

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2024

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2024

**“C103 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL-SELF ASSESSMENT 2023/24 (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –**

The Deputy Leader presented the report to seek Cabinet endorsement of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 as the basis for consultation.

The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report was attached to the report at Appendix A following a comprehensive process to look at progress made against the Annual Delivery Plan for the last year. The Deputy Leader looked forward to seeing further information following consultation and engagement with residents, noting that Members had assisted with development of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report. Consultees would also include all Scrutiny Committees and Governance and Audit Committee who had a statutory role in the process.

Councillor John referred to Page 85 of the Appendix which illustrated that paid use of leisure centre use had increased over the last year from 406,353 to 741,551 and praised staff in Leisure for their work over the last year.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 be endorsed as the basis for consultation as described in this report and Resolution (2).

(2) T H A T the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 be referred to the Governance and Audit Committee (23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024) and all Scrutiny Committees (10<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024) for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet (10<sup>th</sup> October 2024) for consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.

### Reasons for decisions

(1) To ensure that consultation was undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(2) To ensure all Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee (as per section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021) had oversight of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 and their views inform the Council's approach to meeting the performance requirements."

Attached as Appendix – Report to Cabinet: 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2024

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 05 September 2024</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual-Self Assessment 2023/24
Purpose of Report:	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 as the basis for consultation.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Both Council staff and elected Members play a key role in assessing whether the Council is achieving its Well-being Objectives, delivering value for money and enhancing citizen well-being. Consequently, all Members including Scrutiny Committees, the Governance and Audit Committee and Council staff are being consulted on the self-assessment findings as part of an extensive programme of internal and external engagement between July and October 2022. This is in line with requirements outlined in the performance requirements (Part 6 section 89-93) of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet. The Annual Self-Assessment findings will inform the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30 and the Annual Delivery Statement and associated plans for the period 2025/26.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report (<b>Appendix A</b>) draws on a wide range of information sources to assess the progress made by the Council in meeting its Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. The findings will enable the Council to identify how it can further enhance its internal processes and use of resources to improve and support achievement of its Annual Delivery Plan commitments and the Corporate Plan 2020-25 Well-being Objectives.</li> <li>The Annual Self-Assessment report is a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&amp;E), which requires the Council to keep its performance under review, consult on and then publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment once in respect of every financial year.</li> </ul>	

- The Council has evaluated a wide range of performance, engagement and other data insight from its Annual Performance Calendar of activities including the annual Directorate Self-Assessment and Peer Challenge process, the Annual Governance Statement and progress with delivery of the ADP commitments for 2023/24, which has enabled conclusions to be drawn on how well resources are being used to support achievement of the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This has informed the Council's main Annual Self-Assessment judgements below.
- For the period 2023/24, the Council judges that it has **made Good progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2020-25**. The Council has achieved 85% of 591 planned activities and associated targets set in what was an ambitious Annual Delivery Plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. The areas of underperformance identified from performance monitoring remain areas of focus in 2024/25 and are reflected in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans for the period.
- The draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24 provides a 'Reasonable Assurance' judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on the Council's governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness, which indicates that from a governance perspective our systems and processes are generally sound. An Internal Audit Opinion of either 'substantial or reasonable assurance' has also been given to 82% of risk-based reviews undertaken in-year testing the effectiveness of the internal control environment with 92% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. Additionally, feedback from the Council's Governance and Audit Committee and all Scrutiny Committees on last year's annual self-assessment report have been taken on board to improve how we monitor and report progress against the Annual Delivery Plan and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives across the Council and publicly.
- **An overall judgement of Good has been attributed to the Council's use of resources.** However, this judgement reflects an aggregation of individual directorate level judgements given to how well services have utilised their people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Annual Delivery Plan commitments. A judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to the Council's finance, commissioning and procurement to reflect the ongoing demand pressures in service areas and subsequent impact on the budget as well as the significant pressure on departments to deliver financial savings. This was considered appropriate as whilst returning a breakeven position on the 2023/24 budget, this was achieved after a drawdown on reserves to meet significant demand pressures in a number of service areas which is not a sustainable option for the long term. Similarly, a judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to engagement insights reflecting the need to embed existing pockets of good practice across all Council services and in recognition of commitments made to take forward the learning from the findings of the Life in the Vale Survey 2023.
- A key part of the Annual Self-Assessment is to sense-check the Council's performance judgements and the emerging findings in terms of areas for future focus to ensure that the Council remains outward focussed as an organisation, responding to the things that matter the most to Vale of Glamorgan citizens and partners. A programme of engagement activities commenced in July and is scheduled to conclude in September 2024, targeting the public, Council staff and other key stakeholders including a partners drop-in event, an online staff event, attendance at a series of

community public events and various social media communications. The Draft Self-Assessment report including a public summary will also be widely circulated with a request for feedback.

- As part of the engagement work, elected Members via Scrutiny Committees will be consulted on the draft report with their views informing the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report. Governance and Audit Committee have a specific role set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in contributing to the Annual Self-Assessment report and a draft report must be provided to the Committee to review with the Council responding to any recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions that it intends to take.
- The findings from the consultation work will be reflected within the final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report which will be subject to further consideration by Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet prior to being presented for endorsement by Full Council in December.
- This year's the Self-Assessment findings (2023/24) will also inform the Council's first Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), an independent assessment of the Council's improvement journey required under the LG&E Act, to be undertaken once during an electoral cycle. This is scheduled to take place in the late autumn of 2024 (Cabinet minute refers: C26, Annual Performance Calendar 2024/25 appended as background papers to the report) enabling the Council to build on its own self-assessment with both findings informing the development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30.
- The self-assessment findings are informed by data, performance and engagement insights covering the period 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2024, enabling the Council to reflect on the most up to date position including any emerging challenges, risks and areas for improvement, which will inform the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30 and associated Plans for 2025/26.
- Cabinet are asked to review and endorse the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 appended at **Appendix A** as the basis for consultation.
- In addition, Cabinet are asked to refer the report to the Governance and Audit Committee and all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter approved by Full Council.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet reviews and endorses the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 as the basis for consultation as described in this report and Recommendation (2).
2. That Cabinet refers the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 to the Governance and Audit Committee (23rd September 2024) and all Scrutiny Committees (9th-18th September 2024) for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet (10th October 2024) for their consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To ensure that consultation is undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
2. To ensure all Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee (as per section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021) have oversight of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 and their views inform the Council's approach to meeting the performance requirements.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Self-assessments form a core part of statutory local government audit, regulatory and inspection processes in Wales. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E), requires the Council to keep performance under review, consult and report on its performance through self-assessment, and arrange and respond to a panel performance assessment once in every electoral cycle.
- 1.2 Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the Council's current approach to decision making to secure improvement for the future. Consequently, it needs to be embedded across the organisation to help the Council continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce.
- 1.3 In developing its performance arrangements for the period, the Council has considered the requirements of the LG&E Act and taken action to strengthen self-assessment opportunities by building in performance challenge throughout the year, internally and externally as well as developing its internal 'insight' function. This draws together performance, data and customer perception information (from the annual consultation calendar) throughout the year alongside governance related insights (the internal and external audit work programme) to inform decisions. The Council has also reviewed its approach informed by the learning and identified best practice from colleagues across Wales in the second year of meeting the new performance requirements. The

Council will do so each year to ensure its approach continues to evolve to reflect identified best practice.

- 1.4 Embedding this self-reflective approach as part of performance management and governance arrangements has enabled the Council to build a robust evidence base for its annual self-assessment conclusions and will help to drive continuous improvement through enhanced performance management arrangements.
- 1.5 The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment (**Appendix A**) is a position statement on the Council's performance over the past year in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan priorities as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. It is intended to provide an honest and balanced account of the Council's achievements and challenges in relation to delivering Corporate Plan commitments and identifies areas where further progress is required. The information contained in the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report will be used to inform the development of the next iteration of the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-30 and associated plans for 2025/26.

## 2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The Annual Self-Assessment report is a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('the Act').
- 2.2 Under the Act, the mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to consult and publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year.
- 2.3 In line with this requirement, the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Self-Assessment findings (**Appendix A**) draw on a number of information sources to assess progress against the Council's Well-being Objectives in order to identify how the Council can further enhance its internal processes and use of resources to support achievement of the Annual Delivery Plan commitments and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. These include:
  - quarterly/annual performance and risk review reports associated with the key steps (actions) and performance metrics aligned to Annual Delivery Plan and Well-being Objectives for 2023/24 as reported periodically to Members via Committees and Cabinet;
  - findings from the Internal Audit and Risk Work programme (Annual Internal Audit Report) as reported to Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet;
  - key insights from the Annual Governance Statement and Internal Audit Opinion 2023/24 as reported to Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet;
  - findings from the work of regulators and progress with the Council's regulatory 'insight' tracker, which reviews and monitors progress with implementing our regulatory recommendations as reported to Members via Committees and Cabinet;
  - Annual Directorate level Self-Assessments 2023/24;
  - overview of engagement findings across Council services over the past year;

- staff engagement findings;
  - assessments of organisational financial resilience and compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code reported to Governance & Audit Committee and Cabinet.
  - annual reports for the period on Council services including Complaints and Compliments, Equalities, Absence and Welsh Language as reported to Members via Committees and Cabinet;
- 2.4** Additionally, completion of ‘peer challenged’ Directorate Self-Assessments in respect of the corporate enablers [people, finance (including procurement and commissioning), assets (physical and digital), performance and risk management, and insight and engagement] has enabled the five service directorates to reflect on overall progress and identify what they are doing well, the outcomes being achieved and the areas for improvement and future focus.
- 2.5** Reviewing this information has assisted the Council in developing a balanced picture of its improvement journey over the past year and has enabled the identification of areas for improvement which will inform the development of the next Corporate Plan 2025-30 and the associated delivery plans for 2025/26.
- 2.6** The Draft Annual Self-Assessment report is structured around the following main sections:
- Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive.
  - An overview of the work undertaken to meet the three critical challenges the Council is working on.
  - How the Self-Assessment process fits within the overall corporate performance framework and how it is constructed.
  - A summary of progress against last year’s areas of focus.
  - Performance against the Annual Delivery Plan.
  - Detailed performance information for each of the four well-being objectives.
  - A summary of the year in numbers.
  - An overview of engagement, including insights from the work of the Member Champions, complaints and compliments, collaborative working, key Council decisions and engagement on the judgements and emerging findings from the Annual Self-Assessment.
  - An analysis of the Council’s use of resources and governance.
- 2.7** The detailed analysis by each of the four Well-being Objectives considers the commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan for 2023/24. For each, the report considers the overall performance of actions and measures for that objective and provides a RAG status. Further detail is then provided for each commitment in terms of its delivery. In response to feedback from elected Members, detailed information is provided within each of these sections of the many and varied engagement and consultation exercises that have been conducted during the year. This information, alongside the relevant findings from regulators enables us to identify key challenges and the areas of future focus that are required to meet them.
- 2.8** In response to elected Members’ feedback, the engagement section has been strengthened and now incorporates an overview of key Council decisions taken



throughout the year, the work of the Member Champions and collaborative working. The Council's Annual Self-Assessment judgements are then reconsidered within the context of engagement undertaken to sense check the Annual Self-Assessment findings in an overall conclusion section. This section will be updated in September following conclusion of the engagement work. A brief summary of the learning throughout the 2023/24 self-assessment process is also included.

- 2.9** Evaluation of the wide range of performance, engagement and other data insights referred to previously have informed the Council's three main Annual Self-Assessment judgements.
- 2.10** For the period 2023/24, the **Council judges that it has made Good progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2020-25.** The Council has achieved 85% of 591 planned activities and associated targets set in what was an ambitious Annual Delivery Plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. The areas of underperformance identified from performance monitoring remain areas of focus in 2024/25 and are reflected in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans for the period.
- 2.11** The **draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24 provides a 'Reasonable Assurance' judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on the Council's governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness, which indicates that from a governance perspective our systems and processes are generally sound.** An Internal Audit Opinion of either 'substantial or reasonable assurance' has been given to 82% of risk-based reviews undertaken in-year, testing the effectiveness of the internal control environment with 92% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. Additionally, feedback from the Council's Governance and Audit Committee and all Scrutiny Committees on last year's annual self-assessment report has been taken on board to improve how we monitor and report progress against the Annual Delivery Plan and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives across the Council and publicly. This has included liaison via both formal Committee meetings and informal briefing/workshop sessions.
- 2.12** **An overall judgement of Good has been attributed to the Council's use of resources.** However, this judgement reflects an aggregation of individual directorate level judgements given to how well services have utilised their people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Annual Delivery Plan commitments. A judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to the Council's finance, commissioning and procurement to reflect the ongoing demand pressures in service areas and subsequent impact on the budget as well as the significant pressure on departments to deliver financial savings. Whilst returning a breakeven position on the 2023/24 budget, this was achieved after a drawdown on reserves to meet significant demand pressures in a number of service areas which is not a sustainable option for the long term. Similarly, a judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to engagement insights reflecting the need to embed existing pockets of good practice across all Council services and in recognition of commitments made to take forward the learning from the findings of the Life in the Vale Survey 2023.

- 2.13** A key part of the Annual Self-Assessment is to sense-check the Council’s performance judgements and the emerging findings in terms of areas for future focus to ensure that the Council remains outward focussed as an organisation, responding to the things that matter the most to Vale of Glamorgan citizens and partners. A programme of engagement activities commenced in July and is scheduled to conclude in September 2024, targeting the public, Council staff and other key stakeholders including a partners drop-in event, an online staff event, attendance at a series of community public events and various social media communications. The Draft Self-Assessment report including a public summary will also be widely circulated with a request for feedback. The findings of this engagement work will be reflected within the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report which will be subject to further scrutiny by the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet prior to being presented for endorsement by Full Council in December.
- 2.14** As part of the engagement work, all elected Members will be consulted on the draft report with their views informing the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report. Governance and Audit Committee have a specific role in contributing to the Annual Self-Assessment report under the Act and a draft must be provided to the Committee to review with the Council responding to any recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions that it intends to take.
- 2.15** Prior to consideration via the democratic process, all elected Members including Members of all Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee were invited to join an online event in July to feedback on the draft Annual Self-Assessment judgements and emerging areas for future focus. The event also briefed Members on how the emerging findings would help to shape the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30.
- 2.16** Outlined below is the indicative timetable for consulting on and approving the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24. Following engagement with all stakeholders, the report’s findings will be revised before it is presented for further challenge by Governance & Audit Committee. The Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report will then be presented to Cabinet in November and then to Full Council in December for approval, prior to publication.

