.	We continued to operate the multi-agency Weapons-Related Incidents Group to organise developmental activity in relation to weapon related incidents. A draft policy has been produced for schools in line with a good practice document produced through the Serious Violence project activity for Wales. This policy will be finalised and shared with schools and education provisions by December 2026.
Support schools to complete attendance audits to identify best practice and development needs.	As part of the local authority's strengthened attendance assurance framework, the Education Engagement Team will complete attendance audits with all schools by the end of the spring term.
Complete work to improve persistent absence levels in primary schools.	The local authority has updated and implemented a revised School Attendance Enforcement Policy (2025–2028) which confirms education welfare officers' role in applying a graduated, child-centred approach prior to enforcement.
Work with school leaders to improve capped 9 scores by sharing effective practice, the role of improvement partners, brokering support, developing leadership capacity, local authority network groups, evaluating the quality of teaching and judging the impact of teaching on the outcomes for learners.	Sharing best practice is a standing item on the School Improvement Group Agenda. Practice is shared as identified from school inspections or other effective practice as identified from schools across the local authority. Following their recent positive inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher from Pencoed Comprehensive School delivered a presentation to primary headteachers about distributed leadership highlighting areas of good practice.
Continue to support and promote education through the medium of Welsh, with a variety of groups, projects and initiatives in place to increase opportunities for children to use the Welsh language.	Three practitioners are on the two-term primary sabbatical course with the National Centre for Learning Welsh. The five teachers that attended the sabbatical course in 2024-25 are receiving post-sabbatical support.

Continue to progress our plans for School Modernisation	Progress has been made across all school development projects at varying stages. At Heronsbridge School, Kier Construction has been appointed following a tender process via the Southeast and Mid Wales Collaborative Construction Framework and has advanced design development, established a project timeline, and updated ecological assessments. Planning and funding approvals are in place for Ysgol Ferch o'r Sgêr and the new two-form English-medium school, though contractor appointment is currently delayed due to an unresolved land swap. At Mynydd Cynffig Primary, site clearance is underway, design work is nearing completion, and preparations for tender are progressing. For Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr, key agreements on access have been secured, site clearance completed, and ecological arrangements put in place, although site investigations have been delayed by adverse weather; the school opening has been rescheduled to September 2027.
Prepare an options paper for the Food and Fun Programme to consider how barriers to schools' participation could be reduced.	We have restructured the service, with responsibility for Food and Fun passing to a more experienced officer. As a result, participation is expected to increase from four schemes in 2025 to ten schemes in 2026.

Wellbeing Objective Five - A County Borough that is responding to the climate and nature emergency

What did we say we would do to improve?	**What we did in 2025-26**
Complete and consult on the draft Net Zero Strategy.	The Net Zero Strategy was reviewed by a specialist contractor who reported on progress and proposed changes. An updated strategy was presented to the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2025 before being put out for public consultation between November 2025 and January 2026.
Commence the REFIT2 Scheme in Spring 2025.	The latest ReFit Framework did not launch until Summer 2025, renamed Energy Performance Contracting. Based on the scope of work required, financing options, setup costs, and previous experience of the framework, BCBC energy efficiency activity has been delivered through other procurement mechanisms. The framework is in place until 2030 so will be considered for future activities.
Make a Local Places for Nature 2025-27 application.	The application was developed and submitted and secured the funding. This continued to employ two members of staff in supporting the Local Nature Partnership and delivering biodiversity enhancement schemes. Through the Local Placed for Nature funding, new 'cut and collect' grass

	cutting machinery was also purchased for Parks and Green Spaces.
Implement the catchment wide study of the Nant Cefn Glas following the Bryntirion flooding event in September 2024 with funding from WG FCERM (Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management) Capital Pipeline.	The area-wide catchment study undertook onsite surveys, and creation of models for watercourse flows during 2025-26. The analysis of these is continuing into 2026-27.
Continue work on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to support the Local Development Plan (LDP).	SPG on retail, affordable housing, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and outdoor recreation are now adopted. SPG on education, parking and planning obligations are in preparation for consultation and adoption in 2026-27.
Continue work to bring the Waste Service in-house.	A project delivery structure was put in place with workstream leads to complete milestone tasks. Key members of staff have been recruited. Progress continues to be monitored at monthly board meetings attended by relevant Cabinet members and senior officers. Overall progress to date has been very good and will continue into 2026-27.

Wellbeing Objective Six - A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community

What did we say we would do to improve?	**What we did in 2025-26**
Implement the action plan for the Strategic Equalities Plan.	The Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan has continued to be implemented throughout the year, with progress monitored and reported through established governance arrangements. Actions delivered have contributed to advancing equality, fostering inclusion and improving outcomes for people with protected characteristics across the county borough.
Approve and implement our new Digital Strategy.	A public consultation was undertaken between 2 June and 13 July 2025 on a proposed Digital Strategy. Since the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in July 2025, further review of the strategy was undertaken to ensure our transformation vision and aspirations are reflected. A transformation programme is now being developed with digital being one of the key enablers within that approach. A new more ambitious strategy will be launched in early 2027.
Review and improve the corporate front door.	Work has continued to develop the corporate front door, specifically to support Adult Social Care in relation to Early Intervention and Prevention Hub, and the Network teams. A new online self-referral form for Adult Social Care has

	been developed, and funding has been secured to develop a digital front door specifically for Social Services to help provide online information, advice and assistance which will be available to customers 24/7.
Reflect on findings from the National Residents Survey and take action to address issues.	Analysis of the National Residents Survey has provided valuable insight into residents' experiences and priorities. The findings are being used to inform service planning and support evidence-based decision-making, helping to ensure that council policies and services continue to reflect the needs of local communities. An updated survey will be carried out during autumn/winter 2027.
Start tracking Community Asset Transfers that move from short-term leases to longer-term leases.	We are now tracking Community Asset Transfers (CATs) in 2 categories: new CATs (7 completed in 2025-26), and short-term agreements moved to long-term agreements (4 completed in 2025-26)

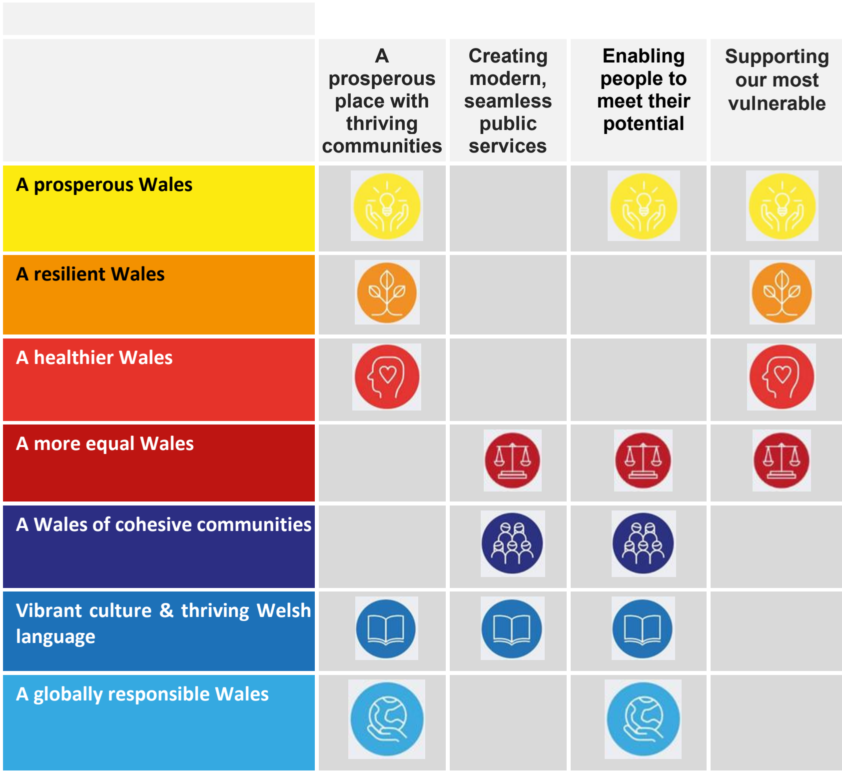
Wellbeing Objective Seven - A County Borough where we support people to be healthy and happy

What did we say we would do to improve?	**What we did in 2025-26**
Continue the redevelopment of Porthcawl Grand Pavilion.	The Grand Pavilion Project is making good progress on site. The main contractor has been on site since September 2025 and will progress work over the next 18 months. A Programme Board has been established for some time to oversee the project. It will open in 2027 as a key part of our regeneration of the town.
Phase three expansion of Flying Start will target new areas in 2025-26.	We implemented two years of the delivery plan within 12 months, meaning that Flying Start expansion is a year ahead of schedule. 84% of Lower Super Output Areas are now eligible.
Complete the Play Sufficiency Assessment looking at what we have already and what we need for the future.	The Play Sufficiency Action Plan was co-designed with the development of clear action points and is awaiting sign-off from Cabinet. The draft plan has been shared with Welsh Government in line with the requested submission date.
Complete engagement on the long-term strategy for libraries.	An initial engagement exercise was undertaken in summer 2025. Raw data is currently being analysed to develop a first-phase draft of the Libraries, Culture and Community Hub Strategy.
Continue to target long-term empty properties.	Use of higher council tax premiums has reduced the number of long-term empty properties across the borough by over 28% in 2025-26 (795 as of 31 March 2025 to 568 as of 31 March 2026). Additional income of over £780k has been collected in 2025-26 by way of the council tax premium.
Support childcare settings to prepare for Care Inspectorate Wales inspections.	An extensive programme of professional development has been offered to settings and opportunities for sharing best practice have been created. Investment (through the Early Years Small Capital Grant) in the buildings, their grounds

	and resources has enhanced indoor and outdoor learning environments so that they fully align with the Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

4. How is the council performing in 2025-26? Are we exercising our functions effectively?

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 –



In line with the Future Generations Act and the sustainable development principle, when we developed this 5-year 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.

Each year, we allocate resources through the development of an annual budget. This is set in line with the priorities in the Corporate Plan. Alongside this, we publish a detailed delivery plan that sets out the specific priorities for the year and how we will measure them.

We have a process for measuring how we are doing on our 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 2025-26 in June and July 2026.

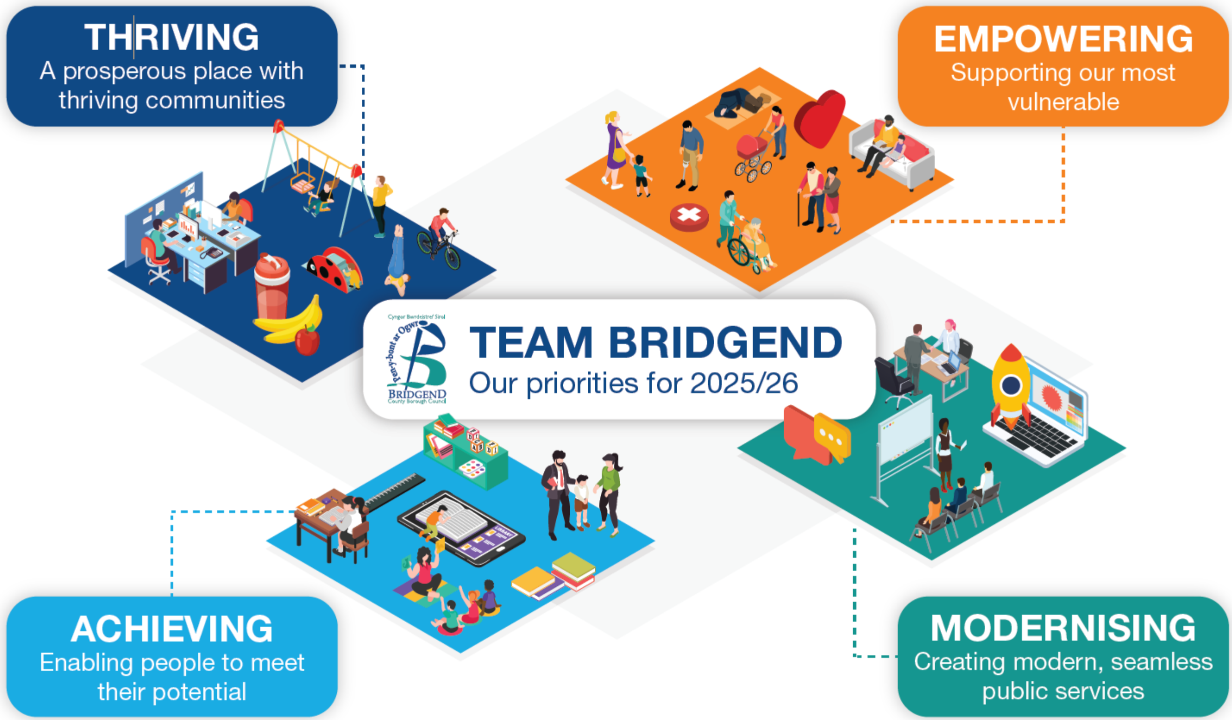
We use all of this information to come to overall judgements on progress against each of our aims and wellbeing objectives using this scale -

	What does this Status mean?		
	Overall / self-assessment performance	**Commitments, projects or improvement plans**	**Performance Indicators**
COMPLETE (BLUE)	Not applicable	Project is completed	Not applicable
EXCELLENT (GREEN)	Very strong, sustained performance and practice	As planned **-** within timescales, on budget, achieving outcomes	On target and performance has improved / is at maximum
GOOD (YELLOW)	Strong features, minor aspects may need improvement	Minor issues. One of the following applies - deadlines show slippage, project is going over budget or risk score increases	On target
ADEQUATE (AMBER)	Needs improvement. Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects need improvement	Issues – More than one of the following applies - deadlines show slippage, project is going over budget or risk score increases	Off target (within 10% of target)
UNSATISFACTORY (RED)	Needs urgent improvement. Weaknesses outweigh strengths	Significant issues – deadlines breached, project over budget, risk score up to critical or worse	Off target (target missed by 10%+)

Performance Overview

To support the 5-year Corporate Plan, every year we develop a 1-year delivery plan. The delivery plan for 2025-26 is more focussed than in the previous two years following a robust review, aligning with the current corporate priorities and resources.