<b>Task/Audience</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
Draft Annual Self-Assessment Report considered by Cabinet with referral to all Scrutiny Committees and Governance and Audit Committee. (Pre-consultation draft)	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
Draft Annual Self-Assessment Report considered by all Scrutiny Committees (consultation draft)	9 <sup>th</sup> September – 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
Draft Annual Self-Assessment Report considered by Governance and Audit Committee (consultation draft)	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2024
Final Draft Self-Assessment Report (post consultation) presented to Cabinet for approval with reference to Governance and Audit Committee for consideration and approval.	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
Final Draft Self-Assessment Report considered by Governance and Audit Committee for approval.	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2024

	(If no further comments from G&AC then reference to Full Council for approval (2 <sup>nd</sup> December)
Final Draft Self-Assessment Report presented to Cabinet for approval with reference to Full Council for approval. (Ref from G&AC)	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Annual Self-Assessment Report considered by Full Council - to include agreement of any recommendations made by the Governance and Audit Committee and proposed actions to be taken in response.	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2024
Annual Self-Assessment findings inform the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30 and the Annual Delivery Statement and associated Plans for 2025/26.	October – December March 2024

- 2.17** The self-assessment findings have and will be informed by data, performance and engagement insights covering the period 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2024, enabling the Council to reflect on the most up to date position including any emerging challenges, risks and areas for improvement, which will inform the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30 and associated delivery plans for 2025/26.
- 2.18** This year’s Self-Assessment findings (2023/24) will also inform the Council’s first Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), an independent assessment of the Council’s improvement journey required under the LG&E, to be undertaken once during an electoral cycle. This is scheduled to take place in the late autumn of 2024 (Cabinet minute refers: C26, Annual Performance Calendar 2024/25 appended as background papers to the report) enabling the Council to build on its own self-assessment with both findings informing the development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30.
- 2.19** Cabinet is asked to review and endorse the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2023/24 appended at **Appendix A** as the basis for consultation.
- 2.20** In addition, Cabinet is asked to refer the report to the Governance and Audit Committee and all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration as part of a programme of engagement as outlined in this report, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to the Final Annual Self-Assessment report being considered Governance and Audit Committee and approved by Full Council.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Performance management and self-assessment is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of the Council’s Well-being Objectives and associated annual commitments in its Corporate and Annual Delivery Plan. The Council’s Annual Performance Calendar and associated performance management and self-assessment processes are our key means of demonstrating how we are meeting the new performance requirements whilst contributing to the national well-being goals.

- 3.2** The Council's key plans and performance reports associated with the delivery of our Well-being Objectives have been structured around the WBFG Act's sustainable development principle to enable us to better evidence our contribution to the national goals.
- 3.3** The five ways of working are a key consideration in our corporate Performance Management Framework ensuring that we continue to focus on working differently and in an inclusive way to challenge why, what and how we respond to our key performance challenges. The five ways of working are a consideration within the Directorate Self-Assessments which form part of the evidence base for the production of the Council's Draft Annual Self-Assessment report.

#### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** There are no direct climate change and nature related implications associated with this report. The Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan incorporate our key commitments which aim to have a positive impact on climate change and nature overall.
- 4.2** The self-assessment report also outlines our achievements from the past year and the key challenges, risks and opportunities for future years in relation to the climate and nature emergencies. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in associated annual plans and the corporate risk register for the coming year.
- 4.3** The 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan reflects the Annual Self-Assessment findings from 2022/23, including any related climate and nature considerations.

#### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

##### **Financial**

- 5.1** The priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives have resources committed to their achievement (via the MediumTerm Financial Plan and the annual budget review process) or the likely prospect of resources being made available in the period of the plan.
- 5.2** Corporate Health aspects of Service Plans (how we are using our resources to achieve our well-being objectives), quarterly performance monitoring and annual reviews of performance and governance arrangements provide Members with an overview of the way in which Council resources (people, finance, assets, engagement and insight) are used to support delivery of our well-being objectives. These considerations have been extensively examined as part of the Directorate Self-Assessment process.

##### **Employment**

- 5.3** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report although the self-assessment findings identify the key employment challenges, risks and opportunities for future years both within the Council and externally across the Vale. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in relevant plans for 2025/26.

## **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.4** Self-assessment is a statutory duty under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, along with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Further, each year the Council must publish an annual report showing the progress it has made in meeting its Well-being Objectives.
- 5.5** The self-assessment findings identify the key challenges, risks and opportunities for future years and many of these will have equality implications. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in the Annual Statement and associated plans for 2025/26. These actions will have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics, in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Also under this Act (section 1), due consideration will be given to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

## **6. Background Papers**

Cabinet Report: [Local Government & Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

Cabinet Report: [Statutory Guidance: Part 6, Chapter 1, Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

[Cabinet Report: Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar](#)

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

WORKING TOGETHER  
FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

# ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT 2023-2024

VALE of GLAMORGAN



BRO MORGANNWG

## 1.0 Executive Leader & Chief Executive Introduction

### Cllr. Lis Burnett, Executive Leader of the Council and Rob Thomas, Chief Executive

The Annual Self-Assessment Report considers the Vale of Glamorgan Council's performance in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24. These have been informed by Vale of Glamorgan residents and key partners ensuring that we have prioritised the services that matter to residents, especially the most vulnerable members of our community. The report also demonstrates the Council's performance in the use of resources and ensuring that its governance arrangements remain robust. Whilst the requirement is to provide a retrospective evaluation of the past year's performance, this report extends the timeframe, including within the report information covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 enabling the Council to reflect upon the most up to date position including emerging challenges, risks and areas for future focus in order to inform its improvement plans.



The Council's self-assessment comprises three main judgements: an Annual Delivery Plan performance assessment, an assessment of the Council's use of resources (which includes its people, assets, finance and procurement, performance and risk and engagement insights) and an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal controls through an Annual Governance Statement. Throughout the year we have evaluated a wide range of performance and other data insights from the annual planning and performance framework which has enabled informed conclusions to be drawn at end of year on how well the Council's resources and governance arrangements have supported achievement of the commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24.

For the period 2023/24, the Council judges that **Good progress has been made in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2020-25**. We have achieved 85% of 591 planned activities and associated targets set in what was an ambitious Annual Delivery Plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. The areas of underperformance identified from performance monitoring remain areas of focus in 2024/25 and are reflected in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans for the period.



The **draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24 provides a 'Reasonable Assurance' judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on the Council's governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness, which indicates that from a governance perspective the Council's systems and processes are generally sound**. An Internal Audit Opinion of either 'substantial or reasonable assurance' has also been given to 82% of risk-based reviews undertaken in-year testing the effectiveness of the internal control environment with 92% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. However, we acknowledge that further actions are needed to strengthen existing arrangements to ensure the Council's governance arrangements

continue to improve to support the delivery of its services and ensure that all key stakeholders are involved in decision making. This work is being taken forward through the Council's Internal Audit Annual Work Plan, the Annual Performance Calendar of activities, Effective Scrutiny Principles Action Plan and the Public Participation Strategy.

**The Council has attributed an overall judgement of Good in relation to its use of resources**. However, this judgement reflects an aggregation of individual directorate level judgements on how well services have utilised their people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Annual Delivery Plan commitments. A judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to the Council's finance, commissioning and procurement to reflect the ongoing demand pressures in service areas and subsequent

impact on the budget as well as significant pressures on departments to deliver financial savings. Whilst returning a breakeven position on the 2023/24 budget, this was achieved after a drawdown on reserves to meet significant demand pressures in a number of service areas which is not a sustainable option for the long term. Similarly, a judgement of 'Fair' was attributed to our use of engagement insights reflecting the need to embed existing pockets of good practice across all Council services and the Council's commitment to take forward the learning from the findings of the Life in the Vale Survey 2023. These challenges are key considerations informing the development of a new Reshaping Programme for the Council.

An annual programme of service engagement insight has informed the Annual Self-Assessment performance judgements, as well as the emerging findings from more recent engagement activities undertaken to sense-check our judgements and the emerging areas for future focus, which were broadly supportive. This will ensure that we remain outward focussed as an organisation, responding to the things that matter the most to our citizens and partners. Consequently, we are assured that on balance the Council's performance judgements are reflective of its progress to date, contributing to achieving the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

It has been another challenging yet productive year for the Council. The economic context continues to be difficult with the global economy impacted by geopolitical events, high inflation rates during the period of this assessment and weak economic growth. The cost-of-living crisis continues to affect our most deprived communities, as we continually look for new ways to do 'more with less' in the context of more restrictive government spending.

The year has also brought additional challenges with the continuing war in Ukraine and unrest and warfare in Israel and Gaza. In the Vale of Glamorgan, we pride ourselves on the work we do to help new arrivals integrate into our communities and are committed to becoming a County of Sanctuary. Between April 2023 and March 2024, we supported 329 refugees and asylum seekers to resettle into our community.

As a Council, we continue to invest in the things that will help residents live healthy, happy and fulfilled lives, including: two new children's residential homes to care for our young people within our community; completed our fourth SMART house and enhanced our telecare offer which attracted 544 new customers contributing to supporting independent living of disabled and older residents and enhancing their well-being; construction is commencing on a new Extra Care Scheme in Penarth; increased the choice available to vulnerable adult residents to support and improve their well-being through the 'Your Choice' initiative with nearly 50% of care packages being provided under the scheme; reduced the time taken to place domiciliary care packages from 22 days to 3 days on average despite significant demands on this service; our Vale Integrated Falls Service has now been successfully operating for a year, reducing attendances to Accident & Emergency with an estimated saving of £750K to the Health Board; achieved Age Friendly Status, the fourth local authority in Wales to do so. Despite the positive progress, there continues to be significant demand for social care services, with the increase reflected both in demand and complexity of need which remains challenging in the context of limited finances and sustained staffing challenges.

A collaborative approach involving nearly 270 partners across all sectors focused on tackling inequality has significantly enhanced opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in leisure, play and sports activities to improve their health and well-being. Achievements include: our contract with Legacy Leisure for delivery of leisure services remains the only similar arrangement in Wales that continues to realise an income for the Council; user numbers at our leisure centres (741,500) exceeded pre-covid levels and extensive improvement works have been undertaken at most centres, which has improved the customer experience; increased participations in key programmes with over 67,500 participations in the Active Young People and Active Schools programmes with activities delivered in response to pupil and young people led engagement; 31 local clubs benefitted from over £256K of Be Active grant funding; over 5,500 residents participated in our pilot Active Communities programme via our leisure centres; there was good uptake on a wide range of ageing well activities by residents including Golden pass, and musculoskeletal health hubs; over 3,500 people took up a



free 3 day leisure pass to access our leisure centres and try out activities and our facilities as part of an ongoing offer to provide affordable opportunities to participate in leisure and sports activities; delivered enhanced community facilities and public art for residents and visitors using S106 contributions including outdoor fitness and play areas and community gardens and public murals. The new Central South Sports Partnership presents the Council with opportunities to build on the good work to date in this area by taking advantage of potential synergies afforded through the new partnership arrangements. However, challenges remain in further enhancing access to leisure, public arts and events, particularly for under-represented groups on a cost neutral basis.

We continue to promote a placemaking approach in our communities and work is progressing at pace in developing placemaking plans for our four main towns. Our focus on place based partnerships will help to broaden participation in governance and plans for the regeneration of our communities. During the year we successfully secured approval for £42M in Levelling up and Shared Prosperity funding to support regeneration in Vale of Glamorgan communities including £20M of UK government funding over 10 years towards regeneration of the Barry Waterfront; 62 projects have also benefitted from nearly £8.7M of Shared Prosperity funding to revitalise our town centres, rural and urban areas, support our net zero ambitions and deliver community and place-based culture, arts and heritage events; supported community led projects through nearly £153K of Strong Communities Fund, which has benefitted communities. We will now need to strengthen our project management capacity and establish good governance systems and structures to ensure that the new regeneration schemes deliver on their commitment to create social, environmental and economic benefit for Vale of Glamorgan residents.

In line with our commitment to support people of all ages to learn and achieve their full potential, our Local Education Service has worked collaboratively to ensure that our early years settings, schools, alternative educators and post-16 education providers have focused on the task of continual improvement to the benefit of all learners. Key achievements during the year include: the Council's Local Authority Education Services and the Youth Service both achieved very positive Estyn inspections; established a new Vale Skills coalition in partnership with Cardiff and Vale College along with the Vale Employer pledge to support skills development and employment opportunities for the future; the seven primary schools inspected by Estyn during the year received positive outcomes and no follow-up action; the Pencoedtre Learning Community model continues to grow in strength and is supporting improved outcomes for learners through a community focused approach; Cowbridge primary, Derw Newydd and Ysgol Sant Baruc have been completed as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, providing modern learning environments whilst also delivering significant community benefits. Overall, academic outcomes continue to improve and whilst attendance outcomes are strengthening they are yet to regain the levels seen from before the pandemic. Additionally, disadvantaged learner outcomes remain an area for development and there is a need to close the gap in outcomes between them and their peers. Significant challenges remain in meeting the needs of all learners with additional learning needs and social, emotional and mental health needs with growth in these groups continuing to increase exponentially. Financial resilience of schools is also an ongoing challenge with budgets under significant pressure.

We remain determined to play our part in the global fight against climate change and this is currently a critical organisational challenge, the Council has remained committed to addressing environmental issues and promoting climate action. Through our Project Zero Challenge Plan we have made positive progress in various areas, including: a new commercial recycling service to sustainably reduce waste in the private sector; a new reuse shop in Barry; new services to increase participation in areas with poor recycling rates; securing arrangements for the future management of our household waste recycling centres; agreement of a Local Area Energy Plan which sets out the changes required for the Council to transition to a zero-carbon local energy system by 2050; implementing a decarbonisation framework in all our schools and developing an electric vehicle charging network to provide convenient and affordable charging in urban areas with limited off street

parking to list a few. Challenges however remain in keeping the current momentum of progress going given ongoing financial pressures and the challenges associated with decarbonising the supply chain.