Our Wellbeing Objectives (WBOs) were reduced from seven to four with some merged or subsumed into others. The four that remain focus on –



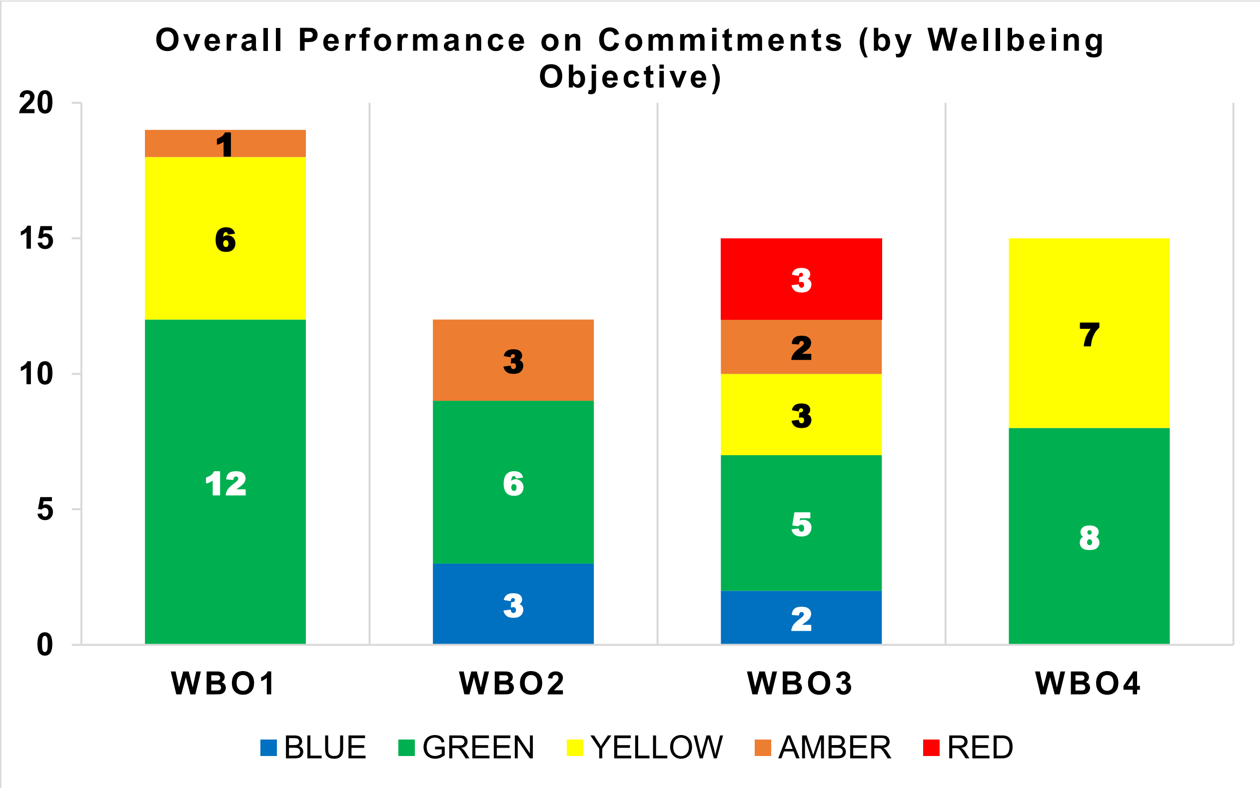
To underpin these 4 Wellbeing Objectives there are 21 Aims, made up of –

- 61 commitments (projects) the council will do to help us achieve our aims, for example, starting construction works on Porthcawl Pavilion.
- 65 performance indicators to measure our day-to-day activities, for example, collecting and recycling your household waste.

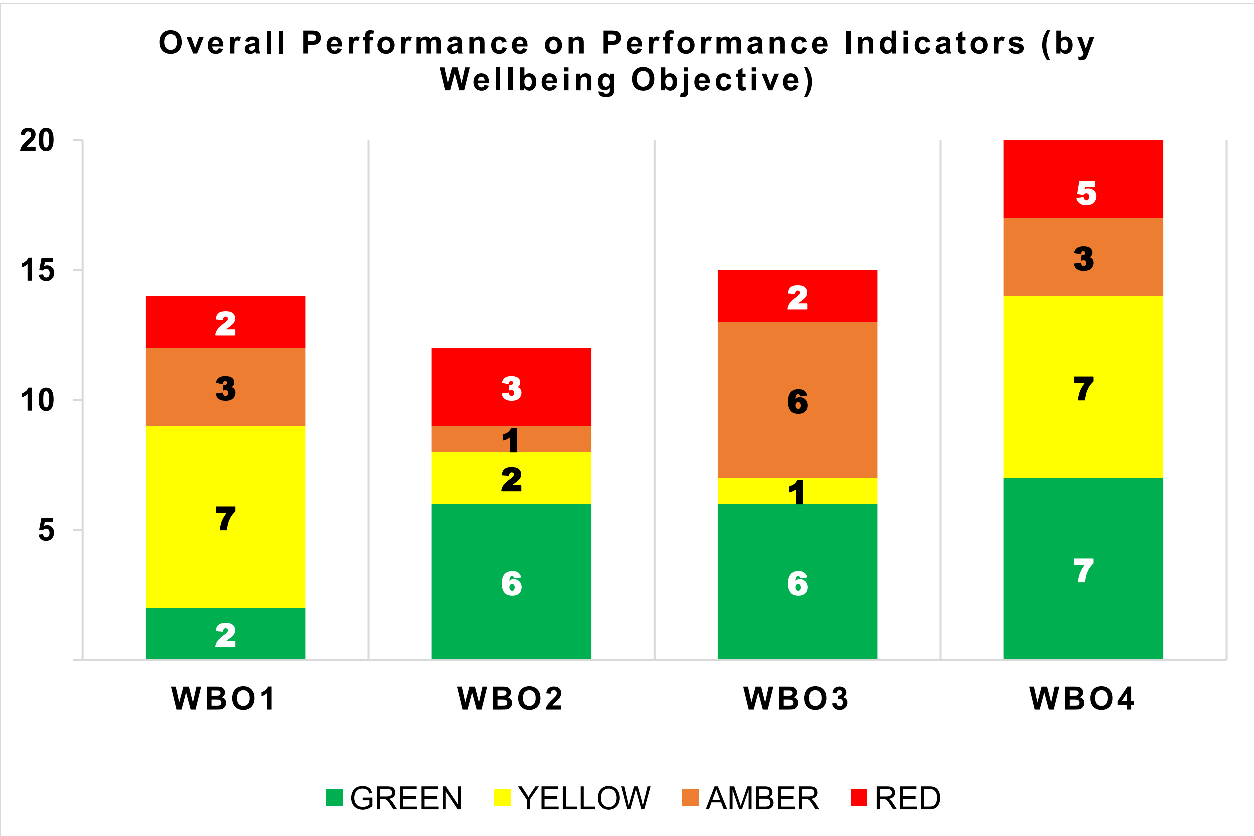
Each one of these has been given a blue, red, amber or green rating to show you whether they are completed, on target or if we are struggling to achieve them, and the two graphs below summarise these.

Alongside the self-assessment, we have published a separate, short performance document that details our progress against each performance indicator and commitment.

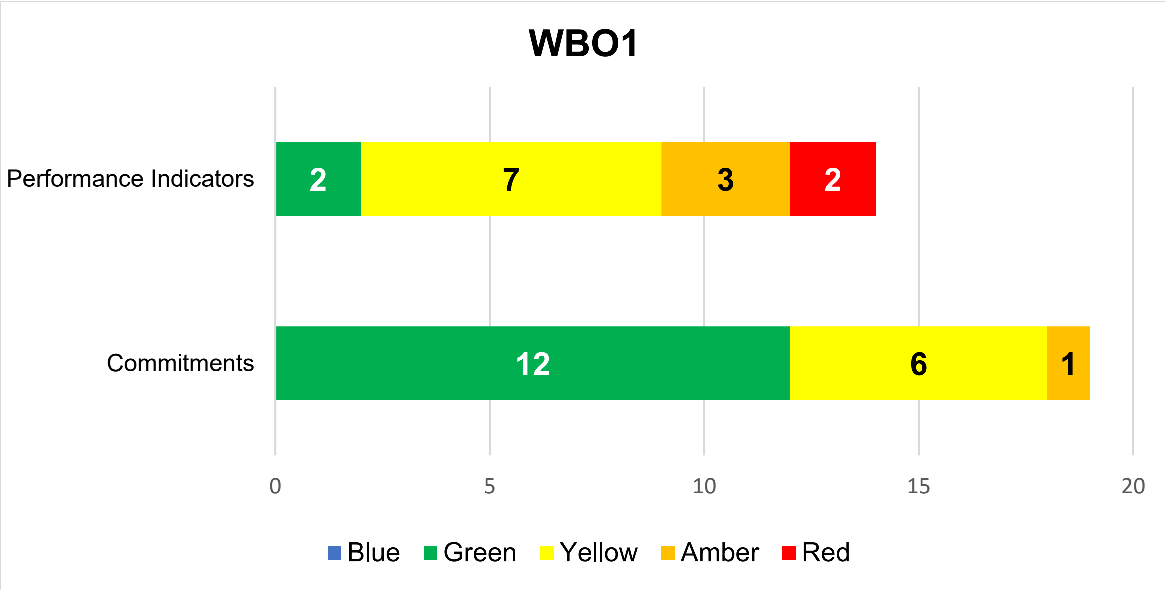
Graph 1 – How we are doing on our commitments / improvement projects



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



Wellbeing Objective	Score
1 - A prosperous place with thriving communities	**Good**



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

Aim	Status	Description
Move towards net zero carbon, and improve our energy efficiency	**Good**	• Work has continued to deliver energy efficiency measures across assets, including LED lighting, improved insulation, solar PV installations and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This contributes to an overall reduction in energy consumption, although progress has been moderated by the transition from gas to electricity heating and increased use of electric vehicles. • Electricity consumption has risen slightly as a result of decarbonisation measures such as heating system conversions and fleet electrification. However, overall emissions monitoring across buildings, fleet, streetlighting, travel, commuting, homeworking and waste shows a continued year-on-year reduction. • We have reviewed our Net Zero Strategy to reflect policy changes, technological developments, delivery challenges and progress to date, and conducted public consultation from November 2025 to January 2026. The revised strategy adopts a more realistic and deliverable approach by focusing on decarbonisation rather than achieving full net zero by 2030 and the Council remains committed to reducing emissions, enhancing biodiversity and seeking external funding to support long-term climate action. • The Air Quality Action Plan has been implemented, with monitoring strengthened through the installation of two real-time indicative monitors on Park Street following a successful bid for Welsh Government funding.

		• Air quality data indicates continued improvement, with NO_2 concentrations on Park Street reducing from 43.8 µg/m³ in 2024 to 42.1 µg/m³ in 2025, and modelling showing that compliance with the 40 µg/m³ target is on track to be achieved by the end of 2026.
Protect landscapes and open spaces	**Good**	• Coychurch Crematorium and Maesteg Welfare Park have maintained their Green Flag status, while Rest Bay, Trecco Bay and Porthcawl Marina have retained their Blue Flag status, demonstrating continued high standards in green spaces and coastal management. • Partnership working with communities and stakeholders has continued to support projects such as woodland enhancement and environmental protection, with initiatives incorporated into the Local Places for Nature application for 2025–27. • The inaugural Bridgend Nature Festival was successfully delivered in July 2025, at Newbridge Fields. Hosted by the Bridgend Local Nature Partnership the family-friendly event featured engaging guided nature walks, interactive wildlife workshops, and hands-on conservation activities. Planning for Nature Fest 2026 is ongoing ready for the summer. • Local Nature Reserve safety inspections have been completed, alongside commissioning ecological surveys through the One Common Connection Project. The updated Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Plan for 2026–2029 has been finalised. • The Climate Change Response Team has continued with increasing tree cover across the County Borough through planting schemes in Cornelly, Porthcawl and Bryncethin. Partnerships to support woodland management have also been strengthened, including extending the agreement with Llais y Goedwig for Bedford Park until August 2026 and ongoing collaboration with Tremains Rangers in Tremains Wood. Initial work is underway exploring options to deliver Forest School activities at Bedford Park and Frog Pond Wood.
Promote the conditions for economic growth and prosperity	**Good**	• Work has continued to secure and align major funding programmes to support economic growth, including preparations for the Local Growth Fund (estimated at £5.9m) and the Connect to Work programme to support jobs and skills. • Support for new and growing businesses has continued through grant funding and professional advice, including 52 start-up grants, 30 business development grants, and feasibility support for new projects. • Funding support has been provided through collaboration with Business Wales, UK Steel Enterprise and the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund, helping to invest in new business activity and support the development of local enterprises. • Innovative initiatives have supported local businesses and town centres, including a Pop-Up Shop space in Maesteg Market supporting 12 start-ups, and a shared retail space in Bridgend town centre developed in partnership with the Ospreys Rugby Team.