Building on the substantial progress to date, we have continued to collaborate with partners across all sectors ensuring a coordinated and more holistic response to tackling poverty and alleviating the pressures felt by our residents in relation to the current cost-of-living crisis. This remains a critical organisational challenge. The wide range of activities in place to support residents continue to be informed by community and other data insights, enabling us to target both the wider Vale community and areas of acute deprivation. In line with emerging insight, support has focussed on skills, employment, housing, access to affordable food, and energy advice across the Vale. This work continues to be supported by a cost of living reserve established in the Council's budget since 2022/23. However, the ongoing demand for these services poses a challenge for future council budgets.

We continue to intervene before the point of crisis to prevent homelessness and where residents present as homeless our rapid rehousing plan has played a key role in providing support. During the year: we successfully implemented a triage approach at first contact to maximise opportunities for preventing homelessness which reduced the average waiting time from 24 days to 6 days contributing to more positive outcomes for tenants; prevented 50% of people presenting as threatened with homelessness from losing their tenancy through the use of discretionary homelessness prevention funding (£216.4K); worked with private landlords to secure exclusive nomination rights to their properties increasing the number of properties brought on board by 36; 176 people successfully moved on from hotel accommodation into more permanent accommodation; established an in-house leasing scheme to increase the supply of temporary accommodation, which has secured access to over 20 units of accommodation; supported 45 young people at risk of homelessness through early intervention. Looking ahead, significant challenges remain in leading and supporting the delivery of new homes across the Vale of Glamorgan to respond to growing housing and homelessness pressures.

Whilst the Council's overall financial health provides a firm platform upon which to meet the financial challenges ahead, we recognise that balancing the books will be harder than ever in future and we need to significantly accelerate work that enables us to deliver our priorities in a way that is financially sustainable and meets the needs of Vale of Glamorgan residents. Key pieces of work have commenced this year to inform our future plans, including the next phase of the Council's transformation programme that will deliver a leaner, more efficient organisation, characterised by modern practices, sustainable service delivery and a skilled and motivated workforce, and most importantly ensuring that our communities, residents and customers are at the heart of our decisions. Alongside other data and insight, the Life in the Vale survey undertaken during the year has provided useful information that is helping to shaping a community focused approach to transformation that will support the delivery of valued and sustainable local services.

The above achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our colleagues, partners and volunteers who have remained flexible and agile, working together to respond to our challenges whilst protecting our most vulnerable citizens and supporting our communities. The Council continues to operate in an extremely challenging environment, with increasing demands being made of an already stretched workforce and this looks to continue for years to come as we continue to navigate significant budget pressures. Consequently, staff well-being remains a priority as we recognise the significant demands of work as well as personal challenges being felt by everyone.

We have big ambitions for the Vale of Glamorgan and believe that these are achievable if we work together as a community to co-produce sustainable solutions that make the most of our local community assets. This is an area of particular focus in the next phase of the Council's Reshaping programme.

By working together we have achieved much in 2023/24. We recognise and celebrate our progress, but also appreciate that there is much more to do, and we will continue on this journey together with determination and energy to deliver our vision of **strong communities with a bright future** for all.

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## 3.0 Our Critical Challenges

Significant challenges continue to be faced by local government as we continue to be impacted by ongoing challenges persisting from the cost of living crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the climate and nature emergencies. Many of these challenges have been compounded by the considerable financial pressure the Council, like many others, is facing. Core funding from Welsh Government continues to fall below that needed to sustain all services at their current level, alongside continued increases in demand and complexity for our services these elements have contributed to the significant financial challenges we face at a time where the cost of provision continues to increase.

Despite these challenges and limited resources we continue to provide vital services to support our communities, and our most vulnerable residents. Our experience over the previous year working under similar pressure and our comprehensive approach to risk management has ensured we understand, monitor and proactively plan how we operate to ensure the services we provide remain at high quality, with some being recognised as award winning. Working to ensure we maintain this quality has presented opportunities to work in new ways, harnessing the skills across our workforce and new digital opportunities to make services more accessible and more sustainable.

During 2023/24 we identified three critical challenges that shaped much of our activity throughout the year which can be seen within many of the actions identified in our Annual Delivery Plan for 2023/24. These challenges remained the same as those identified in 2022/23 and will continue into 2024/25 as they remain relevant and are supported by findings from the Let's Talk 2023 survey.

**Cost of Living Crisis:** The cost of living crisis continues to put financial pressure on our communities. This year food and energy prices continued to rise and, whilst inflation rate has since reduced, in March 2023 food and non-alcoholic beverage inflation in the UK was the highest annual rate seen for over 45 years at 19.2%. Energy bills continue to worry households with 4 in 10 adults in Great Britain (41%) who pay energy bills reporting it was very or somewhat difficult to afford them in January 2024. At a local level, the results of the Let's Talk 2023 residents survey show that the pressure this is putting on households remains a concern for our residents within the Vale of Glamorgan. It is clear that whilst a range of support has been developed to reduce the financial strain and interconnected struggles faced by communities, more needs to be done. Our most vulnerable households and deprived communities continue to be impacted hardest. Work to enhance existing support with partners including schools, registered social landlords, and community and third sector organisations can be seen in our Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 and is also being taken forward through the Public Services Board's (PSB) [Well-being Plan](#). Progress on work regarding the cost of living and poverty is reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny including the use of the cost of living reserve.

**Climate Emergency (Project Zero):** In 2019 the Vale of Glamorgan Council declared a climate emergency and in 2021 we also declared a nature emergency. Although we continue to work to achieve our commitment on climate change set out in Project Zero and work with the community and our partners including the Local Nature Partnership we recognise there is more than can be done. In March 2023 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the [Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report](#) highlighting that humans are responsible for all global heating over the past 200 years leading to a current temperature rise of 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. This increase has led to more frequent and hazardous weather events. The report showed the 1.5°C limit is still achievable but requires critical action by everyone at all levels. Progress locally has been made in 2023/24 in a range of areas including waste management, which saw the successful roll out the last stage of household segregated recycling and implementing and new commercial service. Others include investing in active travel infrastructure and new ways of decarbonising assets. Further work to address this challenge and influence and encourage others to reduce their emissions and to think more about the impact of their activities on our natural resources can be seen in our Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25. Progress reports on Project Zero are reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny twice a year including the use of the Project Zero reserve.

**Organisational Resilience:** The Council's financial position continues to be a significant challenge in the current climate where there is a continuing increase in demand for services, increased complexity in those who need our support the most, and high costs of service delivery. Like many, our financial challenges are impacted by elements outside of our control such as the increasing cost pressures associated with inflation affecting the rising cost of construction materials, energy costs and staff wages. The Council's [budget for 2023/24](#) shows the main source of income is a settlement from Welsh Government, which, including a contribution from pooled business rates provides approx. 69% of the £294 million budget available to deliver all services. The other 31% of the Council's budget comes from Council Tax. In order to continue to protect schools and ensuring our most vulnerable residents continued to receive the care and support they need an increase in Council Tax and charges to some non-essential services were needed to meet a £9.7 million financial shortfall in the budget for next year. This position is compounded by the need to address a number of cost pressures including meeting the needs of an increasingly ageing population and a growing number of children and young people with mental well-being and complex additional learning needs as well as increasing numbers of children who need to be looked after. Work to ensure we attract and retain a highly skilled workforce to deliver the wide range of services needed is ongoing through the Council's [People Strategy](#). Work to further utilise and rationalise our assets and maximise the positive impact new technologies can have on service delivery and accessibility through the Digital Strategy is also a key focus of activity. Further work to address this challenge across the organisation whilst continuing to deliver high quality services and support the needs of our workforce can be seen in our Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25.

## 4.0 Our Self-Assessment Report

### How it all fits together

Our [Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives](#) set out the outcomes the Council wants to achieve which reflect the administration’s political priorities, our shared aspirations and commitments with public service partners (e.g. the Public Services Board’s Well-being Plan and the Cardiff & Vale Area Plan) and Vale citizens, and provide a framework for improving well-being in the Vale of Glamorgan over the medium term.

Our Well-being Objectives for 2023/24 were:

- To work with and for our communities.
- To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.
- To support people at home and in their community.
- To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.

Our [Annual Delivery Plan](#) published each Spring, sets out the steps we will take in-year to deliver on our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and achieve our vision of **Strong Communities with a Bright Future**.

These steps are translated into actions through an integrated planning process and detailed in Service, Team Plans and staff appraisals (#itsaboutme) across the Council and form the basis for our annual corporate framework of activities, performance measures and service, team and individual improvement targets. Progress against our ADP commitments and our Well-being objectives is reflected in quarterly performance monitoring reports that are subject to internal challenge via the Strategic Leadership Team and elected members through Scrutiny Committees, Governance & Audit Committee and Cabinet. Monitoring of progress against these steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required.

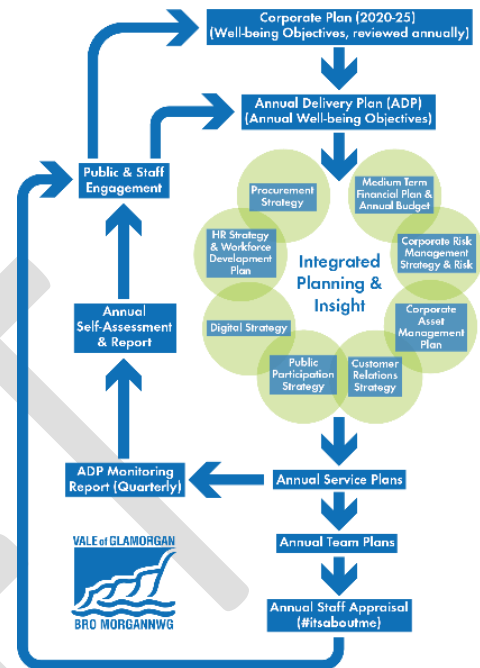
The Annual Self-Assessment Report provides an end of year summary of the progress made in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments aligned to our four Well-being Objectives.

It is important that our approach to self-assessment continues to evolve to drive improvement as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. To enhance our internal challenge, the Strategic Leadership Team regularly considers performance updates on the Council’s Annual Performance Calendar of activities which enables them to challenge approaches and make recommendations for improvement. An annual programme of Elected members workshops aligned to the Calendar has extended the breadth of member participation and has enabled them to shape our approach and the information that they received to enable them to undertake their critical friend role effectively.

### How have we assessed our performance?

Our existing annual performance management and governance arrangements are our key means of meeting our performance duties. Our approach to self-assessment is integrated within these arrangements which provide opportunities throughout the year for internal and external performance challenge thus enabling us to review at any point in time, how well we are achieving our Well-being Objectives. Alongside these arrangements, we are also continuing to develop our internal insight which draws together performance, risk,

### How it all fits together



data and public engagement information throughout the year alongside governance related insights from internal and external audit work programme. This has helped provide a robust evidence base for the annual self-assessment conclusions. Elected members have influenced the format, content and presentation of this information throughout the year during a mix of informal and formal sessions, including briefings and Committee meetings.

A wide variety of Information sources have helped to inform our self-assessment judgements and areas for future focus. These can be found [here](#):

## **Context of our judgements**

Informed by the evidence gathered, we have assessed our progress using the scales below. It is important that our judgements are not considered in isolation as they affect each other and need to be considered in an integrated way. A summary of how we reach our judgments can be found in the [Context of Our Judgment document](#).

### [Annual Delivery Plan](#)

In measuring how we are doing in delivering our 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan commitments, we consider the following to come to a judgement:

- evidence in relation to delivery of planned activities;
- performance in relation to a suite of performance indicators and associated improvement targets;
- engagement and consultation feedback from key stakeholders;
- Views of our regulators and auditors.

### **Use of Resources:** [Assessment of Corporate Enablers](#)

In measuring how well we are using our resources, we consider the following to come to a judgement:

- People
- Assets (Physical and Digital)
- Finance (including procurement and commissioning)
- Engagement and insight
- Performance management
- Risk management

### [Governance](#)

In measuring how well we are run (governance), alongside the above, we also consider the following to come to a judgement:

- Annual Governance Statement, based on CIPFA's, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' principles
- Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion on the Council's control environment in relation to governance, risk management and internal Control
- Internal Audit & Assurance Work Programme findings
- Audit Work Programme findings (including assurance work the financial systems and the wider control environment)

### **Review of our Well-being Objectives**



Each year Vale citizens, Council staff, elected members and other key partners help to shape the steps we will take to achieve our Well-being Objectives through our Annual Delivery Plan commitments. Through this process they are asked to confirm the relevance of our Well-being Objectives. In addition, annually, through our integrated planning and performance management arrangements, we continually review the relevance of our Well-being Objectives, focusing on the intended outcomes, achievements, and challenges. As part of the consultation on the draft 2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan in total 94 responses were received to the public consultation survey. In response to the question on whether the correct Objectives have been identified to deliver the Council's vision, 72.8% of respondents answered 'Yes.' This is in line with the response to the draft 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan where 79.1% of the 68 total respondents to the survey agreed that these were the right objectives. Through this work in 2023/24 we are assured that our Well-being Objectives are appropriate and continue to remain relevant to the priorities outlined in the Public Services Board's (PSB) Well-being Plan 2023-2028 and will continue to complement the work of the PSB going forward.

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## 5.0 Our Progress against last year's Areas of Focus

In our 2022/23 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that we wished to focus on in the 2023/24 year. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken, and the next steps.