		• Plans are in place to deliver targeted workshops in 2026–27 to encourage more applications and improve take-up of business grants, following a reduction in application levels during the current year. • Shared Prosperity Funding has supported local growth through business grants and investment in communities, successfully, with activity transitioning to the Welsh Government Local Growth Fund for 2026-27. • Work is progressing to improve sustainable and active travel, with funding secured from Welsh Government to support new infrastructure and plans being developed to progress future schemes.
Regenerate our town centres and Valleys	**Good**	• Progress has continued on the Placemaking Strategies for Maesteg and Porthcawl, which are being used to align grant and funding opportunities with priority projects, helping to maximise investment and support local regeneration. • The Transforming Towns Placemaking Programme exceeded the initial allocation for 2025–26, with over £1m in grants awarded to projects across Maesteg, Porthcawl and Bridgend. In addition, £176k supported project development, and £4m in grant funding was secured for three strategic schemes, strengthening the pipeline of future investment. • The Valley High Street Property Improvement Grant, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund, has supported improvements to nine commercial properties, with £131k awarded across locations including the Garw, Nantymoel, Ogmore Vale and Kenfig Hill. This has enhanced shopfronts and helped bring vacant properties back into use. • Development of the Ewenny Road site is progressing, with a sale agreed to a housing developer. A planning application is currently under consideration, and completion remains subject to final sign-off of remediation works undertaken in January 2026. • A reserved matters application has been submitted and is being considered by the planning authority. The development will deliver new and affordable homes, alongside an enterprise hub, open space and green infrastructure, supporting sustainable community growth.
Reduce, reuse or recycle as much waste as possible	**Excellent**	• A strong track record as one of the best-performing recycling authorities in Wales has been maintained, delivered in partnership with residents and demonstrating continued commitment to reducing waste and increasing recycling. • The percentage of street cleansing waste prepared for recycling has exceeded target at 41.25%, improving on last year’s performance and reflecting ongoing progress in maximising recycling from operational activities. • Overall, the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted also exceeded target at 70.67% but shows a marginal fall in performance compared to last year, primarily due to delays in processing collected garden waste.

		• Significant volumes of material continue to be successfully recycled, including over 23,212 tonnes from kerbside collections and 9,941 tonnes at community recycling centres, highlighting sustained high levels of resident participation. • Progress has continued towards bringing the waste service back in-house by July 2027, including the recruitment of key officers and the development of transition plans working alongside the current contractor. This approach will support stronger operational oversight, greater flexibility to respond to service issues, and better alignment with evolving Welsh Government targets. • Street cleanliness has declined during the year, with performance reducing from 99.35% to 88.59%, largely due to ongoing staffing challenges. Internal monitoring and targeted improvement actions are underway to support improvements in the coming year.
Provide opportunities for culture, leisure, and play	**Good**	• The Grand Pavilion redevelopment project has continued to progress with a main contractor on site and delivering over the next 18 months. The construction contract commenced in September 2025 and is overseen by the Programme Board. An additional £678k was secured from the Arts Council in January 2026 to support the project. • Opportunities for culture, leisure and play have continued to be delivered, with 21 play areas refurbished and returned to community use during 2025–26, including Phase 4 of the programme and Brackla Skate Park. While this is below the annual target, delays to later phases mean delivery will now extend into 2026–27 alongside additional schemes, including Maesteg Welfare Skate Park. • The Food and Fun programme was delivered in four schools in summer 2025, down from six in 2024, primarily due to staff availability. This provision supported 160 children with 2,730 meals, 144 physical activity sessions and 32 nutrition sessions. The programme is planned to expand to 10 schemes in 2026, supported by recruitment of a Healthy Child Coordinator and enhanced catering capacity. • Participation in the free swimming initiative for children and young people has been lower than anticipated at 10,344 attendances. This is primarily due to data recording issues across sites, with work underway alongside HALO to review and validate attendance data. • A new measure of active users across targeted health and wellbeing memberships has been introduced, with 2,360 users recorded. This provides a strong baseline and reflects good take-up of accessible leisure provision designed to reduce barriers to participation. • Participation in targeted wellbeing initiatives remains high, with over 21,500 attendances across programmes supporting older adults, families and vulnerable groups, helping to promote healthier and more active lifestyles. • Progress continues in strengthening strategic approaches, including development of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan, Healthy Living

		Partnership Strategy, and Community Hub Strategy, although some elements remain in development and will progress further in 2026–27. • Bridgend Library Service continues to perform strongly, meeting all Welsh Public Library Standards core entitlements and most quality indicators, while leading nationally in event attendance and maintaining strong engagement with young people and communities.

What will we do to improve?

- Hold targeted workshops with Business Start-ups to improve the quality of applications
- Invest £6.12m of Local Growth Funding in projects in the County Borough, with third sector partners, including in people and skills, supporting local businesses, and developing communities and place
- Develop active travel funding bids for submission in 2027-28
- Continue the Ewenny Road site development through the planning process
- Monitor cleaner streets inspection process to improve performance
- Continue with transition to bring our Waste Service in-house by July 2027, including a maintenance facility for vehicles and supply chain arrangements
- Review the Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan.
- Deliver the Hillsboro South public realm scheme
- Progress the Porthcawl Waterfront Masterplan to outline planning consent
- Complete the Children's Play Area Refurbishment Programme
- Run 10 Food and Fun Schemes during Summer 2026 and recruit a Healthy Child Co-ordinator to grow the programme further for summer 2027.
- Bridgend Works will provide a visible, responsive and proactive service focused on improving the cleanliness, appearance and day-to-day condition of neighbourhoods, town centres and community spaces across the county borough, including preventative road patching, rights-of way improvements.

Case study – Electric vehicles

Electric vehicles comprise approximately 13% of the BCBC vehicle fleet and BCBC has an ongoing programme of installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the estate to support the use of electric vehicles. Going into 2025-26 there were 73 sockets installed at 14 sites.

In 2025-26, using grant funding totalling £97,000 from Welsh Government matched with capital from the BCBC Decarbonisation Programme, a further 29 sockets were installed at Waterton, Bryncethin and Tondu Depots which included higher capacity chargers that allow for faster charging of vehicles during the working day. Increased battery storage was also installed at Bryncethin depot to capture more of the electricity generated by solar panels at that site and used to charge vehicles and power the building.

Funding from the same sources was also used to meet the additional costs over the diesel equivalents for four new electric vans and an electric mini-digger.

It is estimated that carbon emissions have been reduced by at least 53,519.77 kg.CO2.e in 2025-26 by using electric vehicles instead of diesel and petrol.

Case study – ‘For a Limited Time Only…?’

‘For a Limited Time Only…?’ was a six-month pop-up initiative launched in May 2025 at Unit 14, Maesteg Market. Delivered by Bridgend County Borough Council’s Economic Development and Enterprise Team, the initiative was created to support local start-ups, creatives, makers, small businesses, social enterprises and community groups to test their trade in a real town-centre setting.

The initiative provided a flexible, low-risk space at no cost where participants could showcase products, trial trading, engage with customers, promote their business and build confidence before considering longer-term premises. It also supported Maesteg Market by bringing new activity into the space and encouraging people to visit.

The project benefitted early-stage businesses and community users across Bridgend County Borough, while also contributing to wider town-centre regeneration aims. Activities included pop-up retail, creative showcases, community engagement and opportunities for local traders to raise their profile.

The initiative proved popular as it offered an accessible route for people who may not otherwise have had the confidence or resources to take on a commercial unit. It demonstrated the value of temporary space as a practical tool for enterprise support and town-centre activation and resultantly, there has been an increase in the number of enquiries from local businesses regarding occupying the vacant Market units long-term, with one of pop-up participants signing a lease on unit 14.

Case Study – Bridgend Nature Festival 2025

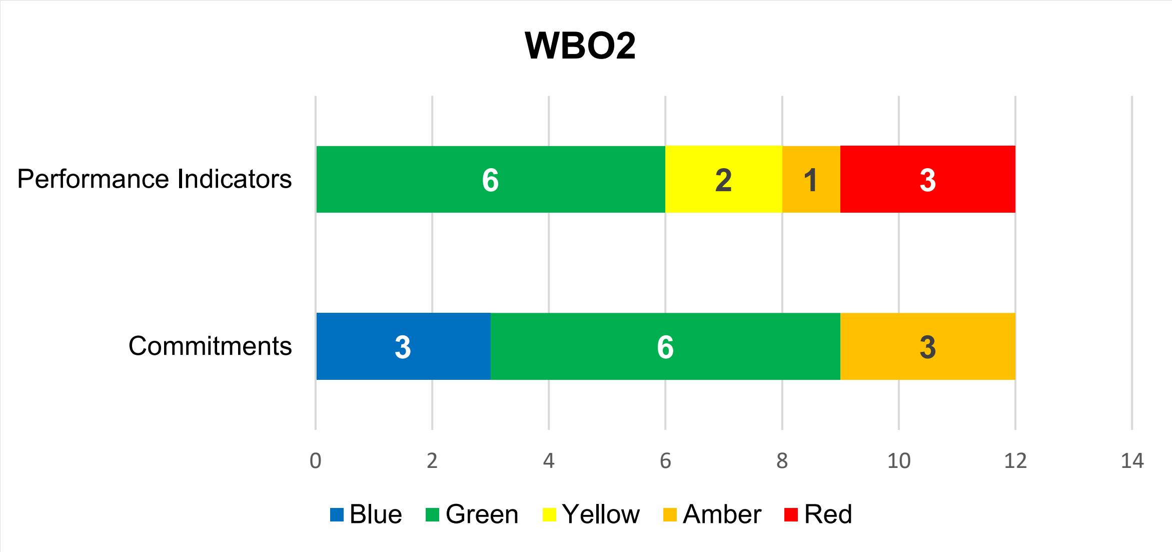
On Friday the 25 July 2025 the Bridgend Local Nature Partnership hosted the first Bridgend Nature Festival at Newbridge Fields. This event brought together a range of non-governmental organisations, community groups and public bodies to deliver an array of engagement activities such as nature treasure hunts, fungi identification sessions, bird spotting strolls and a variety of educational talks, all focused on highlighting the importance and diversity of nature in Bridgend. The event was entirely free for attendees and held at the start of the summer holidays, which meant it was particularly well attended by families and young people. The event attracted approximately 500 people and feedback was overwhelmingly positive, which has led to a repeat of the event being scheduled for the 31 July 2026. The event also contributed to the growth of the Bridgend Local Nature Partnership and an increase in engagement with Local Places for Nature projects in Bridgend.

Case study - Brackla Skatepark

Through effective collaboration from Bridgend County Borough Council and our delivery partner, Maverick, Brackla Skatepark has been redeveloped to a very high standard. Maverick held a local engagement session on site alongside an online engagement which was very well received and the concept drawing had great public support. Once completed, a programme was put together and agreed by the Council. Conditions on site were far from favourable, but the in-house Maverick team completed the build early and to a very high standard. On

Wednesday 1st April 2026, local skaters, riders and families came together for an afternoon of rider demos, music and competitions. There was strong engagement from all ages and abilities. The event had key involvement from Bridgend County Borough Council, Team Rubicon, pro riders and EPIC brands / prize sponsors.

Wellbeing Objective	**Score**
2 - Creating modern, seamless public services	**Good**



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

Aim	RAYG	Performance this year
Improve how we engage with people, listening to views & acting on them.	**Good**	• Digital engagement reached a record 1.23 million interactions, exceeding the target and demonstrating significant growth in how the Council connects with residents online. • Opportunities for children and young people to take part in consultations have been strengthened through targeted engagement activities, including dedicated youth events and closer working with youth services, helping ensure their views are better reflected in decisions. • Communication has been strengthened through the introduction of a new media protocol, regular member bulletins, improved video content for residents, and the implementation of a new social media scheduling platform, enabling more timely, consistent, and accessible updates. • Staff engagement has been strengthened through the introduction of a corporate narrative, an improved staff survey, and regular video updates, helping to keep employees informed, connected, and involved.

		• Progress is being made on a new bilingual intranet, which will improve accessibility and support both Welsh and English language use. • While the percentage of complaints closed within timescales has improved, progress continues to be limited by delays in responses from service areas. • A new complaints system and performance dashboard is being introduced to improve monitoring, accountability, and learning across services. • The Council has continued to deliver its Strategic Equality Plan through enhanced equality and Welsh language training, improved engagement with under-represented groups, and initiatives to improve service accessibility and employment opportunities, strengthening inclusion across the organisation. • A series of listening events with unpaid carers were conducted during February and April 2026. These provided opportunity for carers to feedback on services and provide valuable insights to help shape future plans.
Offer more information and services online, and in local areas.	**Good**	• The Council has improved its ability to resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact (77.58%), supported by ongoing performance reviews and upskilling of customer service advisors to deliver quicker and more effective responses. • Online services continue to be widely used by residents, reflecting strong demand, while ongoing development and promotion of digital services is making it easier to access support online alongside alternative channels. • A review of the Council's front door access to services has been completed, identifying opportunities to simplify and improve how residents contact and access services. • A new online self-referral form for Adult Social Care has been developed, improving how residents can request support, with plans to launch shortly. • Work is underway to develop a digital front door for Adult and Children's Social Care, helping to provide more streamlined and accessible digital services in the future.
Modernise and become a more efficient council	**Adequate**	• Work has continued to strengthen workforce performance through active absence management, ongoing promotion of staff wellbeing support, and targeted training and guidance for managers, helping to improve attendance and increase completion of staff appraisals across the organisation. • The Council has exceeded its target for Community Asset Transfers. 11 initial transfers or transfers from short term arrangements to long term arrangements were completed in 2025-26, including Heol y Cyw Playing Fields, North Cornelly Community Centre and Garth Park Bowls Green successfully transferred to community organisations.

		• Over £500k of funding has been invested in community groups to support asset transfers and improve local facilities, including community centres, sports pitches, parks, and pavilions managed by local groups, alongside ongoing work to develop further opportunities. • A number of additional transfer agreements are in progress, including leases and licences currently being finalised, with further opportunities being explored with community groups and town and community councils. • A draft Digital Strategy has been developed, with further work being aligned to a wider transformation programme to ensure a coordinated approach to modernising services. • A new Head of Transformation and Digital has been appointed to lead the development of a corporate transformation strategy and delivery plan, helping to address delays and provide clearer direction. • Ongoing work to review and better use the Council's estate has helped to maximise the use of buildings through shared use and community-focused approaches. • Plans are in place to introduce a new Integrated Works Management System, which will improve how council assets are managed and support longer-term planning.
Improve partnership working with partners, the third sector and Town and Community Councils	**Good**	• Strong partnership working has ensured all high- and medium-risk domestic abuse victims were contacted within target timescales, including over 850 high-risk and 600 medium-risk cases supported through coordinated multi-agency responses. • The Assia Domestic Abuse Service has supported over 1,300 individuals, with all reporting increased feelings of safety at exit, reflecting effective collaboration with specialist partners and tailored safety planning. • Local Community Coordinators have supported over 1,100 residents, including helping individuals move from formal services into community-based support, strengthening independence and reducing reliance on statutory services. • Partnership working with external organisations has expanded provision for children and young people, including holiday support programmes delivered during the February, Easter and summer half terms in 2026. • A new regional agreement with health partners has been implemented, supporting integrated working between health and social care teams to better support frail older people in the community. • Work with Town and Community Councils has included a review of local arrangements, helping to clarify roles and responsibilities, with further review now being progressed through the local Boundary Commission.

		• Co-productive working has supported communities to develop their own solutions and build resilience, including multi-agency approaches led by Local Community Coordinators, development of a community referral pathway, and support to help individuals and families transition into local support networks. • Estyn recognised the strength of the 'Team Bridgend' culture, highlighting how collaboration between the local authority, schools and third-sector partners breaks down organisational silos and improves outcomes. Alongside this, modernised financial monitoring and resource allocation have helped manage budget pressures while enhancing the quality of localised care and support. • The Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) Management Board exemplifies the "One Council, Working Well with Partners" approach. The establishment of the Restorative and Victim Subgroup has strengthened collaboration with key partners, including the Probation Service and South Wales Police, creating a unified, multi-agency approach to delivering strategic priorities.

What will we do to improve?

- Develop new web and intranet pages - new consultation feedback section.
- Deliver fully bilingual staff intranet by July 2026
- Launch the new complaints and compliments form/process in June 2026.
- Obtain sign-off and launch the new online self-referral form for Adult Social Care.
- Secure EMR funding to progress the development of a digital front door for Adult and Childrens Social Care.
- Develop a Transformation Strategy by December 2026.
- Develop a new Digital Strategy by March 2027.
- Procure and implement a new Integrated Works Management System.
- Commission an external independent review of Bridgend community preventative pathway.

Case Study- Expansion of our Crimestopper Zones

Bridgend County Borough Council first teamed up with well-known charity Crimestoppers and Valleys to Coast Housing to introduce the first ever Crimestoppers Zone in Wales in 2024. The zone, located in Wildmill, Bridgend was introduced to encourage communities to give crime information anonymously and empower everyone to play a role in addressing anti-social behaviour and criminal activity in their local area to support keeping Bridgend neighbourhoods safe. Following this success a second zone has been launched in Brynmenyn in May 2025.

Residents are encouraged to speak up about criminal activity through the charity's unique reporting service, safe in the knowledge that the information they have provided will remain a hundred per cent confidential. The charity guarantees total anonymity when capturing crime information in over 140 different languages. If required, a translator can be available within a couple of minutes for those calling Crimestoppers.

Case study – Budget Challenge Day

A Post-16 Budget Challenge Day was held in January 2026 at the Civic Offices, involving sixth-form learners from all Bridgend secondary schools. The event was designed to amplify young people's voices in the budget process, improve understanding of local government finances, and gather learner-led priorities to complement wider public consultation feedback.

Learners took part in structured sessions exploring the Council's financial position, followed by breakout discussions on key themes including education, early years, young people, wellbeing, communities, prevention and social care. Working collaboratively, learners developed and presented budget proposals to elected members and senior officers, outlining their priorities and the rationale behind them.

The activity demonstrated strong engagement and provided valuable insight into the services learner's value most, alongside increasing awareness, financial literacy and understanding of the complexity of budget decisions.

Case study – Male victim support at Assia

Sara Matthews in Assia was recognised as highly commended for her work with the male domestic abuse victims and their focus group at the Wales Safer Communities Network.

The focus group works with men who have been victims of domestic abuse, who previously were unlikely to engage with the service. The group has been established as a safe space for male victims to share their experiences of abuse knowing they will be believed and not judged and have support from their peers. The co-productive element of the group, with the men picking what they want to focus on or receive advice on is at the heart of everything. This group and the ongoing support have given those attending the confidence to report abuse and ongoing incidents to the Police, and other partners to prevent further escalation. Sara's passion and commitment to advocate for the male victims she works with is critical to the group's success.

Case Study – Unpaid Carers Listening Events

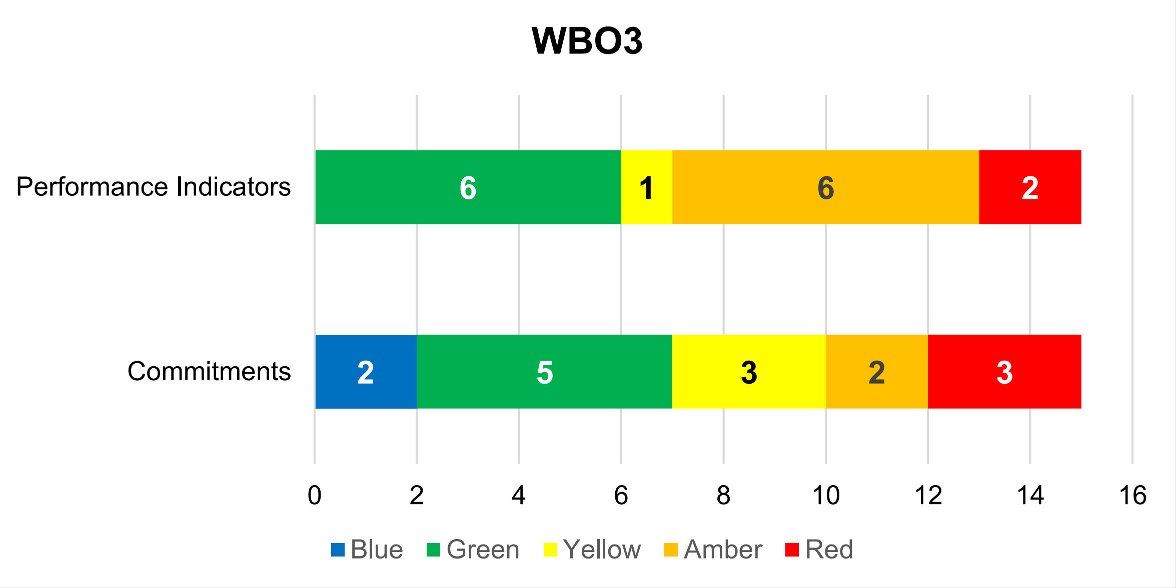
Unpaid carers came together at listening events to share their experiences and views on the support available to them. The events provided an opportunity for carers to speak openly about how they feel and discuss the issues that matter most to them. Many welcomed the opportunity to be heard and valued the chance to contribute their ideas and experiences.

Carers highlighted the importance of having a voice and being able to share their perspectives directly with people who were willing to listen. Feedback from attendees showed that simply being asked for their views made them feel valued and included in conversations about future support and services. One attendee commented: "We do now feel valued because we've been listened to."

The events were intended to be the start of an ongoing conversation with unpaid carers. Participants and organisers shared a commitment to continuing engagement and working together to develop a plan that reflects the priorities of carers themselves. This approach aims to ensure that future actions are shaped not only for carers, but with carers.

A key message from the events was the importance of turning feedback into action. By listening to carers, understanding what matters to them and continuing to involve them in discussions, the intention is to develop a shared plan that can be owned and delivered together. Organisers committed to reporting back on what carers have said and what has subsequently been achieved, helping to build trust and demonstrate the impact of ongoing engagement.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
3 - Enabling people to meet their potential	**Good**



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

Aim	Status	Description
Provide an effective Childcare and Early Years Offer	Excellent	• The Flying Start programme has expanded significantly, with participation increasing from 530 in 2023–24 to 721 in 2025–26, surpassing the target of 620. This strong overperformance has been driven by expansion activity that is approximately one year ahead of schedule and now reaches 84% of Lower Super Output Areas, supported by ongoing promotion to maximise uptake. • Maintained early years settings continue to perform at a high level, with 79% of Care Inspectorate Wales inspection judgements rated excellent, underpinned by a clear and ambitious strategic vision positioning them as Centres of Advanced Practice to lead and influence quality across the sector.

		• Targeted capital investment has enhanced buildings, outdoor spaces, and learning resources, ensuring that environments are high quality and fully aligned with the Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, thereby improving learning experiences for children. • Strong governance and leadership arrangements are in place, with all settings confirmed as compliant with National Minimum Standards through the use of a leadership toolkit, alongside structured mentoring, workforce development, and timely completion of mandatory training for staff. • Non-maintained early years settings also demonstrate consistently high quality, with 91% of inspection outcomes rated good or better, supported by effective challenge and support from the Early Years team. • Sector-wide improvement is being strengthened through the identification of three good-practice hub settings and the delivery of a comprehensive professional learning offer, including leadership development, collaborative learning communities, and Froebelian training completed by 23 practitioners. • Collaborative networks such as the Bridgend Froebel Network are promoting peer-to-peer learning and sharing of best practice, while future plans include expanding provider capacity, increasing access to flexible online training, and developing a further cohort of specialist training.
Provide safe, supportive schools with high quality teaching	**Good**	• Safeguarding remains strong overall, with 93% of schools self-evaluating as 'green', supported by targeted local authority monitoring and improved governor training arrangements, although further work is required to strengthen consistency in training uptake and evaluative practice. • Fixed-term exclusions have reduced in both primary and secondary schools, with primary school days lost falling to 0.021% and secondary to 0.142%, reflecting the positive impact of targeted interventions, including effective use of strategies such as the Managed Move process in secondary schools. • Primary school attendance has improved to 93.1%, above the all-Wales average, demonstrating effective engagement strategies, while enhanced analytical approaches and attendance audits are being introduced to further drive targeted improvement and share good practice. • Secondary school attendance has also improved to 87.6%, although it remains below the all-Wales average. Strengthened data analysis, cluster reviews, and a robust attendance assurance framework is being

		implemented to better identify patterns and support schools. • Educational outcomes remain positive overall, with the average Capped 9 score increasing to 358.8 and exceeding the all-Wales average, although disparities persist for pupils eligible for free school meals, highlighting the need for continued targeted support to improve equity. • School improvement arrangements are effective, with 100% of secondary schools and 96% of primary schools not requiring Estyn follow-up, supported by strong partnership working, strengthened governance through improved insights from the skills audit, and tailored professional learning aligned to school priorities. • Investment in digital learning has been successfully delivered to schools, including AI training, online safety education, national engagement events, and updated policies, alongside participation in pilot programmes and international learning to strengthen innovation and streamline processes. • The digital offer for young people has been enhanced through a youth-led website, interactive tools, and social media engagement, increasing accessibility, participation, and opportunities for young people to share their views, with further consultation and online safety initiatives planned. • Estyn recognised the exceptional quality of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision. The therapeutic and nurturing learning environments help pupils facing barriers to mainstream education re-engage with learning, achieve positive outcomes and fulfil their potential. Bridgend schools continue to achieve the lowest rate of post-inspection follow-up categories in Wales.
Provide Welsh medium education opportunities	**Adequate**	• Activity to increase Welsh-medium uptake has included targeted promotion and expansion activity, resulting in an additional 38 Reception applications for September 2025 and increased Nursery interest, particularly in Maesteg. • Schools have adapted their Welsh qualification offer at Key Stage 4, with some introducing Agored Cymru courses as an alternative pathway to GCSE Welsh, impacting how participation is recorded. • Post-16 Welsh provision has been supported through the establishment of a Welsh Leaders Network to promote AS and A Level Welsh and facilitate the sharing of good practice, alongside encouragement of