- Progressed work to deliver the [People Strategy](#) and its three workstreams (Redesigning for responsiveness, Driving employee experiences, and Striving for high performance). This work has supported Council services with strategic workforce planning and recruitment campaigns to help address recruitment and retention challenges. HR dashboards have been established to highlight key metrics, including information from an equalities perspective.
- New approaches to applications and more creative ways of advertising employment opportunities have been trialled to help attract younger and more diverse applicants. The positive working relationships with CELT+ to provide opportunities via the QuickStart Scheme has resulted in 12 young adults currently undertaking placements within the Council as of March 2024.
- The complaints and compliments process has been reviewed to ensure that it is easy and efficient to use and maximise the quality of data captured. This has helped identify a number of changes that will be made in June 2024 to improve the process.
- The Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey, developed in partnership with Data Cymru, received over 4,000 responses and has provided the Council with a very robust source of insight on public perceptions. This will be used to inform a wide range of projects and is the largest exercise of its type to be conducted to date by the Council.
- The Elected Member Champions Group continues to develop and support elected members in acting as advocates for key communities in the Vale, ensuring the voice, needs and experiences of particular communities are heard in decision making. Examples of work undertaken by our Champions include the Older People's Champion co-hosting an Age Friendly Vale consultation workshop with the Leader and the Council's Anti-poverty Champion speaking at a stakeholder event to develop a Food Strategy for the Vale.
- Created solutions to service issues utilising digital methods, examples include changes in garden waste, commercial waste and cost of living grant applications.
- Launched a staff Volunteering Strategy to allow staff to volunteer for 1 day a year to support local community groups and initiatives within the Vale of Glamorgan helping to support our local communities and improve staff well-being.
- Staff have also been supported with a range of support sessions held on topics including financial well-being and pre-retirement and skill development opportunities through a suite of Learning Café opportunities hosted by staff members across the Council. 562 staff members have attended 20 Café events/webinars since April 2023. Café sessions have also provided opportunities for staff to engage and shape new policies and strategies including the new Corporate Plan for 2025 – 2030 and the Reshaping Programme.
- Staff sickness absence has reduced when compared to previous years, despite being over target with 10.32 working days lost per full time equivalent against the target of 9.2. Whilst absence rates for both longer term and short term sickness are less than the previous years' work will continue across the organisation to further improve absence management.
- Continued to progress work to develop the Carbon Management Plan, both the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-28 and Carbon Management Plan (once adopted) aim to create a framework to ensure that the Council's physical assets are utilised in the most sustainable way.
- A range of activity including Eich Lle office accommodation rationalisation project and a number of building decarbonisation projects have commenced and look to utilise our physical assets in the most sustainable manner.
- The Council with support from Welsh Governments Assets Collaboration Property Fund invested £250,000 in a pilot project across 3 community centres to assist third sector/voluntary partners to decarbonise assets

that they occupy under leases. This will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of these important community assets from both an energy/carbon and financial perspective.

- Taken further significant strides towards creating an inclusive working environment, including championing LGBTQ+ staff, supporting local pride events, supporting Windrush Day, and continued support and promotion of the Council's LGBTQ+ staff networks - GLAM and Diverse. This saw the Council being named as one of the [Top 100 Inclusive Employers](#) by Stonewall for the first time.
- Worked with the Public Services Board, stakeholders including local residents, community groups and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales to develop a draft [Age Friendly Vale](#) Action Plan, following the Vale of Glamorgan successfully becoming the 4<sup>th</sup> local authority area in Wales to achieve Age Friendly Status. The Award made by the World Health Organisations recognises the work that is taking place across communities to make the Vale a good place to grow older in, and the commitment to make the Vale an even better place where people are supported to age well.
- Recruited a new Senior Community Development Officer to take forward the Public Services Board's project to engage with our most deprived communities and organisations working in these areas. This insight will help to better understand the lived experiences and shape potential future action and activities in the areas. This will also allow us to hear from those 'seldom heard' groups who we do not always reach through traditional engagement methods.

## Areas where further work is required

- Continue to improve the process for handling complaints within target timescales. This year the Council received the highest annual number of complaints on record with 737 complaints received during 2023-24. Overall complaints were closed with an average of 17.39 days with 53.79% (423) being resolved within the target timescale missing the target of 75%. Opportunities for improvement have been identified and will be implemented in the summer of 2024.
- Despite progress being made significant challenges continue to be experienced in some service areas in attracting and retaining staff, further impacting the need to address workload/ capacity issues and reduce the levels of presenteeism across the workforce.
- Further increase the support provided for young learners with a focus on supporting schools to meet the increasing trend of learners presenting with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and supporting schools to raise levels of attendance, particularly in secondary schools.
- The number and complexity of referrals into Children and Young People Services continues to create a high level of demand. This places increased pressure on our existing resources and further reliance on externally purchased care. Since 2019/20 the number of children in external placements in residential care and with independent fostering agencies (FIA) have increased by 42.9% and 124.4% respectively. As have the costs associated with these placements, with residential costs increasing by 49.1%, and FIA costs increasing by 128.1%. Work within the Council and with partners will continue to focus on meeting this demand and will be monitored through the Council's revised Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People who need Care and Support.
- Accelerate progress to tackle climate change and the nature emergency, this includes continuing to deliver our commitments under [Project Zero](#), further embedding the sustainable development principle in the management of our physical and digital assets, delivering commitments within the new Carbon Management Plan (once adopted), progressing work to develop and implement the Green Infrastructure Strategy and progressing commitments within the Biodiversity Forward Plan.
- There is a shortage of housing and temporary accommodation which is in part impacting continued high levels of homelessness. This growing challenge has been impacted this year by changes in homelessness duties and the changes to funding arrangements by Welsh Government which do not cover the Council's duties, and refugees who need housing within the county. Work will continue with partners to identify and deliver interventions to support people at risk of homelessness as early as possible.

## 6.0 Our performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

Presented below is a **summary of our performance** in relation to our four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and overall performance of the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24. The Direction of Travel provides an indication of the direction of performance when compared with the previous quarter. For instance, where our performance status (RAG) has improved it is indicated by , where our performance status has remained the same compared with previous quarter it is shown by and where our performance status has declined it is represented with .

At end of 2023/24, the overall performance (RAG) status for the Annual Delivery Plan as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives is **GOOD**. This judgement reflects the substantial progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period with 85% of planned activities achieved.

Combined total of Service Plan Actions and Performance Measures	PERFORMANCE STATUS			Overall RAG Status for all Well-being Objectives
	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>AMBER</b>	<b>RED</b>	
Total	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions and Measures
591	502(85%)	12(2%)	77 (13%)	<b>AMBER</b>

Three out of four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives have been attributed a **GOOD** performance status at end of year to reflect the progress made to date. Positive progress has been made in relation to planned activities and associated targets in relation to Well-being Objective 1, giving it a **Fair** performance status. Overall, the direction of travel has remained static for all Annual Delivery Plan actions aligned with our four Well-being Objectives when compared with the previous quarter (quarter 3). Direction of travel for achievement of associated targets has remained static for most Well-being Objectives with the exception Well-being Objective 1 where there has been a fall in the number of measures meeting targets associated when compared with the previous quarter.

ADP (Actions)	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
All ADP Actions		

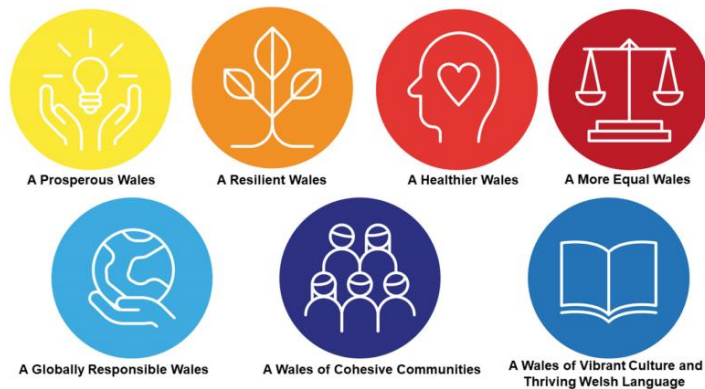
ADP (Performance Measures)	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
All ADP PIs		

ADP (Actions + Measures combined)	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
Overall ADP		

## 6.1 Our contribution to the national Well-being Goals

Our commitments to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our citizens are outlined in our Corporate Plan 2020-2025. By embedding the five ways of working throughout our planning and decision-making processes, we are working in a more sustainable way to deliver on these commitments and contributing to the national well-being goals as detailed below.

The long-term nature of some commitments mean that the impact of work undertaken in the past year may not always be demonstrable in the short term and will impact over the longer term. Consequently, these commitments remain long term strategic priorities for the Council as we progress the Corporate Plan 2020-25 involving our partners and communities in 'working together for a brighter future'. All Corporate Plan commitments have been mapped against the national Well-being Goals [here](#).



## 6.3 Our Annual Delivery Plan Performance by Well-being Objective

### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1: To work with and for our communities

*We are committed to working in partnership to ensure services meet the needs of our residents and local communities and to leaving a positive legacy for future generations.*

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 1		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 1
		Green		Amber		Red		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures <sup>1</sup>
264	41	236(89%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	28(11%)	15 (75%)	<b>AMBER</b>

Overall performance (RAG) status for Well-being Objective 1 is **FAIR**. This judgement reflects the positive progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period.

#### What we said we'd do in our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
1 Adopt a new digital strategy, improve how we communicate and develop more responsive online services, including improvements for housing services and the customer contact centre and enhancements to the website.	<b>Green</b>
2 Make efficient and effective use of assets by reviewing the council's estate including office accommodation and key sites.	<b>Green</b>
3 Review the viability and sustainability of services in response to ongoing significant financial challenges and uncertainty.	<b>Green</b>
4 Revise our procurement practices to ensure value for money to ensure our activities contribute to the local economy, support work around climate change and deliver community benefits.	<b>Green</b>
5 Implement a new People Strategy with a particular focus on improving diversity across the workforce, recruitment and retention, planning for the future and staff well-being.	<b>Green</b>
6 Work with voluntary and community organisations to deliver and shape local services, encourage people to get more involved in their local communities and support them to seek funding.	<b>Green</b>
7 Work with partners in the private sector to help deliver service innovation and new sources of investment and expertise.	<b>Green</b>
8 Deliver our Public Participation Strategy to encourage and enable greater involvement for residents and other stakeholders in decision making, with a particular focus on improving engagement with seldom heard voices.	<b>Green</b>

<sup>1</sup> RAG performance status was not applicable for 21 measures as they were either establishing baseline performance for 2023/24 or the data was not yet available.

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
9 Support increasing numbers and a greater diversity of young people to be engaged in a wider range of participation opportunities to enable equity and diversity in decision making within the Council.	Green
10 Hold climate and nature emergency community conversations involving different stakeholder groups to shape our plans and activities and encourage positive behaviour change.	Green
11 Deliver year four of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, achieve Age Friendly status for the Vale and progress work as part of national action around disability, race and sexual orientation and gender identity.	Green
12 Increase the use of the Welsh Language through the delivery of the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).	Green
13 Work in partnership as part of the Armed Forces Covenant to support members of the armed forces, veterans, family members and widow or widowers.	Green
14 Deliver a programme to further develop and support elected members to be effective in their roles reflecting the commitment to increase diversity.	Green

## What we've achieved

### 1. Adopt a new digital strategy, improve how we communicate and develop more responsive online services, including improvements for housing services and the customer contact centre and enhancements to the website.

- **Launched the Council's Digital Strategy 2023-2028** setting out our vision for how we will transform our digital culture to meet the requirements and expectations of residents, colleagues and partners.
- Successfully overcome service issues by **creating solutions with high digital utilisation for services** such as garden waste, commercial waste, and cost of living grant applications.
- Successfully **deployed Teams Telephony** resulting in further expansion and connectivity for our colleagues across the Council.
- **44 schools** in the Vale have completed professional learning to improve knowledge, understanding and skills for cross-curricular digital skills leadership, curriculum and pedagogy since April 2024. This is helping ensure schools **embrace the new curriculum requirements using the Hwb platform**.
- **Over 40 digital sessions** were run from the Aberaeron Hub, of which the majority of learners are Council tenants. Digital support is also offered to all Council Sheltered Housing Schemes through Ability Net and our Digital Buddies and Digital Engagement and Volunteer Officer who are working to **increase residents digital skills, digital safety and confidence** and supporting improvements in how customers want to interact with and access Housing services.
- **All nine Vale libraries have Digital Champions** to help residents develop digital skills and confidence.
- All new service design includes consideration of the user experience through **traditional channels** as well as online access.
- Over **2,000 users are being reached a day** on average by the Council's social media channel on X (formerly known as Twitter).
- **76.8% of customer enquiries to C1V were resolved at first contact** and no Ombudsman complaints have been upheld against the Council.
- **8,044 devices** successfully managed through the Hwb device management platform, which has significantly **enhanced the digital resources available** within our schools.

### 2. Make efficient and effective use of assets by reviewing the council's estate including office accommodation and key sites.

- **Invested £250,000** from the Welsh Governments Assets Collaboration Property Fund in a pilot project across 3 community centres to assist our third sector/voluntary partners to **decarbonise assets that they occupy under leases**.
- **Successfully completed Eich Lle phase 1**, including relocation of the Council's Contact Centre (C1V), Wellbeing Matters, Legal, Democratic Services, Property, and HR within the Civic Offices enabling better use of our properties and creating financial savings.
- Additional schools are now able to use the **booking facilities for outdoor and indoor sport spaces** and changing facilities increasing opportunities in these local venues.

### **3. Review the viability and sustainability of services in response to ongoing significant financial challenges and uncertainty.**

- Continued to provide a wide range of non-statutory services despite significant financial challenges by implementing new approaches to make services sustainable. For example, successfully introduced charges for green waste collections and have seen no reduction in the amount of green waste collected when compared to the free service provided in 2022/23.
- **88%** of required savings totalling **£4.139M** achieved increasing from 79% in 2022/23.
- Despite the financial challenges the Council continues to plan to deliver an **ambitious £388M Capital Programme**, investing in the County's highways, schools and housing.

### **4. Revise our procurement practices to ensure value for money to ensure our activities contribute to the local economy, support work around climate change and deliver community benefits.**

- Embedded the Council's **new procurement policy** with a reference to the social value framework to ensure our activities **contribute to the local economy, support work around climate change and deliver community benefits**.

### **5. Implement a new People Strategy with a particular focus on improving diversity across the workforce, recruitment and retention, planning for the future and staff well-being.**

- Awarded **Silver Status** in the Stonewall UK Workplace Equality Index and have been recognised in the **top 100 Inclusive Employers by Stonewall which recognises exceptional employers** who are committed to supporting their LGBTQ+ staff and customers.
- Supported **almost 100 members of staff** with Financial Wellbeing, delivering sessions to support staff on topics including financial wellbeing and pre-retirement.
- **Staff sickness rates have reduced** when compared to the previous year with 10.32 working days lost due to sickness, an improvement from the 12.82 last year. Days lost due to long term sickness continues to reduce to 6.69, this is the **lowest since 2020/21**.
- **Increased workplace and other volunteering opportunities** via a well-publicised calendar of events and staff uptake has been positive and gathering pace.