		increased learner uptake for the 2025–2026 academic year. • The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been progressed through the establishment of the ‘Pont Iaith’ late immersion provision at Ysgol y Ferch o’r Sgêr, alongside expanded Cymraeg i Blant sessions in Porthcawl, which are operating at full capacity with waiting lists. • Early years Welsh-medium provision has been further developed through plans to open a new Cylch Meithrin in Porthcawl and continued promotion of Welsh-medium education through visible campaigns, including banners across Bridgend train stations. • Strategic development work on Welsh-medium catchment areas has experienced delays due to limited GIS capacity; however, plans are in place to engage the private sector to undertake an independent review to support future planning.
Modernise school buildings	**Adequate**	• Across all five schemes, key progress has been made in securing planning approvals, funding, design development, and early site works; however, delivery timelines continue to be impacted by external factors such as land-swap agreements, ecological requirements, and site conditions, requiring ongoing mitigation and project management to maintain momentum. • Progress on the Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr new-build has included site clearance, agreement on highway access and active travel routes, and Cabinet approval to revise the opening date to September 2027, alongside preparatory work for the pre-application consultation and ecological arrangements such as a reptile translocation site, although site investigation has been delayed due to ground conditions. • Development of the new Mynydd Cynffig Primary School has advanced through Cabinet approval to tender, ongoing preparation of the Bill of Quantities, agreement of a dormouse mitigation strategy with Natural Resources Wales, continued site clearance including relocation of allotment users, and near-completion of detailed design work. • The Ysgol Ferch o’r Sgêr enlargement project has progressed through securing planning approval, Welsh Government approval of the Full Business Case, and Council capital funding approval, although progression to contractor appointment is currently constrained by the outstanding land-swap agreement. • The project to replace Afon Y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools has similarly secured planning approval, Full

		Business Case approval, and capital funding, with progress currently limited by the need to finalise the land-swap agreement to enable contractor appointment. • Development of the new Heronsbridge School has progressed through completion of ground investigations, appointment of Kier Construction via the regional framework to lead design development, ongoing engagement with planning and transport stakeholders, updated ecology reports, and Cabinet approval to revise the opening date to autumn term 2028. • Estyn highlighted how the council's investment in school buildings is improving schools not only as physical structures but also by supporting the successful delivery of the Curriculum for Wales. Through a strong school modernisation programme, capital investment has been aligned with progressive teaching and learning, creating modern learning environments that support educational achievement while contributing to thriving communities, local prosperity and environmental pride.
Be good parents to our care experienced children	**Good**	• Work to prevent homelessness among care leavers has included multi-agency reflective reviews, leading to joint training and implementation of a joint assessment protocol. As a result, homelessness rates remain below target, although further preventative work is ongoing. • Support for care leavers' participation in education, employment and training has been sustained through corporate parenting workstreams, with performance exceeding target, alongside development of a new council-wide work placement initiative to further improve long-term outcomes. • The Corporate Parenting Board has strengthened governance through regular multi-agency meetings and by embedding the voice of care-experienced young people, informed by a summit, with priorities for 2026–2027 aligned to this feedback. • Engagement activity has increased, with growth in membership of the youth forum and continued partnership with Tros Gynnal Plant to meet advocacy needs and promote young people's rights to representation and support. • Strategic development activity has progressed, including plans to establish an operational working group and further develop the 'care experienced' protected characteristic, alongside aligning priorities across partner organisations.

		• Schools have implemented the Corporate Parenting Strategy through effective use of Pupil Development Grant for children looked after (PDGCLA) funding, with evaluations evidencing positive impacts on wellbeing, behaviour, engagement, and attendance, including a significant increase in primary attendance for looked-after children and continued improvement in secondary attendance. • Targeted improvement work includes engagement with emerging Welsh Government guidance and the development of a structured quality assurance programme for Personal Education Plans to ensure consistency, timeliness, and impact across all schools.
Help people get the skills they need for work	**Good**	• The Employability Bridgend programme has supported 265 participants into education or training, exceeding the target of 219. • Employment outcomes reached 241 participants entering work, achieving 83.1% of the 290 target, with additional job outcomes pending, expected to increase performance in 2026-27 following initial delays caused by service restructure and the implementation of a new CRM system. • Performance in reducing young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains strong at 1.8%, improving from 1.9% in 2024–25 and outperforming the all-Wales average of 2.1%, placing Bridgend joint 8th nationally. • Employability services have continued to adapt to funding changes, including reduced external funding streams, while maintaining strong partnership working with Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus to support vulnerable young people. • Activity to increase employment and training opportunities has included continued delivery through the Bridgend Employability Network, alongside the development of a health-focused sub-group to strengthen support for individuals with additional health-related barriers. • A comprehensive employability and skills offer has been delivered through partnership working with funders and stakeholders, supporting residents to access basic, essential, and vocational skills training tailored to individual needs. • Engagement and outreach activity has been strengthened through multi-channel promotion, including social media, print, and radio campaigns, alongside large-scale events such as the Porthcawl and Maesteg Jobs Fairs, each attracting over 300 attendees and 60 employers.

		• Programme delivery has remained strong, contributing to exceeding annual engagement targets, and ongoing provision of mentoring and in-work support to help individuals secure and sustain employment.

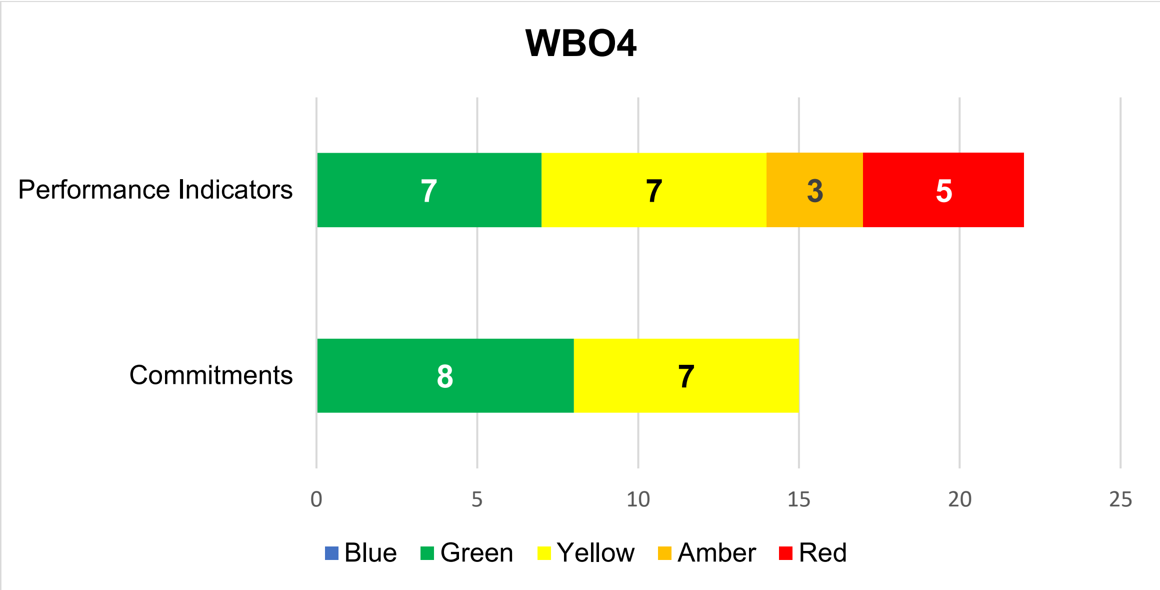
What will we do to improve?

- Carry out a restructure of senior roles to ensure continued strong leadership as the number of early years settings increases.
- Produce a suite of online, recorded professional learning that colleagues can access at a time that suits them.
- Provide the opportunity for a second cohort of practitioners to complete the Froebelian Approach modules between September 2026 and March 2027.
- Education Engagement Team (EET) will complete attendance audits with all schools by the end of the spring term.
- Following the completion of annual school attendance audits, the EET will produce a detailed good practice example that captures and showcases effective strategies implemented across Bridgend's schools.
- Share this year's 'School On A Page' (SOAP) documents with schools by July 2026, to aid reflection and self-improvement.
- Dysgu, the national professional learning and leadership body will develop resources and professional learning for delivery in the next academic year.
- Conduct a young person consultation to gather broader feedback on the setup, design, and future development plans of our digital offer.
- Provide Online Safety workshops for Year 7 pupils in Brynteg School and Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen.
- Pursue the Capital Grant application to re-locate Pont Iaith.
- Engage with the private sector to progress an independent review of Welsh-medium catchment areas in 2026-2027.
- Undertake translocation of reptiles and site investigation at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr and finalise the technical information and commence the PAC process.
- Mynydd Cynffig Primary School - Corporate Management Team will consider the land the financial resources required for the dormouse mitigation strategy and give a future commitment in this regard. The planning application will be considered by Development Control Committee.
- Corporate Landlord Department will obtain the necessary approval for the land swap for Ysgol Ferch o'r Sgêr and the new two-form entry English-medium school.
- Heronsbridge School - The pre-application consultation will commence, work packages will be tendered and the outcome of the ground investigation will be confirmed.
- Create an engagement workplan for 2026-27.
- The Education Engagement Team and Children and Family Support Services will jointly initiate a structured quality assurance programme for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) by April 2027.

Case study – Safer Internet Day

On 10 February 2026, nine secondary schools and three special schools from Bridgend took part in Wales' national Safer Internet Day event at the Principality Stadium, focusing on the theme "Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI." With more than 63 practitioners and learners attending, Bridgend was the most represented local authority. Participants joined learner and practitioner sessions exploring AI, online safety, and critical digital decision-making. The event strengthened learners' understanding of online risks, enhanced practitioner confidence in teaching AI and online safety, supported whole-school digital resilience, and amplified learner voice in national discussions about ethical and responsible technology use.

Wellbeing Objective	Score
4 - Supporting our most vulnerable	**Good**



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

Aim	Status	Description
Provide high-quality children's & adults social services / early help services	Excellent	• The number of children on the Child Protection Register and those in care remained well managed and largely on track, reflecting effective prevention work and appropriate decision-making. • Outcomes for Team Around the Family plans remained at a satisfactory level overall, although slightly below target due to a number of more complex cases. Increased management oversight is being implemented to improve consistency. • Performance for statutory visits to children remained strong and above target, at over 90% for both care experienced children and those on the Child Protection Register, demonstrating sustained high-quality safeguarding practice. • Support for unpaid carers was strengthened through expanded engagement (including 130 attendees at the Young Carers Network Event), growth of the Young Carer Ambassador Programme and establishment of a Carers Steering Group to shape services. • Planning is in place for a Dementia Action Week event at Bryngarw, supported by BAVO. Partners are promoting dementia-friendly activities, community sessions, and awareness, alongside ongoing forums to support organisations.

		• Children's Services saw significant workforce and practice improvements, including delivery of the Grow Our Own model resulting in 12 newly qualified social workers, reduced reliance on agency staff and improved recruitment and retention. • The Most Significant Change Panel was held with leaders and decision-makers, alongside continued facilitation of the youth forum, enabling the meaningful voices of families and young people to be captured and used to inform service delivery and development. • Adult Social Care progressed through development of a forward improvement plan, alongside an ongoing review of front door practice to improve decision-making consistency, inform staff training, and support peer learning focused on quality outcomes. • Significant commissioning and transformation progress was achieved, including development of a 15-year capital programme, completion of the recommissioning of care-at-home services with new contracts commencing in April 2026, approval of the Placement Commissioning Strategy and approved business cases for four new residential homes to expand local provision.
Support people in poverty	**Good**	• Support for residents to access financial help remained strong, with 96% of people supported through the Financial Assistance and Support Service (FASS) increasing their income, reflecting effective advice and expanded outreach activity in local communities. • Support to manage and reduce household debt exceeded target at 98%, with key issues including fuel costs, water arrears and Council Tax, highlighting continued demand for advice services alongside wider cost of living pressures. • Targeted take-up campaigns helped increase access to key benefits, including Pension Credit and Free School Meals, generating over £616k per annum (since 2023) in additional Pension Credit income and supporting 172 children to access Free School Meals. • Outreach activity was strengthened to improve access for harder-to-reach residents, with positive feedback from communities and increased awareness of available financial and employability support • Faith in Families Cwtch Mawr Multibank has launched pilot deliveries in Bridgend, working with BCBC, BAVO and local partners to provide essential goods to families facing hardship. Through trusted community organisations, items such as clothing, toiletries and household essentials are distributed quickly and with dignity. The pilot aims to address growing need linked to the cost-of-living crisis while supporting plans to expand the service across the county borough.