### **6. Work with voluntary and community organisations to deliver and shape local services, encourage people to get more involved in their local communities and support them to seek funding.**

- Our libraries continue to provide an **expansive range of activities and support for residents of all ages** including Hafod Housing drop in sessions for those 55 and over in St Athan and Rhoose, 'Story Babies' storytelling for children up to 14 months in Dinas Powys, Makerspaces being utilised for creative workshops in Penarth and Barry and lots of exciting clubs run by staff and volunteers such as Code Club in Cowbridge.
- Worked with Cwmpas to engage with over 30 stakeholders through a variety of methods, including 13 external third sector organisations, to better **understand the challenges and opportunities** when



working with the third sector and social enterprises to strengthen relationships and work together in future.

- Received **123** applications under the Communities and Place priority of the Shared Prosperity Fund, of which **73** were approved and awarded funds. Of these 73, **33** were social enterprises or third sector organisations, and received funding between them to the total of **£689,386**. These have supported community initiatives within the Vale of Glamorgan helping to deliver the Council's vision of "strong communities with a bright future."

#### **7. Work with partners in the private sector to help deliver service innovation and new sources of investment and expertise.**

- Together with BT and IDNS we have **established a fully operational immersive classroom** that is already being used on a weekly basis by parents and children from Cadoxton Primary and Oak Field Primary to **provide a new innovative learning environment**.
- **44 proposals have successfully received funding** through the Vale Business Development grant to provide financial support to established businesses, helping to foster growth and development and enable businesses to innovate, decarbonise and grow.

#### **8. Deliver our Public Participation Strategy to encourage and enable greater involvement for residents and other stakeholders in decision making, with a particular focus on improving engagement with seldom heard voices.**

- **Over 4,000 responses were received by the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey**, analysis of these responses in partnership with Data Cymru will influence future decision making and priorities across the Council.
- Further increased opportunities for residents to influence decision making with **consultations undertaken on a range of services and developments across all Directorates** to capture the views of diverse and 'hard to reach' groups. These include the Replacement Local Development Plan, school developments, tenant survey, active travel routes,
- **83 projects have been hosted on the Participate Vale platform** allowing residents to easily access and engage with engagement and consultation methods online.
- Launched the ability for residents, community groups and organisations to **create e-petitions** to be considered by the Council, allowing people to have their say in a new format. Since its recent launch the page has already received over 800 views and established 2 e-petitions.
- 190 members of the community and 27 community leaders have been engaged with by the Public Services Board in its project to **engage with our most deprived communities** to better understand the lived experiences and shape possible future action and activities.

#### **9. Support increasing numbers and a greater diversity of young people to be engaged in a wider range of participation opportunities to enable equity and diversity in decision making within the Council.**

- The **Youth Council continues to flourish** with Members voicing their views and needs to help influence decision making across the Council.
- **344 children and young people** have attended UNCRS workshops run by the Rights Ambassador Project helping them to develop their **understanding of their rights and ability to shape decision making**.
- **Her Voice Wales group were awarded the Youth Excellence Award for Demonstrating Excellence** in partnership planning and delivery. The group led by women aged 11-18 continue to work hard to equip young people with the skills and confidence to become **champions of equality** in their communities tackling gender inequalities.
- **A greater number and diversity of young people (over 5,000) were engaged in decision making via a wide range of participation opportunities** e.g. participation in interview panels for Youth Service staff; election of a Youth Parliament that delivered a campaign on Children Looked After and Additional

Learning Needs support and contributed to conversations around school budgets and education matters at Learning & Culture Scrutiny Committee; a successful Super Ambassadors event for primary schools; the work of the 'Her Voice Wales' group, have been instrumental in the Council's sign up to the Safe Places Scheme. The group has been shortlisted for the Youth Excellence Awards; Supported Pupil Voice initiatives through School Council Networks during the quarter.

**10. Hold climate and nature emergency community conversations involving different stakeholder groups to shape our plans and activities and encourage positive behaviour change.**

- **6 primary schools** that lack access to green spaces have been **awarded mini green and blue spaces** from the Vale Nature Partnership to increase access and encourage pupils to enjoy, learn and record wildlife whilst promoting behaviour change and enhancing learning experiences.
- The **Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy** has been consulted on through a variety of methods to hear directly from business, community members and stakeholders. The Strategy includes a range of strategic policies that will respond to the climate and nature emergencies.
- **Views to the new Project Zero Hub relaunched this year have increased by 1,654%** compared to the same period in 2023. Relaunched to act as an effective single point of contact for both citizens and staff, the hub encourages users to engage with the Climate Change Challenge Plan and share ideas and best practice on how to reduce carbon footprint.
- Across the Vale, **25 young people participated in the Youth Council Climate Change Event** allowing young people the opportunity to share their views on a number of topics through facilitated workshops with local experts and decision makers. This insight helped shape future priority setting for the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and Project Zero Challenge Plan.

**11 . Deliver year four of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, achieve Age Friendly status for the Vale and progress work as part of national action around disability, race and sexual orientation and gender identity.**

- The **revised Transgender Inclusion Toolkit has been approved** and is being rolled out to all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan to provide guidance and advice for schools and other settings following consultation in January – March 2023.
- **22 schools** are being supported as they work towards becoming Schools of Sanctuary, **achieving the award recognises the work taking place to foster a culture of welcome, belonging and solidarity for those seeking safety.**
- Gilets Multilingual language and literacy resources are available in 37 schools to **enable Multilingual learners to access texts in their own language** and to enable schools to provide a range of multicultural texts and resources to all learners and as part of the school curriculum.
- Successfully ran **an anti-racist action research project for schools** with a second Anti-Racist Action Research Learning Day in June 2024 where participating schools shared their experience of becoming anti-racist to help other support other schools to begin or continue this work wherever they might be in their journey.
- **Awarded Silver Trailblazer Status by Race Equality Matters**, recognising the Council's commitment to taking long-term action to tackle race inequality.
- **Specialist equipment has been purchased** for residents who have limited mobility to use at Barry Island in increase access to the beach and promenade in partnership with Age Connects, this service will launch later in the year.
- The Vale of Glamorgan successfully became the **4<sup>th</sup> local authority area in Wales to be awarded Age Friendly Status by the World Health Organisation**, recognising the commitment to make the Vale a better place for people to age well in.
- Supported successful events for **Pride Month and Windrush Day** to promote awareness and visibility.

- Support **2 staff networks** to support staff members who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community (GLAM) and members who are part of the global majority (Diverse). Work is ongoing to establish a third group to support staff who identify as having a disability (Abl).

## **12. Increase the use of the Welsh Language through the delivery of the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).**

- Our schools **continue to promote the Welsh language** and achieve recognition of progress by **receiving Siarter Iaith awards**. This year 7 further English Medium Primaries have received the Cymraeg Campus Bronze Award, and 4 have received the Silver Award. 1 additional Welsh medium Primary school received the Silver Siarter Iaith award. 1 further English Medium Secondary received the Cymraeg Campus Bronze Award, 2 received the Silver Award and 1 received the Gold Award.
- **Welsh language lunchtime clubs are available in 5 schools** (4 of which are English medium schools) to promote and encourage pupils to learn Welsh together.
- There are **592 active adult Welsh learners** and of those 543 are on a full course of 60+ hours of learning. This is an increase of almost 50% on the year before. The increase at various levels suggests learners continuing to learn by moving on to higher levels.
- **Relaunched a Welsh language forum in the Vale of Glamorgan, Fforwm y Fro following an overwhelmingly positive response** from organisations and Welsh medium schools who are keen to take part, with many looking forward to sharing news, events, information, and best practice. Members include Menter Bro Morgannwg, Learn Welsh the Vale, Cardiff and Vale College, Urdd, Merched y Wawr, Mudiad Meithrin, and Welsh medium schools.
- **Ran a successful Council wide campaign to promote the Welsh language**, courses, and standards amongst staff. As of March 2024, there are **48 members of staff currently enrolled** on a Work Welsh course at varying levels.
- Overall, 12.9% of the Council workforce self-report Welsh language skills ranging from basic to fluent. 35.4% of these staff members reported competent, good or fluent Welsh language speaking skills. This is **higher than the 11.5% of residents able to speak Welsh reported in the Census 2021**.

## **13 Work in partnership as part of the Armed Forces Covenant to support members of the armed forces, veterans, family members and widow or widowers.**

- The Council has been **awarded the Defence Employers Recognition Scheme Gold Award** and were finalists in the Welsh Veterans Awards after being nominated by local veteran's groups. To achieve the Gold Award employers must **satisfy an extensive list of achievements** such as signing the Armed Forces Covenant, proactively demonstrating forces-friendly credentials and help leavers of the armed forces to transition into employment.

## **14. Deliver a programme to further develop and support elected members to be effective in their roles reflecting the commitment to increase diversity.**

- **All Elected Members have received mandatory Equalities** training post Local Government elections. Many attend Council Equality staff network meetings, supporting and contributing to discussion.
- More than **50%** of Cabinet Committee items this year received input from Scrutiny Committees, this was an increase when compared to the previous 4 years.
- The Elected Members Champion Group continues to develop and support Elected Members in acting as advocates for key communities in the Vale.

## Engagement activities: what our residents and service users said

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
Digital Strategy and design of new digital processes (relevant to OBJ4)	<p>This year, wherever possible, we have had user input into newly designed services as well as the Digital Strategy.</p> <p>This has included collaboration with WLGA on the design of our new Telecare service due in 24/25 as well as user engagement on the Commercial Waste sign-up process. We have begun to explore technology solutions to further increase the reach of this and to scale our customer engagement.</p>	<p>Over 100 colleagues were involved in the development of the Digital Strategy. This led to a strategy which reflects the Council’s overall ways of working and an action plan which will be contributed to by a range of different services.</p> <p>The user insight in developing new services has resulted in services which are more responsive to user needs, such as the new commercial waste service.</p>
Data Strategy	<p>The development of the data strategy followed the same process as for the Digital Strategy, involving over 50 colleagues involved in data work from across the organisation in a number of themed workshops. The themes of these workshops have then been used to structure the Data Strategy. Using the feedback from these sessions a Joint HOS/SLT session was held on the data strategy and the draft strategy reported to Strategic Insight Board and SLT.</p>	<p>The Data Strategy was coproduced to reflect the ambitions of the whole council and represent the work that all teams will be involved in. The commitments set out in the strategy have been directly informed by the feedback gained through the colleague workshops.</p>
Let’s Talk about Life in the Vale	<p>4000+ responses on a range of topics covering residents experience of living in the Vale of Glamorgan. Themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About you (demographic questions)</li> <li>• About your local area</li> <li>• Your priorities</li> <li>• Cost of living</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Modes of travel</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing</li> <li>• About your local council</li> <li>• Interaction with the Council</li> <li>• Living in the Vale of Glamorgan</li> </ul> <p>The results analysed by Data Cymru can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	<p>Early findings were used to inform the 2024/2025 budget.</p> <p>The insight gathered will be fundamental in informing the new Corporate Plan and emerging Reshaping Strategy.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
2024/2025 Budget consultation	289 responses to standalone budget survey showing support for the budget strategy to continually review the efficiency of Council services and to focus resources on those services supporting the most vulnerable. However, there was only 31% support for the 6.7% Council Tax increase and 42% support for the inflationary increase in discretionary charges. 50% of respondents did agree with the proposal to introduce charges for some discretionary services.	Informed final budget proposals as presented to full council on 6th March 2024.
Range of internal Strategies and Programmes	Throughout the year, a range of question time/discussion sessions have taken place with Council staff, hosted by the Director of Corporate Resources. Topics have included the Annual Delivery Plan and the Digital Strategy.	The views of Council colleagues have informed the final versions of these pieces of work and are also being taken forward as part of a programme of engagement on the Reshaping Programme.
Engaged with Trade Unions	The Joint Consultative Forums continue with trade union colleagues continue to foster a culture based around social partnership.	Whilst there have been challenges across the last twelve months we remain positive that our trade union relationships are collegiate and aim to work collaboratively in the best interests of our staff and their members.
Staff Reward Strategy	The OD and Learning Team have held workshops and consultations sessions on Staff Reward to help shape the future offering and Reward Strategy moving forward.	This has led to the development of a revised Reward offering, centred around 5 themes, Pay, Communities and Culture, OD and Learning, Sustainability and Wellbeing.
Age Friendly Vale Draft Action Plan	<p data-bbox="580 1444 1023 1944">On behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board (PSB) the Strategy and Insight Team have carried out a series of face-to-face engagement opportunities with older residents. Most engagement centred around the popular 'button drops' with over 230 buttons being used to highlight people's opinions and experiences on topics such as communication, health, loneliness, and the cost of living.</p> <p data-bbox="580 1948 1023 2016">In addition, 2 workshops have been held with public sector and third</p>	<p data-bbox="1032 1444 1485 1630">Insight and information gathered from partners and the public was utilised to inform the draft Age Friendly Vale Action Plan to ensure it reflects the needs of residents.</p> <p data-bbox="1032 1657 1485 2016">Insight from the draft Action Plan consultation will shape the final version of the Plan that will provide the structure for work across the Vale between 2025 –2028 to make the Vale a better place to age well in.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<p>sector partners to develop an understanding of what work is already happening with the Vale to support an Age Friendly agenda and identify gaps and areas for improvement. More than 60 people attended the sessions to share their perspectives.</p> <p>This helped develop the draft Age Friendly Vale Action Plan which is being consulted on between June – August 2024 via a short survey that’s available in hard copy from local libraries and by request from C1V, and online. In addition, a series of community feedback session will be held with 11 scheduled for local libraries and community venues.</p>	
<p>Vale Youth Council – Climate Conversations Event (relevant to OBJ4)</p>	<p>Across the Vale, 25 young people participated in the Youth Council Climate Change Event. Priorities set out at the event were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support young people’s safety by working with Her Voice Wales and exploring street lighting and CCTV improvements.</li> <li>• Support schools with improving their active travel infrastructures, including cycling equipment.</li> <li>• Investigate plans for a more connected active transport approach across Cardiff and the Vale.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to work more closely with schools, communicating the feedback from the event and new workplace recycling regulations.</li> <li>• Explore the mapping of public water fountains available and external funding to increase the number of these.</li> <li>• Increase the amount of public recycling bins.</li> </ul>	<p>Participate Vale Website –There has been continued engagement with Vale Residents on the event feedback.</p> <p>Young people’s voices on the Council’s Annual Delivery Plan and Project Zero Challenge Plan have informed priority setting.</p> <p>Ongoing partnership work with Project Zero remains a key area of focus.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<p>Improve communications about community recycling and litter picking hubs.</p>	
<p>Strengthening Our Communities</p>	<p>Cwmpas were commissioned to undertake a programme of engagement with Council officers, Social Enterprise, Third Sector and Town and Community Councils as part of an integrated response to four Audit Wales reports on tackling poverty and working with the third sector. Cwmpas have interviewed a number of people, held workshops and focus groups as part of this work.</p> <p>Initial findings indicate the need for better understanding and knowledge of social enterprise, the Voluntary Sector Compact is not well known, co-ordination of work around poverty and accessible information and points of contact. There is positive feedback about the relationship with council officers.</p>	<p>A report on this work will be considered by Cabinet in the Autumn. The findings and recommendations will help shape the Corporate Plan and Reshaping programme, the Voluntary Sector Compact and how the Council works with other sectors. The work will also assist in shaping the Council's activities to tackle poverty.</p>

## What our regulators said

Review	Findings	Our response
<p><a href="#">Assurance and risk assessment review – Use of Performance Information: service user perspective and outcomes</a></p>	<p>The Assessment considered the service user perspective and outcome information provided to senior officers and senior members (senior leaders), and how this information is used.</p> <p>Overall, it was found that the Council’s performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council’s activities. It found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The performance information provided to senior leaders provides them with some insight into the perspective of service users, but this is not consistent across all services.</li> <li>• The performance information provided to senior leaders does not enable them to have a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the Council’s actions.</li> <li>• The Council has arrangements in place to ensure that its performance information is accurate.</li> <li>• As information provided on outcomes and the perspective of service users is limited, the extent to which the Council can use this information to help it achieve its outcomes is also limited.</li> <li>• The Council has identified that it needs to engage more with service users but hasn’t determined how this will shape the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it is appropriate and relevant.</li> </ul>	<p>Our work to action the recommendations from this review will be monitored on a regular basis and reported to the Council’s internal Strategic Insight Board and the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>This review was published in February 2024 and progress to strengthen our approach in relation to the two recommendations will be monitored starting in quarter 1 2024/25.</p>



Review	Findings	Our response
	<p>The Assessment made two recommendations to strengthen the information given to senior leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R1 - The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.</li> <li>• R2 - The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.</li> </ul>	
<p><a href="#">Digital Strategy Review</a></p>	<p>The Assessment explore the extent to which the Council’s strategic approach to digital has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council’s resources.</p> <p>Overall, it was determined that the Council is taking the sustainable development principle into account in producing its digital strategy, and is developing arrangements to deliver the strategy, but monitoring arrangements are under-developed. It found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has made good use of internal evidence sources to inform its strategic approach to digital but has made limited use of external evidence sources.</li> <li>• The Council has a clear vision for using digital technology and has considered how its approach to digital impacts on other things it is trying to achieve but has not articulated how it impacts on other public bodies.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress against all 5 recommendations is monitored through our local regulatory actions performance monitoring framework. Progress against all 5 recommendations is Green and reported to the Council’s internal Strategic Insight Board, and the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.</p> <p>Updates against the recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R1 - We are continuing to utilise a wide range of sources and resources to ensure that we are considering macro changes as well as strong support from SOCITM.</li> <li>• R2 - Our key digital projects are aligned and supported through our active involvement in WLGA, DHCW, and Social Care Wales. We will continue to develop and improve this going forward.</li> <li>• R3 - A culture change has begun that encourages us at the start, and throughout, to consider how we can collaborate both with</li> </ul>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has identified who it needs to involve in developing its next digital strategy and plans to consult widely, but it is not yet clear how the Council plans to collaborate with partners in delivering it.</li> <li>• The Council has taken steps to ensure resources are in place to take forward the digital strategy, although there is further work to do in respect of what savings may be made through implementing its digital strategy.</li> <li>• The Council does not monitor progress of its strategic approach to digital and there are weaknesses in the performance measures the Council intends to use in future.</li> <li>• The Council has reviewed its previous digital strategy and is committed to reviewing its new strategy, but it's not clear at this stage how any lessons learned from the implementation of its new digital strategy will be shared.</li> </ul> <p>The Assessment made 5 recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R1 - To ensure that its digital strategy takes account of current and future trends and issues the Council should ensure its horizon scanning to inform its strategic approach to digital is well informed by external sources, including future trends.</li> <li>• R2 - To avoid duplication and identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits, the Council should review how its strategic approach to digital impacts on the objectives of other public bodies.</li> </ul>	<p>other local authorities and aligned third parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R4 - An iterative approach to the identification of digital strategy savings is being developed. Currently these are predominantly managed manually, however through the design of a standardised set of business cases, hypotheses, testing and post implementation analysis, we are on track to mature this capability.</li> <li>• R5 - As we further develop the Project Toolkit, we will continue to improve the identification and sharing elements of our project processes. We have successfully identified the need to intervene in ongoing projects based on lessons learned.</li> </ul>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R3 - The Council should ensure it has considered opportunities to collaborate in the delivery of its digital strategy to identify opportunities to share knowledge, expertise and/or resources that may improve value for money.</li> <li>• R4 - To help the Council monitor the value for money of its digital strategy it should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify any savings it is aiming to make from the strategy.</li> <li>- ensure that performance information used to monitor its digital strategy enables it to fully understand the impact of the Council's investment in digital</li> </ul> </li> <li>• R5 - The Council should develop arrangements for identifying and sharing lessons learned from its approach to its digital strategy.</li> </ul>	

### Our key challenges

- Financial challenges remain across the organisation to ensure we continue to provide quality services across our communities now and in the future as significant budget pressures arising from growth in demand for services continue to impact on our ability to deliver a balanced budget for key areas such as social care services and education services. 88% of savings are expected to be achieved in 2023/2024 (*subject to closure of accounts process*).
- Significant challenges continue to be experienced in some service areas in attracting and retaining staff. Voluntary employee turnover has increased from 9.20% to 10.93%, against a target of 7.5% this year.
- Although there has been an improvement in employee absence at 10.32 days per full time equivalent when compared with the same period last year (12.82 days), absence continues to miss the target of 9.2 days. There is a need to address workload/ capacity issues and reduce the levels of presenteeism across the workforce, further exacerbated by the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in some service areas. Limited resources and capacity have impacted the development of some new ways of working and developing opportunities which can generate additional income to support service sustainability.
- Whilst positive progress has been made on performance last year, there is a need to accelerate progress in embedding a consistent approach to improve our response, reporting and learning from complaints and compliments. 57% of corporate complaints were dealt with within target timescales against a target of 75%.
- Challenges remain to further develop and strengthen the inclusivity of engagement activities, especially in relation to protected and socially disadvantaged groups, and those 'seldom heard' to inform service design, development and delivery.
- Inflationary pressures beyond our control continue to have a significant impact on the cost of supplies and ultimately the affordability and deliverability for capital schemes with some contractors remaining reluctant to

commit to long term projects or to hold costs for long periods. These challenges are becoming ever more challenging when compounded by reducing budgets and ongoing skill shortages.

### **Areas for future focus**

- Embed the People Strategy to further address some of the staff challenges highlighted in this assessment including improving diversity, recruitment and retention, succession planning and staff well-being. This will support the progress through the transformation programmes workstream People & Culture. Work to finalise and adopt the transformational change programme, Reshaping, is an area of emerging activity.
- Work in an increasingly collaborative way to find innovative ways of funding essential services whilst continuing work to identify opportunities for savings to deliver a balanced budget. Areas of focus will include supporting schools reporting a deficit budget position to develop balanced recovery plans.
- Resource and accelerate progress in developing customer insight, especially in relation to protected and socially disadvantaged groups to inform service design, development and delivery. This work will be supported by utilising the results and lessons learnt from the Let's Talk survey responding to issues raised by respondents.
- Although there are well established mechanisms in place for pupil voice, there is the need to embed more widely across the Council young people's engagement to shape decision making across a wider range of services.
- Further progress work to expand online services and the range of digital methods used to engage and communicate with the Vale of Glamorgan citizens through the Digital Strategy. This includes progressing a rolling programme of website content updates and identifying opportunities for digital applications and purchasing to improve service accessibility and efficiency.
- Keep under review the Capital Programme to reflect and address emerging pressures/challenges around suitability/viability of our physical assets. Work will develop to progress opportunities with communities who are interested in community asset transfers and opportunities to expand the shared use of outdoor sporting space and indoor halls in our school estates.
- Utilise the Digital Strategy to support ongoing work across the Council and with partners to develop our collective capacity for citizen/customer engagement and our use of these insights alongside performance and other data insights to inform future service developments.
- Develop a new Corporate Plan and performance management regime that is both ambitious but realistic, focused on outcomes, linked with transformation and with an eye on the future including the first Panel Performance Assessment in 2024/25.
- Continue to strengthen our relationship and work with Town and Community Councils and the Third Sector.

## WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

*We are committed to supporting people of all ages develop and learn. We are committed to encouraging people's ambitions and to ensuring that individuals and communities are able to prosper and achieve their best.*

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 2		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 2
		Green		Amber		Red		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures <sup>2</sup>
58	45	56(97%)	12(60%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	2(3%)	6 (30%)	<b>GREEN</b>

Overall performance (RAG) status for Well-being Objective 2 is **GOOD**. This judgement reflects the good progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period.

### What we said we'd do in our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
1 Work in partnership with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service to ensure schools are effectively supported to maximise outcomes for all learners.	<b>Green</b>
2 Work with our schools and partners to implement the whole-school approach to mental health and well-being and ensure appropriate support and guidance is provided in order to meet the differing needs of children and young people.	<b>Green</b>
3 Support our schools to facilitate the phased implementation of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform including work around self-evaluation.	<b>Green</b>
4 Support our schools to minimise exclusions and enhance attendance recognising the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis.	<b>Green</b>
5 Progress school investment schemes including the expansion of Ysgol Y Deri, a new school building at St Nicholas, expansion of primary school capacity in Cowbridge and design work for St Richard Gwyn as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.	<b>Green</b>
6 Review and revise our core support service offer to schools including IT, HR, cleaning, building services and waste services.	<b>Green</b>
7 Work with others including key businesses, not for private profit organisations and charities to support employment, and the development of skills for the future including the delivery of initiatives and paid opportunities within the Council for apprenticeships, training and employment. Vale of Glamorgan - Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 .	<b>Green</b>
8 Work with the Cardiff Capital Region, Welsh and UK Governments to develop regional and local strategies for transport, planning and economic development including the transport interchange for Barry and major projects like the energy park at Aberthaw, the Barry Gateway and the continued growth of the Bro Tathan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone.	<b>Green</b>
9 Take a place making approach to regeneration and maximise the use of external funding such as Welsh Government Transforming Towns and UK Government Shared	<b>Green</b>

<sup>2</sup> RAG performance status was not applicable for 25 measures as they were either establishing baseline performance for 2023/24 or the data was not yet available.

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
Prosperity funding to support sustainable economic growth and communities across the Vale.	
10 Work collaboratively to develop and implement Vale wide strategies that promote new employment space and support local businesses, tourism, social enterprises and communities and support environmental and economic priorities.	<b>Green</b>

## What we've achieved

### 1. Work in partnership with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service to ensure schools are effectively supported to maximise outcomes for all learners.

- The Vale's Education Service and Youth Service both achieved **very positive Estyn inspections**.
- **30** members of staff from VoG schools trained to deliver Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programmes to support pupil well-being.
- **8** Vale schools contributed to the Central South Wales Challenge model as lead practitioners in support of curriculum, teaching and assessment across the region.
- **638 practitioners** from all Vale schools engaged in Curriculum for Wales related professional learning.
- Results for the Vale of Glamorgan for 2022/23 academic year improved and were above national proportions for percentage A\*-A, A\*-C and A\*-E at **A level**, and percentage A\*-A, A-C and A-E at **AS Level**.
- At **A level**, **11 subjects** are in the top quartile of performance across Wales including Physics, Business Studies and Applied IT.
- At **AS level**, 5 subjects are in the top quartile of performance across Wales including Applied ICT, Mathematics and Computer Science.
- At **Key Stage 4**, over **26** subjects are in the top quartile of performance across England and Wales including Applications of Mathematics, Mathematics (numeracy), Applied Science, Biology, English Language, English Literature and Physics.
- **1,479** practitioners from all Vale schools engaged in Central South Consortium professional learning events.
- **86%** of schools have an appropriate Pupil Development Grant Plan/ Strategy that meets the needs of (learners entitled to free school meals) eFSM learners across the school with the remaining 14% of plans deemed as developing.
- **92** practitioners engaged in professional learning to develop Welsh provision in schools.
- Across Vale schools, English medium schools have achieved **20 bronze**, **4 silver** and **2 gold awards** at primary level (Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Primary) and **1 bronze** award and **2 silver** at secondary level (Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Secondary) contributing to enhanced Welsh provision.
- Strong engagement in post-16 funded projects with secondary schools with post-16 provision engaging in one or more projects.
- **91%** (43) of newly qualified teachers in Vale schools engaged with the Aspire programme to enhance their knowledge.
- **100%** of EOTAS learners leaving Year 11 made a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training.
- **No vulnerable young people** (Children Looked After, Services, Young Carers, Global Majority, or those where English is an additional language) **left compulsory education**, training or work based in Year 11 **without an approved external qualification**.
- During 2023-24, Estyn inspected **seven** primary schools, with **positive outcomes and no follow-up action**.
- **153 (97%)** of eligible childcare settings in the Vale are signed up to the Childcare Offer with 782 children having accessed the programme in 2023/24.