Support people with housing needs	**Adequate**	• Delivery of affordable housing exceeded expectations, with 177 new homes provided against a target of 110, supported by strong partnership working and investment through the Social Housing Grant programme. • Homelessness prevention improved significantly, with over 43% of households successfully supported to remain in their homes, supported by increased use of private rented accommodation and expansion of the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme. • Demand for homelessness services remained high, with increasing use of temporary accommodation, limited housing supply across both social and private sectors, and more complex cases requiring specialist or adapted accommodation. • Disabled Facilities Grants continued to support independence, with over 98% of recipients reporting improved ability to live independently, despite a slight dip in satisfaction linked to minor delivery issues. • Delivery times for Disabled Facilities Grants remained significantly above target due to increased demand and limited resources, with 205 cases completed within available budgets and ongoing work to reduce legacy cases. • Housing and homelessness services progressed through key strategic actions, including approval of a revised Social Housing Allocation Policy, a planned review of homelessness services to inform a future strategy, and continued collaboration with Registered Social Landlords and Welsh Government. • Additional housing capacity was expanded through the purchase of HMOs, with further acquisitions in progress, supported by a three-year rolling Social Housing Grant programme of over £13m. • Progress was made in bringing long-term empty homes back into use, including properties becoming occupied, sold or under renovation, alongside enforcement action, Welsh Government funding, and implementation of the Empty Homes Strategy 2025–2030.
Support children with additional learning needs (ALN)	**Good**	• Estyn highlighted the Pupil Referral Unit provision as a significant strength, identifying that nearly all pupils achieve qualifications and progress successfully to post-16 education, employment or training. • Estyn recognised Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision as a substantial strength of the local authority, reflecting a clear strategic commitment to inclusion and improving outcomes for learners with ALN. • Welsh-medium ALN provision was highlighted by Estyn as a notable strength, with bilingual Learning Resource

		Centres and specialist services enabling learners to access support in their preferred language. • Outstanding feedback has been received regarding ALN governance, early years multi-agency interventions, and the BYJS trauma-informed approach. Estyn's evaluation highlights sector-leading multi-agency early years interventions that identify developmental needs before formal schooling begins. Robust ALN governance ensures that children with complex needs have access to high-quality, specialised sensory environments within the borough, enabling care to remain local and empowering families. • Implementation of the online IDP system progressed, with 22% of new IDPs created online and all schools trained, with full rollout continuing across school-based IDPs during 2026–27. • Transition planning for pupils with additional learning needs improved, with around 76% of pupils with a transition plan having received a review. Further work is underway to ensure earlier involvement of post-16 services in all cases. • Waiting lists for specialist provision increased to 57 pupils, reflecting rising demand, more complex needs, and limited capacity. All pupils identified and put on a waiting list for specialist placement receive an offer of provision within a 12-month maximum period or are prioritised when they are in a transition year. • A five-year ALN Provision Plan (2025–2030) was approved to respond to increasing demand, including proposals for new observation provision, an Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD) Foundation Phase class, and additional Communication Autism Resource Education (CARE) bases in both primary and secondary settings. Challenges remain, particularly for the ESBD Foundation Phase provision, with further consultation and site identification planned. • Throughout Autumn 2025, a new training programme was delivered over 18 training sessions for 217 staff from 19 schools. This programme has been developed further, with data and outcomes collated over the summer period. • Between September 2025 and January 2026, the number of children supported through the Early Years Panel increased from 146 to 157. • Positive inspection outcomes were secured at The Bridge PRU (2025) and Ysgol Bryn Castell (2026), alongside continued recognition of high-quality specialist provision across the authority. This resulted in The Bridge Receiving 3 spotlights and Ysgol Bryn Castell receiving 1 spotlight in the final reports.

		• Low tribunal rates and successful mediation processes demonstrate effective partnership working with families and early resolution of concerns. The local authority had no educational tribunals for the third year.
Safeguard and protect people at risk of harm	**Excellent**	• Children's safeguarding decisions continued to be made promptly, with over 99% completed within 24 hours, ensuring children at risk are identified and protected without delay • Timely completion of child protection investigations remained above target, supporting effective assessment of risk and enabling appropriate safeguarding actions to be put in place • Adult safeguarding enquiries were responded to quickly, with performance exceeding target, helping ensure timely support and protection for adults at risk. • Waiting times for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments remained within target, supporting timely decision-making for individuals requiring safeguards to protect their rights and wellbeing. • Corporate safeguarding arrangements were strengthened through regular Corporate Safeguarding Board oversight and a positive internal audit outcome. Safeguarding audits were carried out across all schools, alongside implementation of the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Safeguarding Threshold Document to support consistent understanding of risk and intervention across partners. • Early intervention and prevention activity was strengthened through Youth Service outreach and improved collaboration between services via a single referral pathway (via Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub or Early Help), supporting identification and engagement of children at risk of anti-social behaviour before escalation. • Work to strengthen early identification of children at risk of offending is ongoing in partnership with South Wales Police, although progress has been slower than planned due to delays in establishing a consistent early notification system. A supporting application has been developed to support timeliness of information sharing and effective identification of children at risk. • His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), in its inspection of the BYJS in November 2025, acknowledged BYJS' highly individualised approach which allows victims to dictate their own level and frequency of support. HMIP also noted how the BYJS successfully reduces youth crime and manages complex cases effectively. • By mapping out how trauma affects their home environment, the BYJS actively safeguards vulnerable young people. HMIP noted how this prevents escalation into deeper crisis and offers targeted care and support.

		• By breaking the cycle of reoffending through positive engagement, the BYJS directly helps young people reroute their lives toward productive, brighter futures. HMIP noted how the service's multi-agency approach looks at the root causes of behaviour. This holistic view helps entire families build resilience, equipping young people with the skills to overcome barriers.

What will we do to improve?

- Complete a review of front door practice for Adult Social Care.
- Commence review of TuVida contract.
- In Q1 2027 we will establish a strategic group for Bridgend which will include unpaid carers.
- Develop and plan for the new 3-year planning cycle for SSWB Directorate.
- Carry out a review of the MSC framework and the impact on service development.
- Develop a meaningful framework for Adult Social Care for capturing the voices of individuals who access the service.
- Conclude consultation on proposed changes to the Shared Lives service.
- Undertake Care home analysis to inform further feasibility analysis on specific sites in the county borough.
- Development of the Market Position Statement.
- Mobilise delivery of 2 residential homes Finalise Harwood House/ Heronsbridge School business case and submit Expressions of Interest via the capital board
- Establish a delivery programme for the Placement Commissioning Strategy, with oversight and where possible performance monitoring.
- Commence development of the Market Position Statement.
- Launch CONNECT once appointments have concluded and refresh the early help screening teams' approach to assessments.
- Undertake a self-evaluation in line with the standards in the Anti Racism Wales Action Plan.
- Develop business cases for peripatetic social work and social care roles to reduce reliance on agency due to unavoidable long-term absence (such as, maternity leave)
- Public consultation for the expansion of Learner Resource Centres will go to Cabinet for approval in September 2026.
- Feasibility study and report for expansion of ESBD provision (The Bridge and Ysgol Bryn Castell)
- The Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) Forum for the 2025–26 school year will be formally scheduled for December 2026.
- Progress development of a new identification system with South Wales Police.

Case study – High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Youth Awards 2026

Two learners with Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI) were nominated for the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Youth Awards; one pupil attends Bridgend College and one attends Year 12 at Porthcawl Comprehensive School. This award highlights an extraordinary achievement in community contribution and personal resilience. Both received their awards at Coed y Mwstwr Hotel on 15 April 2026, with one, who is supported by the Visual Support Team, awarded first prize and a cheque for £1500.

Case Study – Tackling Long-term Empty Properties

Our Shared Regulatory Service continues to make strong progress in tackling long-term empty properties through a combination of support, funding and enforcement measures. During 2025-26, three of the top 20 priority empty homes have been brought back into occupation, four are sold subject to contract and five are undergoing renovation. Enforcement activity remains a key driver of progress, with one enforced sale ongoing and a further case being progressed following works in default. We have also secured funding through four successful Welsh Government grants, enabling further intervention in challenging cases. Alongside enforcement, work continues to deliver the objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy 2025–2030, including the introduction of a targeted communications plan and the delivery of the first Empty Homes Support Session, which received positive feedback from property owners. Together, these actions are helping to increase housing availability, support neighbourhood regeneration and reduce the number of long-term empty homes across the county borough.

Case Study: Faith in Families Cwtch Mawr Multibank

Faith in Families' Cwtch Mawr Multibank, Wales' first and only multibank, has been operating in Bridgend for the past six months with support from Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO). The initiative provides an innovative solution to tackling poverty and reducing waste by redistributing brand-new surplus goods from businesses to children, families and individuals experiencing hardship.

Each day, essential items such as clothing, bedding, toiletries, baby essentials and household goods are received, sorted and distributed through a trusted network of more than 140 partner organisations. Since April, the Cwtch Mawr Multibank has supported 380 individuals – an average of 38 people per active week – as well as 170 households, with around 40 per cent of households accessing support on more than one occasion. By ensuring unused goods reach those most in need quickly and efficiently, the Cwtch Mawr Multibank is helping to improve the wellbeing of local residents while strengthening community support across the county borough.

Case Study – Supporting Young Carers to Feel Valued, Connected and Heard

During 2025-26, Bridgend County Borough Council's Prevention and Wellbeing Service continued to strengthen support for young carers through the Bridgend Young Carers Network. Led by Young Carer Ambassadors aged 11–25, the network provides a safe space for young carers to connect with others, share their experiences and help shape local support.

Working alongside schools, Halo Leisure, Awen Cultural Trust, Bridgend Inclusive network group and over 60 partner organisations, the service delivered termly network events, weekly wellbeing sessions and "We Are Valued Days", giving young carers opportunities to take a break from caring responsibilities, improve wellbeing and build friendships. During the year, 160 young carers attended the Network Day and 136 attended We Are Valued events. The Young Carer Ambassador programme also grew significantly, increasing from 3 to 33 ambassadors.

The service supported the rollout of 852 Young Carers ID cards and provided 403 Halo memberships for young carers, alongside 927 memberships for household members. Feedback from young people highlights that these activities help reduce isolation, increase confidence and ensure young carers feel recognised, valued and supported within their communities.

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:

- Financial Management
- Risk management,
- Commissioning and procurement,
- Corporate planning
- 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.

Use of resources	**Good**	Use of resources overall is good. Some things have got better – Performance Management and Financial Planning have improved judgments due to progress made within the year. Other things have stayed the same or got worse - Risk Management has a downgraded judgement due to recent regulator recommendations. We have strong frameworks and robust processes for day-to-day management of resources, with clear and agreed working models and good working relationships between corporate teams and directorates. However, longer-term planning, addressing capacity in corporate and directorate teams, improving proactiveness and developing our corporate services to meet changing demands remain difficult with the resource issues we face. Our Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) Report (September 2025) said that the Council demonstrates strong financial management and effective use of resources, supported by robust monitoring, collaborative budget-setting involving Members, and positive relationships with partners. However, there are opportunities to strengthen alignment between financial planning and the Council's strategic vision, particularly ensuring the budget

		and Medium-Term Financial Strategy clearly support future priorities. There is also a need to encourage greater innovation in how services are delivered. Additionally, developing a stronger “Team Bridgend” culture, with improved cross-service collaboration and a more consistent, organisation-wide approach to communication, will help reduce silos and support more effective and joined-up working. Our planned activities in response to the PPA findings and recommendations are already underway which will support improvements in use of resources going forward.

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.

Financial Planning	**Good**	Financial Planning is good overall. This is based on positive internal and external judgements from regulators, consistent balanced budgets, and unqualified Statements of Accounts signed off by the Auditor General for Wales and strong governance frameworks in place. Although the Council ended 2025–26 with a £13.4m underspend, forecasting during the year was difficult and volatile. Much of the underspend came from one-off funding, and some planned budget reductions were not delivered, creating future pressures. Whilst reserves were increased at year-end using our underspend, they have generally reduced in recent years and are largely committed. This creates a risk to future financial sustainability, as reserves may not be sufficient to support budgets. The Council faces ongoing financial challenges, including rising costs (pay, inflation), service demand pressures, and reduced council tax collection rates linked to the cost-of-living crisis and limited enforcement options. The 2026–27 budget balanced based on achieving £2.35m of savings and a 4.7% council tax increase, with continued uncertainty in future funding and a difficult financial outlook. The financial position is set out in detail in regular reports, for members and the public to review. Through these processes the Council demonstrates a high level of compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s (CIPFA) Financial Management Code, Principles and Standards. Overall, while the framework is solid, financial resilience is under increasing pressure, and stronger forward planning will be critical Key Areas for improvement: o Earlier and more robust long-term financial planning o Development of deliverable savings and income generation options o Greater engagement with members o Tight budget management by services
Corporate planning	**Good**	Corporate planning is good. We have updated and significantly reprioritised the corporate plan delivery plan (CPDP) for 2025-26 to reflect the ambitions of elected members, staff and partners as well

		as challenges and limitations. The CPDP was agreed by Cabinet / Corporate Management Board on 4 March 2025 with a communication plan and directorate business plans prepared to outline service level contributions for the year. In the recent Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), one of the recommendations provided was to support our new Chief Executive to develop an inspiring vision, a Transformation Strategy, underpinning corporate strategies and the cultural shift required to produce both sustainability of services, greater cross-Council working and innovation – which involves staff, communities and partners. This work has begun in 2025-26 and will carry on into 2026-27. From this a new Corporate Plan will be produced to align with this strategy. There are opportunities for further improvement, including starting the review process earlier and engaging better with staff / trade unions as part of the social partnership duty. Key Areas for improvement: ○ Complete work on the Transformation Strategy Bridgend 2040 ○ Begin a process of revising all key plans to align with the long-term vision, starting with the 5-year Corporate Plan ○ Improve the process for annual review and business planning ○ Improve engagement with the Corporate Planning process, with members, residents, staff and Trade Unions and Partners
Risk management	**Adequate**	Risk management is adequate. There is a Corporate Risk Management Policy in place which was updated and approved by Governance and Audit Committee in January 2026. This is supported by a risk management guidance document which has been signposted to all staff. Reports and the reporting process for risk are straightforward and accessible, including for members and Risk update reports were considered by Cabinet and Corporate Management Team regularly during 2025-26. Reviews undertaken by Audit Wales and Internal Audit of the Council's Corporate Risk Management processes, completed in 2025, concluded that the Council needs to strengthen its risk management culture, improve how risk is identified and monitored and review the overall risk appetite for the Council. External capacity has been sourced to work with the Council to address the issues raised and ensure that risk management identification, reporting and monitoring is robust and timely.
Commissioning and Procurement	**Adequate**	Procurement and commissioning are adequate. Procurement is well established, with updated Contract Procedure Rules aligned to the UK Procurement Act 2023 and the Welsh Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Practices have been enhanced to embed social value, carbon reduction, and safeguarding requirements within tenders, alongside improved supplier engagement through our website, corporate contracts register, guidance, and standard terms and conditions. Cost control measures, such as price caps and purchasing card authorisations, have also proven effective and continue to be applied.