- The Family Information Service received over **1,420** queries in relation to childcare matters with 76% of these from parents and carers and the remaining 14% from childcare providers and other professionals. Additionally, there was **39,789** web page views on childcare matters. **91% rated their experience as excellent** or very good. **86%** said support, advice or information provided was very helpful or helpful.
- Increased the school budget per pupil in 2023/2024 to **£5,405**, slightly higher than the Wales average of £5,386 and improving on the previous year's figure of **£4936**. The Council had made the decision to increase its schools budget well in excess of the 5.1% increase in Welsh Government Grant due to severe pressures in the sector.
- Launched an **innovative learning facility for schools** at Cadoxton Primary school. The highly valued teaching aid enhances pupil learning through an interactive immersive space using the latest technology and can even imitate smells.
- Delivered a comprehensive digital professional learning programme aligned with the national Digital Professional Learning Journey to support our schools. **44** schools completed the programme.
- Supported the development and sustainability of the childcare market by offering guidance, advice and training to all childcare/ childminding settings and collaborated on an apprenticeship scheme to support ongoing recruitment challenges.
- **55** childcare settings benefited from **£470,000** of funding to raise the quality and enhance childcare provision in the Vale.

## **2. Work with our schools and partners to implement the whole-school approach to mental health and well-being and ensure appropriate support and guidance is provided in order to meet the differing needs of children and young people.**

- **563** young people engaged with school-based counselling, and 2,519 sessions were delivered.
- Commissioned Play therapy delivered by Luna Play across six primary schools with high uptake. **91%** of children stated that individual play therapy was helping them to feel better. **90%** of Children stated that playing in the therapy room helped them make sense of their feelings and behaviours.
- Delivered and implemented **C-Card training** across all secondary schools, the Youth Service and the Youth Justice ESS in partnership with Public Health Wales as part of Relationship and Sexuality education. C-Card outlets have been piloted in **4 leisure centres** across the Vale.
- Nearly **600 key stakeholders engaged** with the review and a revised **Trans-Gender Inclusion toolkit** and guidance for schools and other settings has been published.
- Further **expanded our network of Vale Trauma Informed School (TIS) practitioners** to support our most vulnerable learners.
- The Vale's **Whole School Approach (WSA) to Mental Health and Emotional Well-being has been identified as a key strength** with Public Health Wales reporting **over 94%** of Vale schools on board with the WSA and have undertaken the Self Evaluation Tool and **91%** have an WSA school action plan/implementation plan in place. All secondary schools (8) and Ysgol y Deri have completed their school action plan and 89% (39) of primary schools have now completed their school action plans. In comparison, the All-Wales figure for completing a self-evaluation and adopting an action plan is just over 38%.
- Holton Primary School became the first primary school in the Vale to achieve School of Sanctuary status. **14** schools have signed the pledge and **7** are currently progressing an application.
- During the year, **563** young people were supported, and **2,519** sessions were delivered. School staff evaluation showed that 100% agreed the counselling service had helped young people and had positively impacted young people's capacity to study and learn.
- Commissioned Play therapy delivered by Luna Play across six primary schools with **91%** of children stating that individual play therapy was helping them to feel better.
- The Big Fresh Catering Company saves the council an annual budget in circa of **£400k pa** and it has delivered a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of learners. All generated surpluses are

reinvested in schools, which most recently has yielded an additional **£200k**, helping to reduce budget deficits across schools and/or helped to purchase school equipment.

### **3. Support our schools to facilitate the phased implementation of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform including work around self-evaluation.**

- All schools attended Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (**ALNCo**) training.
- Nearly all schools (**98%**) schools completed the ALN self-evaluation framework and work has moved on to **embedding a whole school approach to self-evaluation** aligned to school improvement plans.
- **Significant investment in ALN** has enabled growth of specialist provision. For example, the expansion of Ysgol Y Deri, establishment of Derw Newydd, Early Intervention Base and Gwaun y Nant Welsh-medium base, has enabled us to maintain learners with complex needs within their locality.
- Introduced Additional Learning Needs Individual Development Plan (IDP) officers which have been improved the IDP process. **141 LA IDPs** were quality assured during 2023/24.
- Worked with partners to develop process maps and a catalogue of provision to **improve provision to post 16 Additional Learning Needs learners**.
- **126** practitioners from Early Years settings attended training on Core ALN Modules delivered over 12 sessions.
- As part of an Early Years regional programme, **248** people across the Vale's childcare settings have accessed additional training to enable them to improve their readiness for children that present with additional needs and support their inclusion.
- **Strengthened Welsh language capacity** in Additional Learning Needs provision in line with our WESP ensuring all learners are able access support in their first language.

### **4. Support our schools to minimise exclusions and enhance attendance recognising the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis.**

- Developed and implemented an **Attendance Strategy** in partnership with the Central South Consortium (CSC), schools, parents and young people to improve attendance.
- Attendance data for primary sector was nearly **93%** compared to nearly 95% pre Covid levels. As of April 2024, 39% (17) primary schools were performing better in 2018/19 than post Covid levels
- Maintained **low levels of fixed term exclusions** across primary schools at **0.02%**.
- **1.2%** of Year 11 leavers were identified as being NEET during the year, which is a reduction on the previous year's figure of 1.49%.
- Targeted work in the **Pencoedre Learning community** using Family Engagement Officers has had a positive impact on attendance in primary schools in the cluster (Cadoxton, Colcot, Holton, Jenner and Oakfield).

### **5. Progress school investment schemes including the expansion of Ysgol Y Deri, a new school building at St Nicholas, expansion of primary school capacity in Cowbridge and design work for St Richard Gwyn as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.**

- Nearly all Band B schools have been completed including Cowbridge Primary, Derw Newydd and Ysgol Sant Baruc. Only three schools remain outstanding, St Richard Gwyn, the Ysgol y Deri expansion and St Nicholas and these are on track to be completed by the end of the programme in 2026.
- **8373** new entrant training (including graduates, work placements, pupil placements); **3,500** hours of school STEM engagements; over **14,000** person weeks of new entrant jobs; **71%** of subcontractors based in Wales 78% of construction waste avoiding landfill; **64%** construction spend within Wales; **50%** of the workforce coming from the local postcode; supported **74** community initiatives, such as community gardens, making donations to food banks and helping with nature restoration projects in Porthkerry Park are some of the community benefits of the Sustainable Communities for Learning



Programme. Additionally, successfully secured funding for ten schools to improve their outdoor green spaces as part of the scheme.

#### **6. Review and revise our core support service offer to schools including IT, HR, cleaning, building services and waste services.**

- **Created a dashboard** to provide data to monitor and highlight any concerns relating to schools workforce.
- Entered into a **3-year Service Level Agreement with Pencoedtre** High School for provision of IT support services ensuring improved user and device management and integration to Welsh Governments Hwb framework.
- Worked effectively with schools to enhance digital assets and maximise their use including overseeing the management of **8,044** devices through the Hwb device management platform and maintaining technical ICT support Service Level Agreements across **31** schools.
- **6 schools returned to in-house services** for building maintenance services after being with external contractors, increasing the number to **53** schools receiving in-house services for building maintenance including cleaning and building compliance. The flexibility provided by a mobile cleaning unit covering sickness at school sites has been a key factor.

#### **7. Work with others including key businesses, not for private profit organisations and charities to support employment, and the development of skills for the future including the delivery of initiatives and paid opportunities within the Council for apprenticeships, training and employment.**

- **617** adult clients engaged with employability services to improve their skills and employability with **175** job entries as part of implementing Welsh Government's Employability Strategy.
- **185** young adults (16-24 year olds) engaged with employability services via the Young Person Guarantee.
- **432** clients aged 25+ engaged with employability services via the 25+ job clubs.
- **12** QuickStart placements completed in the Council as part of supporting the development of skills for the future.
- Promoted our assets as **community learning spaces** offering a wide range of opportunities, informed by extensive engagement at taster and other events to ensure curriculum offered meets local needs.
- Through the STRIVE project, **39** young people have enrolled on the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. **20** young people achieved their Young Leadership certificate delivered by the Sports Development team. **73** young people have been referred with **53** engaged on the project.
- Enrolment for basic skills and life skills for young people exceeded target with (actual data)
- Facilitated a series of well attended construction employment events during the year in partnership with Communities 4 Work targeted at job seekers to **promote apprenticeship opportunities for local businesses and local people.**
- Partnered with the Central South Consortium (CSC) on a '**Future First**' programme to develop schools' links with local business and careers support for post-16 learners. Progressed work on a **Vale Business Pledge scheme** which will provide careers and work experience opportunities for learners.
- **Over 95%** success rate on **accredited courses for priority learners** exceeding the national comparator of 86%. This equates to **846** learners.
- **61** out of **3,057** young people in contact with the Youth Service, **achieved an accredited national/local outcome.**
- Developing a **new Vale Skills coalition** in partnership with Cardiff and Vale College along with the **Vale Employer pledge.**
- Promoted increased options around the use of apprenticeships and traineeships across council services, especially for hard to recruit into posts with **41** people taking advantage of fully funded apprenticeship qualifications during the year.

**8. Work with the Cardiff Capital Region, Welsh and UK Governments to develop regional and local strategies for transport, planning and economic development including the transport interchange for Barry and major projects like the energy park at Aberthaw, the Barry Gateway and the continued growth of the Bro Tathan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone.**

- **94%** of all planning applications have been determined exceeding our target of 93% but just short of last year's performance of nearly 99%.
- Nearly **£6.373M of investment** levered into the Council during 2023/24 was dedicated to transport improvement schemes, up from £3,685,632 last year.
- Engaged with the Cardiff Capital Region, Welsh Government to ensure key proposals such as the **Energy Park at Aberthaw, Barry Gateway** and the **Bro Tathan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone** are included in the **Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy**.
- The **Cogan Interchange project** WeiTAG Stage 2 development work is complete.
- Engaged with Welsh Government on proposals for a **train station at St Athan**.
- We continue to promote the Barry Transport Interchange, a meeting point for different modes of transport, connecting train, bus, cycle and taxi services as well as offering close by park and ride facilities. **New direct service introduced from the interchange to main parts of Barry** including Gibbonsdown and western and central Barry.

**9. Take a place making approach to regeneration and maximise the use of external funding such as Welsh Government Transforming Towns and UK Government Shared Prosperity funding to support sustainable economic growth and communities across the Vale.**

- Successfully secured **approval for £20m UK government funding** over 10 years towards the regeneration of Barry Waterfront.
- Secured funding and commenced work to develop **Placemaking plans for our 4 main towns**, Barry, Llantwit Major, Penarth and Cowbridge focusing on economic growth.
- Established and formally **gained approval for a new Barry Partnership** to take forward the **Waterfront Project** as part of the UK Government's Levelling up Scheme.
- Established a **Strategic Investment and Growth Board** with a focus on economic growth, regeneration and climate change.
- **62** Vale projects have benefitted from **nearly £8.7m of Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF)** under the themes of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills contributing to revitalising our town centres, urban and rural areas, growing the volunteering community, supporting our ambition to achieve net zero, and community and place-based events targeting culture, arts and heritage.
- The average vacancy rate in the Vale's main town centres at **10.9%**, remained within our target of 15%, with performance better than the national average of **16%**.
- Engaged with our most deprived communities of **Buttrils, Gibbonsdown and Court wards** to make new connections and ensure their needs are considered when developing and implementing regeneration projects.
- **36 jobs** were created and safeguarded through the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund programme.
- **74** businesses have been supported via the Vale Business Development Grant Fund, Commercial Improvement Grant and Vale Start-up Bursary Schemes.
- **6** commercial spaces improved via SPF funding.
- **£152,916K** of Strong Communities funding has been awarded to 24 community led organisations to support initiatives that contribute to the Council's vision of 'working together for a brighter future'.

**10. Work collaboratively to develop and implement Vale wide strategies that promote new employment space and support local businesses, tourism, social enterprises and communities and support environmental and economic priorities.**

- **615** businesses across the Vale were advised on funding, business planning and new start-ups, up from **121** last year.
- **170** community led organisations advised, up from **29** last year.
- **24** community led organisations were financially supported, exceeding our target of **15**.
- A combination of **74** businesses have been supported via the Vale Business Development Grant, Commercial Improvement Grant and the Vale start up Bursary Scheme, up from **20** last year.
- Supported our town centres by improving green spaces, public areas and transport infrastructure in **Barry, Rhoose** and **Eglwys Brewis**.
- Promoted a **town focused approach** in development of community events and cultural activities with a focus on destination promotion and driving footfall. Facilitated or financially supported 24 events as part of a wide calendar of events throughout the year, up from 12 events last year.
- Engaged with our most deprived communities of **Buttrils, Gibbonsdown** and **Court** wards to make new connections and ensure their needs are considered.