		Commissioning, however, remains variable across directorates. While some areas demonstrate good practice through early engagement with procurement, co-production, and long-term planning, others lack robust strategies and consistent delivery. This inconsistency can lead to reactive approaches and missed opportunities to maximise value and collaboration. Audit Wales (June 2025) concluded that the Council cannot yet assure itself that it consistently achieves value for money in commissioning. It recommended strengthening strategic commissioning arrangements, improving compliance and consistency, and embedding evaluation and continuous improvement. The overall judgement is assessed as adequate based on the need for improved capacity in the corporate and directorate teams, and an improved and more consistent approach to commissioning needed across directorates. Key Areas for improvement: ○ Improve understanding of commissioning and procurement requirements across the organisation ○ Address Audit Wales recommendations to strengthen commissioning arrangements ○ Improve corporate alignment of commissioning and procurement to share learning and identify efficiencies
Performance management	**Good**	Performance management is good, with continued progress made since the last self-assessment and a “substantial assurance” outcome received from internal audit in March 2026. There is a strong well-established framework in place and evidence of strong performance management processes and effective use of data in some service areas, although this needs to be replicated across all services to fully embed this performance culture. We successfully completed our first PPA in September 2026, informing future improvements. PPA feedback told us *“Although a good framework is in place, it needs to be more deeply embedded across the Council to ensure consistent ownership and accountability for performance goals”* Performance reporting arrangements have been strengthened with reports providing progress judgements, trend data and summary charts. There is strong scrutiny by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. Regulatory tracker reporting has also been strengthened introducing escalation where issues persist. There has been a clear focus on improving data quality and accuracy through guidance, audits, and stronger use of evidence, alongside targeted support for group managers and performance leads to enhance reporting consistency and timeliness. The approach to self-assessment continues to be improved, enabling more balanced and robust judgements on performance. Greater emphasis has been placed on collating and using service user perspectives, including residents survey data in collaboration with Data Cymru and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and

		learning from best practice through sector networks. The introduction of Service Self Evaluations has improved accountability, requiring Heads of Service and Group Managers to clearly articulate and evidence the performance position of their areas. Key Areas for improvement: o Stronger challenge and use of performance information o Better use of performance tools for insight o Increased capacity and resilience across teams and systems
Workforce planning	**Adequate**	Workforce management is adequate. Feedback from employees, managers, trade union representatives and internal audits is generally positive. Managers are assisted to deal effectively with people issues through appropriate and timely support from the HR / Organisational Development service. The HR operating model aims to give managers an improved service focused on proactive and preventative HR services and an incremental reduction in the need for and provision of reactive support services. Improvements have been made to our Strategic Workforce Planning along with further development of HR policies and procedures, such as the introduction of automation in the recruitment process. Support has been provided for managers to reduce and manage sickness absence. HR Briefings delivered to provide support and coaching on a range of topics, with positive feedback used to shape future briefings. We continue to focus on organisation wellbeing, supporting both employees and managers. Key Areas for Improvement: o Further development of HR processes and digital automation o Need for additional capacity in both management and HR o Stronger emphasis on long-term workforce planning, including succession planning
Asset management	**Adequate**	Asset management is adequate. Whilst considered theoretically robust it is currently operationally strained. The council is excellent at identifying what it wants to achieve and has delivered major standalone wins. Until resourcing is addressed and the new Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS) implemented, Asset Management will remain limited by its reactive constraints. The service is functionally sound enough to maintain a high level of compliance and secure major long-term objectives, but currently lacks the structural stability required to move from a reactive mode into a truly proactive model. Despite these challenges, the performance is not considered unsatisfactory. Reaching a 91% building compliance rate is an historic high for the council and continuing to reduce backlog maintenance and assisting partners in facilitating an £80m town centre college campus proves that the team possesses deep competency and strong partnership capabilities. The team successfully maintains fiscal responsibility and high compliance standards, operations remain fundamentally reactive

		rather than proactive due to these capacity constraints. Forecasts for the current period are positive, with recruitment activity ongoing, the IWMS being implemented and the new strategic asset management plan being prepared we aim for Asset Management to move into “Good” in the future. Key Areas for Improvement: o Strengthening Strategic Asset Planning and Alignment o Improving Asset Management Systems and Data Use o Enhancing Governance, Monitoring, and Reporting o Building Capacity and Embedding the Corporate Landlord Model o Addressing Compliance, Maintenance, and Collaboration o Need for additional capacity in both management and HR

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 2025-26.

What is our judgement?

Governance	**Good**

Our governance arrangements are good, and work well.

Decision making

Our Governance Framework, the Code of Corporate Governance, explains 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 council 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 of Corporate Governance 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 Governance Statement which are monitored through the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

A number of significant issues were identified in the 2024-25 AGS, to be taken forward during 2025-26. During the year we have made improvements including –

- Progressing the development of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy
- Continued to progress the transfer of the Waste service back to the Council
- Ensuring Governance and Audit Committee members received the necessary training to support their role
- Reviewed the process of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) and set up a new Scrutiny Budget Working Group to replace BREP and to review and contribute to the final budget for the Council.
- Monitoring and supporting schools with a budget deficit at year end to deliver their deficit recovery plans
- Continued to work at local, regional and national levels to support recruitment in hard-to-fill services, building on successful approaches used within Children's Social Services.

A number of significant issues were identified in the Council's 2025-26 AGS which will require actions moving forward to address them. The key issues identified are:

- Change Management Governance – ensuring the transformation across the Council has sound governance arrangements in place to agree priorities and to monitor progress
- Risk Management – to address the issues raised in an Audit Wales review to ensure the identification and management of risk is robust
- System Development and Change – to manage and ensure the safe implementation of major new software systems, the safe introduction of Artificial Intelligence for services and protect the Council from a cyber-attack
- Oversight and governance of delegated budgets – increased school budget deficits may impact on the ability of schools to deliver and may result in financial pressure for the Council as a whole, so work will be done with schools to ensure deficit plans are robust and are managed.

7. 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.

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

During 2025–26, the Council undertook a comprehensive programme of consultation and engagement activity to inform key strategic, policy and service decisions. This programme reflects a strong commitment to involving residents, partners and stakeholders in shaping services and responding to emerging challenges.

Engagement activity covered a wide range of priorities, including budget setting, service redesign, climate change, transport, housing and community safety. Levels of participation varied across consultations, with particularly high engagement seen in budget-related and public protection consultations.

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 to inform long-term strategic planning, for example

- The *Time to Talk Cultural Services* consultation attracted over 1,300 responses and helped shape the future direction of libraries, community hubs and cultural provision, ensuring compliance with statutory duties while reflecting local needs.
- The Digital Strategy consultation supported the development of a modern, inclusive approach to service delivery, highlighting the importance of accessible online services, digital skills development and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence

- Housing and infrastructure proposals were also shaped through targeted engagement. Consultation on the Social Housing Allocation Policy gathered feedback from both housing providers and residents to inform a fair and transparent approach to allocating social housing.
- Transport and placemaking initiatives, including Bridgend Town Centre access proposals and the Ewenny Road Active Travel scheme, sought community views on improving accessibility and connectivity, balancing the needs of different users, and supporting sustainable travel.
- Climate change and decarbonisation were a key focus of engagement activity. Consultations on the Net Zero Carbon Strategy, Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and Active Travel and Climate Change proposals collectively gathered views on how the council can support behaviour change, reduce carbon emissions and improve health and wellbeing. Feedback emphasised the importance of practical, accessible solutions and the need to address barriers to sustainable travel.

Other strategies and services are coproduced with service users and their families to help us create services that are more responsive, inclusive and effective. For example this year we have held Carers Listening Events, which have informed our Carers Action Plan, and we intend use future events to co-produce the service specification for the Carers Support Service in the year ahead.

We also consulted on some significant proposed changes to the way the council or our services work. Some of the main consultations in 2025-26 were –

- The Annual Budget Consultation January 2026 generated significant levels of feedback, with over 1,200 responses. It highlighted clear public priorities, including strong resistance to reductions in services supporting vulnerable people, education and child protection. At the same time, respondents demonstrated an understanding of financial pressures facing the council, with a majority supporting council tax increases at or above 4.5%. The consultations provided valuable evidence to support difficult financial decision-making and align spending priorities with community expectations.
- Community safety and environmental quality were also addressed through consultation, most notably the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) on dog fouling, which attracted over 1,200 responses. This high level of engagement demonstrated strong public interest in maintaining clean and safe public spaces and informed proposals to strengthen enforcement and responsible behaviour.

Consultation	**Your feedback and how we used it**
Bridgend Town Centre Access (Apr–May 2025)	755 responses; gathered views on improving access and balancing needs of users, including parking, cycling, loading times and flexible access arrangements.
Time to Talk Cultural Services (Jun–Aug 2025)	1,377 responses; informed future strategy for libraries, hubs and cultural services, focusing on legal duties, resident priorities and future delivery models.

Digital Strategy 2025–2029 (Jun–Jul 2025)	250 responses; explored digital priorities, improving online services, inclusion, digital skills and use of technology including AI.
Bridgend Social Housing Allocation Policy (Jul–Oct 2025)	161 total responses; reviewed how social housing is allocated with input from both landlords and the public.
Ewenny Roundabout to Brynteg School Community Engagement Survey (Oct–Nov 2025)	79 responses; sought feedback on Active Travel route proposals connecting Brynteg School.
Active Travel and Climate Change (Nov 2025–Feb 2026)	127 responses; gathered views on encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling and addressing barriers to active travel.
Bridgend Net Zero Strategy (Nov 2025–Jan 2026)	129 responses; informed development of the 2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy reflecting local priorities.
Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (Nov 2025–Jan 2026)	88 responses; focused on developing an equitable and scalable EV charging network to support decarbonisation.
Time to Talk Budget 2026–27 (Jan 2026)	1,216 responses; engaged residents on budget pressures, savings options and spending priorities.
Public Space Protection Order – Dog Fouling (Mar–May 2026)	1,274 responses; strong engagement on proposals to tackle dog fouling and improve responsible dog ownership.

Complaints and compliments

We have a clear and agreed two stage process for dealing with complaints. We report to Governance and Audit Committee on complaints each year.

- **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 by our Information Team and we report on them every quarter to the Public Services Ombudsman. In 2025-26 we had the following informal complaints –

	Number	Resolved	Upheld	Discontinued or withdrawn	Ongoing
Adult Social Care	1	0	0	0	1
Benefits Administration	9	8	0	0	1
Children's Social Services	1	1	0	0	0
Community Facilities	4	1	0	0	3
Complaints handling	0	0	0	0	0

Education	19	9	0	1	9
Environment	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	37	22	1	0	14
Housing	14	4	0	0	10
Planning & Building Control	11	4	3	1	3
Roads & Transport	10	2	0	0	8
Various/Other	24	10	0	1	13
Waste & Refuse	0	0	0	0	0

- **Formal Complaint Stage**

Formal complaints can be lodged 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 five working days. These complaints are sent to a Head of Service who appoints a senior officer from the 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 and where in the Borough they come from. The Information Team has received, logged, acknowledged and referred a total of 24 formal complaints during 2025-26 –

	Number	Resolved	Upheld	Discontinued or withdrawn	Ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	4	2	0	0	2
Children's Social Services	0	0	0	0	0
Community Facilities	1	0	0	0	1
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0	0
Education	4	1	0	0	3
Environment	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	3	2	0	0	1
Housing	2	1	0	0	1
Planning & Building Control	5	1	0	0	4

Roads & Transport	1	0	0	0	1
Various/Other	4	1	0	0	3
Waste & Refuse	0	0	0	0	0

There are separate processes for dealing with social services complaints, Elected Member conduct concerns and school-based complaints.

Improvements made and still planned

Following an internal audit of the corporate complaints process in 2024-25, and a review of the current complaints system and process, a range work on a range of improvements started. Below is what we said we would do and a progress update for 2025-26 –

Area of Improvement Identified	Progress made in 2025-26	Actions for 2026-27
An e-learning module for all complaint handlers.	Completed	
A more consistent way of working to collate, record and report complaints and compliments as well as documenting working procedures to support all officers involved in the complaints process.	Partially completed	Procedure will be included as part of new complaints system.
Improving the process for customers to make both complaints and compliments (incorporating stage one and stage two complaints in the same system).	Ongoing	
An improved triage and escalation process.	Ongoing	
Improvements to customer feedback and communication.	Ongoing	To be developed as part of the new complaints system.
Automating elements of the process where possible to streamline the whole process from beginning to end.	Ongoing	To be developed as part of the new complaints system.
Developed a process to capture and record all complaint feedback consistently • Tracking whether complaints are upheld and actions taken • Ensuring lessons learned are identified and recorded • Enable analysis of data to identify trends and improvement areas • Identify priorities for further learning and development	Ongoing	

Reviewing and developing monitoring reports.	The Team produce an annual report for GAC.	

8. Regulator views

Our regulators play an important role in ensuring local councils operate lawfully, spend public money responsibly and provide services of an acceptable standard. They provide essential oversight, monitor our performance, investigate concerns, and help drive improvement. They help us maintain accountability to our residents and service users.

Our 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 take the feedback from our regulators very seriously and regularly test our progress against the views and recommendations of our regulators, through a regulatory tracker, which is reported to Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) in April and October each year, and in July and January if there are areas of concern.

Regulator Reports

- **Panel Performance Assessment September 2025**

One of the requirements of the new local government improvement regime set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act is for the Council to undertake a Panel Performance Assessment, or PPA, between each local government election. The PPA has to set out conclusions on whether the Council met the 'performance requirements' during that financial year, and make recommendations on actions needed to improve. The 'performance requirements' focus on -

- Are we exercising our functions effectively;
- Are we using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- Is our governance strong.

Our first PPA took place this year with the panel on site between 16-19 September 2025. They undertook interviews with a range of elected members, council officers and partners. They also held focus groups with users of council services and community representatives, including Trade Unions, Town & Community Councils, the business community, Youth Council, older people, citizens and headteachers.

In addition to the three statutory 'performance requirements', we asked the panel to focus on three further areas

- **Transformation** – The development of a transformation strategy that meets political and key stakeholder aspirations that is underpinned by effective arrangements for delivery, performance management and a culture of constructive challenge. A clear need to focus on mechanisms and capacity for transformation that will improve citizens experience and create an organisation that is sustainable in the medium and long term.

- **Addressing workforce challenges** – Building on strengthened workforce planning, address challenges in recruitment in key areas, and improve succession planning, to help the Council create a long-term workforce strategy.

- **Improving engagement** – Building on improvements to strategic communication, improve the Council's engagement and relationships internally with councillors and externally with local communities and town and community councils to help it become more citizen focused.

For each of the three performance requirements and the three areas raised by the Council, the panel outlined strengths and areas for improvement. The panel also provided eight recommendations.

The assessment recognised the Council as performing well, with strong leadership, a committed workforce, and clear self-awareness, but highlighted a need to accelerate change to ensure long-term sustainability.

The headline findings of the PPA were that –

- Bridgend is a good Council with untapped potential.
- There is a political and managerial leadership that is ambitious for Bridgend.
- The workforce is enthusiastic, committed, and cares deeply about the Council and the communities it serves.
- The Council has high levels of self-awareness - clear and shared assessment of strengths and the challenges ahead.
- The Council is ready for change and positive about the future.

We have developed a response to the PPA report, accepting all eight recommendations and outlining both progress to date and further planned improvements. Some of the actions have already been taken, including organisational changes and strengthening strategic capacity, with further work planned around transformation, workforce development, and engagement.

The full panel report and our formal response outlining the actions proposed has been published and can be found on our website.

Audit Wales

Audit Wales have completed 3 audits in 2025-26. These are:

- A review of our arrangements for Commissioning Services which was published in June 2025. It concluded that the Council does not have arrangements to assure itself that it consistently secures value for money when it commissions services and provided 3 recommendations related to strengthening commissioning arrangements, monitoring compliance and evaluating effectiveness through review. Commissioning will play a pivotal role in the Transformation agenda and therefore processes will be reviewed and adapted as the Transformation Strategy develops.

- A review of the Planning and Development Service was published in December 2025. It found that the Council's limited understanding of the service's strategic role, combined with weaknesses in resource and risk management and a lack of planning and performance oversight, but has strong governance arrangements in place for the Development Control Committee. It made four recommendations to the Council which focus on resource management, service planning, risk and performance management. Our response focuses on strengthening the foundations of the Planning and Development Service through increased staffing and sustainable funding arrangements, formalised risk management processes, introduction of a service plan and enhanced performance monitoring arrangements.
- Review of Risk Management was published in December 2025. It found that The Council's risk management arrangements are not working effectively to fully support the delivery of its strategic objectives, and made three recommends focussed on strengthening risk culture, and improving systems to identify and monitor risk, and evaluating the effectiveness of risk management arrangements. External support is being sought to undertake this work, which will begin in early 2026- 27.

Care Inspectorate Wales

- A Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) improvement check of children's social care services was published in September 2025. It concluded through sustained leadership and workforce investment, there have been significant improvements in Bridgend's children's services, particularly in workforce stability and quality assurance.
- A CIW inspection report on Foster Wales Bridgend was published in September 2025. This inspection follows a previous inspection in November 2023 where eight areas were identified as requiring significant improvement. This inspection has found the service has improved in five areas.
- CIW conducted inspections on three childcare settings from April 2025 to March 2026. This includes one setting, Flying Start Garth, that achieved an 'excellent' outcome across all inspection criteria and received a spotlight related to parental and community engagement. All settings received at least a 'good' judgement in all areas. Recommendations focused on strengthening Welsh language and cultural diversity, keeping policies up to date with legislation, improving how actions from inspections are monitored, and maintaining robust health and safety practices. Additional areas included promoting children's independence and ensuring accurate staff record-keeping.
- CIW conducted inspections of four adult residential care homes during the reporting period. One setting, Bryn Y Cae, achieved an 'excellent' rating for Wellbeing and 'good' ratings across all other domains, while the remaining three homes (Ty Ynysawdre, Ty Cwm Ogwr and Ty Llwynderw) achieved 'good' ratings across all inspection areas. Inspections highlighted consistently positive outcomes for residents, including person-centred care, effective leadership, robust governance arrangements and safe, welcoming environments. Inspection feedback also identified areas where services could continue to build on existing strengths, including enhancing opportunities for meaningful activities, maintaining person-centred review processes and supporting ongoing workforce development. No formal areas for improvement or priority action notices were identified across the inspected services.

Estyn

- Estyn's 2025 enhanced local authority link inspector (LALI) visit found that Bridgend is making good progress in improving pupil attendance and delivering its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Inspectors highlighted strong leadership, effective partnership working and a collaborative approach, which have contributed to improved attendance and positive developments in Welsh-medium education. While further work is needed to strengthen data use, evaluate WESP outcomes and ensure the sustainability of attendance initiatives, Estyn concluded that the Council has strong foundations and a clear commitment to driving continued improvement.
- A report on Bridgend Youth Support Service was completed in February 2026. It found that Bridgend Youth Support Service is a high-performing, well-regarded service that deliver strong outcomes for vulnerable young people, provides inclusive, high-quality support and works effectively with partners, but needs to strengthen Welsh language provision and Impact-focused evaluation
- Estyn conducted an inspection of Education Services in Bridgend County Borough Council in March 2025. The report was extremely positive and found that the Council provides well-led education services with a strong collaborative culture and effective support for schools, leading to generally positive outcomes. Inclusion was found to be a key strength, particularly for pupils with additional learning needs and vulnerable groups, supported by strong multi-agency working and robust safeguarding arrangements. However, it identifies areas for improvement, including the need to strengthen self-evaluation, sharpen improvement planning, and ensure more consistent outcomes for all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- During the academic year, 11 schools were subject to core inspection (two secondary schools, one special school and eight primary schools). Estyn identified 14 spotlights of effective practice, including one additional case study, and undertook a further 16 interim visits across one secondary and 15 primary schools, providing a comprehensive evidence base of school performance across the local authority. While one school was placed in a statutory category of follow-up, all schools received support to address their recommendations, including targeted, bespoke in-school support where required. Key areas for improvement identified include strengthening the quality and impact of self-evaluation and improvement planning, improving the progressive development of cross-curricular skills, ensuring appropriate challenge for all pupils, and further developing pupil independence. Inspection findings are used to guide targeted professional learning and support, helping to strengthen leadership, improve teaching, and raise outcomes for learners.

Joint inspection

- During the 2025–2026 financial year, CIW and Estyn conducted two joint inspections on childcare settings. Both settings received 'good' judgements across all inspection criteria. Estyn produced a case study of good practice from one setting, which focused on the way in which children with ALN are supported and fully included, ensuring access to all areas of provision, including quiet/sensory spaces. Recommendations centred on formalising and recording staff supervision and increasing opportunities to promote children's understanding of cultural diversity.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit is also a statutory requirement in Local Government. The Council's internal audit is undertaken by the Regional Internal Audit Service, a partnership shared service between Bridgend County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

In 2025-26 59 audit assignments were included in the audit plan, with 54 completed during the year.

- 12 audit reviews had no audit opinion, as these are routine internal audit work, for example advice and guidance, external audit liaison, fraud and irregularity work, audit planning and recommendation monitoring.
- 42 were with an audit opinion. Based on the testing of the effectiveness of the internal control environment, an audit opinion of Substantial Assurance has been given to 14 audit reviews (33%) and an opinion of Reasonable to 26 audit reviews (62%). The remaining 2 audit reviews (5%) have been given an audit opinion of Limited Assurance, that is only limited assurance can be placed on the current systems of internal control. There were no 'No Assurance' opinions.

Taking into account the results of the internal audit reviews completed during 2025-26, the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2025-26 is: "Reasonable Assurance". Which means based on the work they have done, no significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment, and any weaknesses that have been identified are service specific.

9. Staff and Trade Union views - Social Partnership Reporting Duty 2025-26

Since 1 April 2024 the Council has been subject to the Social Partnership duty under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. This means that we have to explain how we have worked with staff and trade unions within the year, and any areas for improvement we have identified.

Relations with the recognised Trade Unions are extremely positive at present and their support is welcomed to ensure we are working in a true social partnership

Regular work

There is a monthly meeting with Trade Unions, where a range of officers present on a variety of topics, trade union colleagues views are tested and any issues discussed.

The Trade Unions involved in these regular meetings represent staff across the Council, this includes Unison, Unite, GMB, ASCL, NEU, NASUWT, NAHT and UCAC

In 2025-2026 we had 9 monthly meetings, that took place on 16 May, 11 July, 18 September, 17 October, 13 November and 12 December 2025, and 22 January, 27 February and 20 March 2026.

Throughout the year the Chief Executive, Corporate Director for Education, Early Years and Young People, Head of Learning, Corporate Director - Finance & Transformation and Cabinet Member for Resources have attended these meetings.

The Trade Unions also have daily direct access to senior HR officers and there is regular and open communication to work together. Trade Unions are involved regularly in workforce and other related meetings.

All policies, protocols and programmes are shared with the relevant Trade Unions at the earliest opportunity to include their views and thoughts.

Planning the year ahead

As part of the annual budget development process, the Corporate Director - Finance & Transformation attended the regular Trade Union meetings in November 2025 to provide an update on the process, the approach, assumptions made (and later the draft settlement from Welsh Government) and savings proposals.

Trade Unions played an integral part in the development of the Council's 5-year, high level Corporate Plan 2023-28. They were involved at 3 key points – firstly, developing the approach, then developing, setting and agreeing the wellbeing objectives and finally at the draft report stage. Trade Unions will also be engaged with in the development of the new Bridgend 2040 Transformation Strategy which will be presented to the in their September meeting.

Reviewing the year behind

Each year since its inception, Trade Unions have been involved in the development of the Council's Corporate self-assessment. As part of the development of the corporate self-assessment 2025/26 the corporate policy and performance manager, attended the regular Trade Union meeting in September 2026 and presented the key points and judgements from the draft self-assessment and took views, areas for development and any issues from the trade unions in attendance. The draft report itself was also circulated to Trade Unions for review and any additional comments or changes.

<u>Areas for improvement</u>

- Develop a more engaging / interactive process for involving Trade Union colleagues in the self-assessment process
- Involve Trade Union colleagues in the development and review of the 1-year Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.
- Providing training or awareness raising to employees / Trade Union representatives on how the Social Partnership Duty is being implemented
- Working to confirm updated Trade Union facilities time.

10. Our Strategic Equality Plan

Our new Strategic Equality Plan was developed and consulted on in early 2024 and outlined our six strategic equality objectives, which will shape how we plan, provide, and deliver our services to reflect the diversity of our communities.

We have developed a Strategic Equality Action Plan for 2024-2028 which was approved in July 2024 and has now been published on our website. Work towards achieving these actions will continue over the next 4-year lifespan of the SEP.

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 (which will now include the full equality impact assessments undertaken). In addition we will publish annually:

- 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.