### Engagement activities: what our residents and service users said

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
Proposal to increase capacity for Welsh medium education by expanding Ysgol Iolo Morganwg from 210 places to 420 places from September 2025.	<p>91 responses received with no objections. 94.5% in favour of the proposal and 5.5% not in support.</p> <p>53 responses from parent and guardian group with 4% of this group (3 people) not supporting the proposal.</p> <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English medium being prioritised over Welsh Medium.</li> <li>• Larger school, meaning losing that community feel.</li> <li>• Concerns over new travel arrangements.</li> <li>• Disruption.</li> <li>• All issues addressed as part of the response report.</li> </ul>	<p>Proposal supports growth in Welsh medium primary education, contributing to the Council's WESP and Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy.</p> <p>The Vale is committed to ensuring that all pupils have every opportunity to attain the best possible outcomes. To achieve this ambition, it is essential that schools remain sustainable, reflect the needs of our local communities, and are equipped with the best possible learning environments.</p>
Proposal to establish a new school building for St Richard Gwyn High school and increase its capacity from 813 places to 1,050 places from September 2025.	<p>43 responses received in total, with 100% supportive of the proposal, no objections.</p> <p>60% of respondents were members of staff, 30% were parents or guardians and remaining 10% were local residents and parents of past pupils (left within the last two years).</p> <p>Issues raised:</p>	<p>Delivery of the proposal to provide additional capacity at St Richard Gwyn High school. This school serves Vale wide.</p> <p>The new development will provide capacity for 1,050 places with 60 place SRB in line with the increase in local housing developments at Sully, Barry and Penarth.</p> <p>The Vale is committed to ensuring that all pupils have every</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption</li> <li>• Revenue funding for the Specialist resource base.</li> <li>• Suitable active travel routes</li> <li>• All issues addressed as part of the response report.</li> </ul>	<p>opportunity to attain the best possible outcomes. To achieve this ambition, it is essential that schools remain sustainable, reflect the needs of our local communities, and are equipped with the best possible learning environments.</p>
<p>Stanwell School change from Foundation School to Community Maintained School from September 2024.</p>	<p>106 responses received in total with no objections received. 56 (53%) respondents were in support of the proposal. 50 (47%) respondents were not in support of the proposal.</p> <p>Largest group of respondents were parents or guardians. 45 responses received in total. 20 (44 %) were in favour of the proposal and 25 (56%) were not in favour.</p> <p>The second largest group of respondents were staff members with 28 responses. 24 (86%) were in favour and 4 (14 %) were not in support.</p> <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council determining the funding distribution.</li> <li>• Concerns around admissions impact on learning outcomes</li> <li>• Approach to feeder schools.</li> <li>• All issues addressed as part of the response report.</li> </ul>	<p>The consultation determined the change in school status. The change ensures that the school benefits from the Council’s support in a number of areas including funding, greater working relationships and pupil wellbeing.</p> <p>Changing to a community-maintained school provides a fairer admission policy.</p>
<p>School-based policies for the Learning Links Team (LLT)</p>	<p>Engaged with distinct learner groups, parents/carers, schools and Children and Young People Services (CYPS) on relevant policies and action plans.</p> <p>The outcome of conversations was captured through the Equality Impact Assessment Process (EIA) with suggestions from different stakeholders incorporated in the policies and action plans. The groups requested that plans are reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis.</p>	<p>For young carers, the updated action plan meant that schools were reminded on engagement visits of the local authority process. The result was an increase in learners being identified, then referred to the Families First Advice Line and being recorded as a young carer. This meant they could receive the matched support from CYPS. For learners from the global majority, including multilingual, there was an explicit request for an Anti-Racism Policy, and this was then drafted with them, their families and schools.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
		<p>For Services children, the Ministry of Defence Local Authority action plan was changed to reflect the views of learners, their families and their schools. All actions identified in the action plan were completed. The Vale was the first LA to have an action plan where all the actions were RAG rated as green.</p> <p>The views of children open to CYPS, including Children Looked After were reflected in the updated Corporate Strategy for Children in Need of Care and Support.</p>
<p>Public events at Penarth Pavilion 2023/24: Feedback</p>	<p>35 Pavilion event feedback surveys were completed by 363 members of the public.</p> <p>The key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% rated the event they attended as excellent.</li> <li>• 76% said they would be very likely to attend future events based on the event they attended.</li> <li>• 81% rated the staff they met at the Pavilion as being extremely friendly.</li> <li>• 78% rated the event they attended to be very good value for money.</li> <li>• Regarding marketing of events, feedback identified that social media postings, advertising posters around the Pavilion building and marketing e-shots, were the most popular marketing channels for events.</li> <li>• To the question, “what kind of events would you like to see at Penarth Pavilion”, popular responses were: children’s events, live music, cinema, classical concerts, baby and toddler events, jazz concerts, art exhibitions, tea dance events, jazz festival, afternoon</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback has helped inform event programming to ensure a consistent programme of live music events. Consequently, Penarth Pavilion is continuing its partnership with the Royal Welsh College of Music &amp; Drama.</p> <p>Afternoon cinema reintroduced on a fortnightly basis, showing a mix of recent releases and film classics.</p> <p>The Pavilion has reached out to local dance/yoga instructors to establish interest in holding weekly classes at the venue.</p> <p>Four more cabaret nights and four Halloween discos have been programmed for 2024/25.</p> <p>The monthly art history talks regularly sell out and the feedback has helped inform which artists to feature.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	events, tribute acts, cabaret nights, art demonstrations.	
Attendance leads within Vale Secondary and Primary Schools	<p>The findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% satisfaction with the referral process regarding attendance concerns.</li> <li>• 100% satisfaction with the accessibility to Inclusion officer and with the support received.</li> <li>• Over 83% considered the attendance toolkit helpful.</li> <li>• 100% satisfaction with Vale Attendance Forum.</li> </ul>	<p>Survey findings confirmed that the LA's approach to raising schools attendance is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Attendance Forums continue to be delivered on a termly basis. Fixed Penalty Notice training has been expanded and the Attendance Toolkit kept under review to ensure it is effective.</p>
'Youthy' 18+ Youth Club	<p>Key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all young people requested they would like support with CV writing, employment support, life skills and internet safety.</li> <li>• Young people said if they were to attend an 18+ youth club, they would be interested in activities such as cooking, music and gaming.</li> <li>• Community groups were the most popular choice of how young people aged over 18 would like to meet.</li> </ul>	<p>In response to feedback, staff have started sessions at Pod in Barry to run life skills sessions on budgeting, employment skills etc.</p> <p>Cooking is a frequent activity that is run in Youthy 18+, and it is requested termly by the members.</p>
Half term Alternative Offer for Young People	<p>February half term feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of 181 contacts, 17 young people responded to the survey.</li> <li>• Sessions were rated 4.82 out of 5.</li> <li>• 24% of respondents fed back that they loved having dodgeball and basketball as part of the sport offer.</li> <li>• Part of the offer included a participation team day trip. 12% of the attendees for this fed back they would like a longer trip.</li> </ul> <p>Easter half term feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of 237 contacts, 19 young people responded to the survey.</li> </ul>	<p>A more varied sport offer saw improved take up and this will inform future planning of alternative offers. Summer will see the delivery of 'youth sports festivals' across the Vale.</p> <p>Feedback from February suggested that young people wanted more dodgeball games. This was included in the Easter offer and proved popular again.</p> <p>Summer will see the continuation of our archery offer, and potentially the opportunity to get more staff members archery trained.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sessions received a rating of 4.59 out of 5.</li> <li>• Feedback from the young people about the sessions was great, with 26% of young people saying they really enjoyed the archery games.</li> <li>• Improvements included 18% of the respondents saying they would like longer sessions.</li> </ul>	
<p>Make Your Mark – UK Youth Parliament consultation for 11-18 year olds</p>	<p>4,837 young people took part in the consultation (29th January - 8th March) across all Vale secondary schools and youth provisions.</p> <p>Key priorities for the Vale were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 856 young people voted Health and Wellbeing.</li> <li>• 847 young people voted Culture Media and Sport.</li> <li>• 618 young people voted Jobs, Economy and Benefits.</li> </ul>	<p>Detailed findings by area (Central, Eastern and rural Vale) have been shared widely across directorate teams, and via the Public Participation Practitioners Network to inform planning of future events, provision, and to shape service delivery. For example, Regeneration and Planning colleagues using priorities to support funding bids in Barry in relation to Levelling Up Funds.</p> <p>Findings have also informed planning of Vale Youth Service summer events with a sports focus – ‘Sports Fests’ are being organised across Central, Eastern and Rural Vale that are freely accessible.</p> <p>An additional Vale Youth Service event has been organised ‘Rights Fest’ to celebrate young people’s rights through expressive arts, centred around Make Your Mark Event.</p> <p>Findings have also informed partnership work e.g. with Sports and Play in developing their sports offer.</p> <p>In response to culture, media being an identified priority for young people, the Vale Youth Service are exploring further work with Bro Radio.</p> <p>Well-being service exploring further partnership working with Platform</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
		<p>to support young people’s well-being in the Vale of Glamorgan.</p> <p>Young people through the School Council Network have fed into the development of the Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Well-being Strategy.</p>
Replacement Local Development Plan	<p>Some support for the Strategy, and some objection to the level of and location of proposed growth. Some objections on the basis of too much growth, some on too little growth.</p> <p>Produced consultation report which addresses and responds to all of the representations received.</p>	<p>Changes have been proposed to the wording of strategic policies as a result of feedback.</p> <p>Feedback relating to the need for Placemaking will result in specific work with Town and Community Councils in order to understand and respond to needs/priorities regarding those communities.</p>
Placemaking Plans (Relevant to OBJ 4)	<p>Engaged with the 4 towns in various ways over the last year, ensuring that we are capturing the voice of all of the community, including younger people, older people, businesses and residents.</p> <p>Cowbridge engagement opportunities have included: Coronation community picnic May 23, Mayors coffee morning June 23, Traders event Oct 23, Open Day at Cowbridge Comprehensive Nov 23, Dementia Friendly Nov 23, Residents drop-in Jan 24, School council reps meeting, Residents drop-ins @ public houses – Aberthin and Cowbridge Feb 24, Waitrose drop-in Session Feb 24, Fortnightly meetings with Town Council, and website survey.</p> <p>Emerging opportunities and issues in Cowbridge include young people, connectivity, green space and evening economy.</p> <p>Penarth engagement opportunities have included: ‘To the Sea’ event Sept 23, Xmas lights turn on Dec 23, Down Hill Derby</p>	This data from the wide-ranging community mapping exercises undertaken in Partnership with Town Councils will inform the Placemaking Plans.



What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<p>event July 24, Penarth Civic Society meetings, website survey.</p> <p>Emerging opportunities and issues in Llantwit Major are currently being collated.</p> <p>Llantwit Major engagement opportunities have included: Llantwit Food Festival June 23, Aging Well Group Oct 23, Traders Focus Group Oct 23, Residents drop-in Nov 23, Youth club Jan 24, Food bank Feb 24, Horticultural Society Feb 24, Toddler group Feb 24, Music in Mind Feb 24 and Probus Feb 24.</p> <p>Emerging opportunities and issues in Llantwit Major are currently being collated.</p>	
<p>Your Place; PSB (Public Services Board) Tackling Deprivation Project</p>	<p>Completion of the discovery phase of the project. This stage has involved open conversations to gather views on a range of unspecified topics and has seen the Senior Community Development Officer attend over 100 community engagement sessions/activities to build connections and trust with local stakeholders including residents. Attended 24 community locations over 53 sessions engaging with 365 people, including food pantries, warm spaces, community groups, local events, religious centres, veterans clubs, the library, youth clubs, community centres and social housing door knocking. Additionally, engaged with 54 professionals working in the area over 24 sessions. This has included school heads, family engagers, food pantry leads, police, elected members, faith leaders and key community figures.</p>	<p>Insight from this engagement has supported a number of community funding bids, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oakfield School Beacon community hub has been granted Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding to begin the process of research for a community focused centre on the site.</li> <li>• Pencoedtre High food tech classes has received Food Vale funding for its key stage 4 and ALN classes, allowing a new generation of the community to build confidence in preparing healthier meals.</li> <li>• Youth service mobile youth bus has received SPF funding to provide youth services directly in the Gibbonsdown area in line with what the community wants.</li> <li>• Outdoor refuse areas have been created at social housing flats in Gibbonsdown and Court following engagement reporting flats storing rubbish inside in communal areas.</li> </ul>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<p>Common themes of assets and challenges have been collated. Top 5 challenges people face in these areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neurodiversity</li> <li>• Youth concerns (e.g. Pencoedre High School, lack of resources, poor education, crime)</li> <li>• Transport – in particular buses</li> <li>• Fly tipping</li> <li>• Anxiety/lack of confidence</li> </ul> <p>Assets regularly mentioned are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green spaces including beaches</li> <li>• Family engagers, Communities for Work (C4W), housing – consistent members of staff</li> <li>• Close knit community feel</li> </ul> <p>The discovery phase has driven identification of the following emerging themes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Well-being</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Connectivity</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Safety and security</li> <li>• Services</li> </ul> <p>These common themes have been linked with statistical evidence from the WIMD 2019 report and the 2021 census to drive discussion with the PSB Steering Group to help determine the next steps for the project which will involve more focused engagement around set themes moving on to action planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Railings have been installed in Gibbonsdown to improve active travel routes for wheelchair users following reports of unsafe routes.</li> </ul> <p>The next phases of the project will involve more focused engagement around set themes moving on to action planning.</p>

### What our regulators said

Review	Findings	Our response
<a href="#">Estyn inspection of the Local Authority's Education Service</a>	<p>Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, the local authority and the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSC) work well together to consider</li> </ul>	<p>To improve the quality and use of information about learning and teaching, with a particular focus on skills (literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh in English medium</p>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<p>the performance of their schools. Officers make helpful use of this information about pupils' well-being and outcomes. There is a good understanding of many aspects of its schools' work, for example attendance and provision for additional learning needs (ALN). However, there is not clear enough oversight of the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making in their learning in all schools and this reduces the ability to target resources for school improvement. The local authority has not ensured that CSC consistently provides helpful information about these aspects for all schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority provides strong support for its schools in relation to supporting pupils with ALN and officers have worked well to strategically plan and deliver support for schools to prepare for the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET). In addition, support for schools to improve pupils' attendance is generally effective.</li> <li>• Members, senior leaders and officers are committed to reducing the impact of poverty on children and young people and work in this area has focussed closely on improving well-being, supporting families and addressing food insecurity. Work to improve the learning, progress and attainment of pupils living in low-income households is at an early stage of development. The local authority works effectively with young people and ensures</li> </ul>	<p>schools), the CSC has designed, developed and promoted a regional professional learning (PL) offer for skills to align to local authority and national priorities, school improvement priorities as well as the terms of the Local Authority Education Grant.</p> <p>Since introduction of the offer in July 2024, 16 schools (30% of Vale schools) have engaged with PL for Languages, Literacy and Communication, Maths and Numeracy and digital. Five additional schools have requested bespoke support for skills (either literacy, numeracy or digital). Two secondary schools have also received bespoke support on the strategic leadership of cross curricular skills.</p> <p>A set of rubrics have been developed to allow Improvement Partner teams to provide high quality information to the LA about the leadership, provision and progression in skills at a school level. Following final quality assurance and PL, these will be rolled out for use from September 2024.</p> <p>As part of sharpening our focus on evaluation and improvement processes, an initial workshop has been undertaken in the form of an appreciative inquiry. This focused on identifying what currently works well, what the challenges are in evidencing impact of our work and identification of potential solutions going forward. We are now researching best practice to inform how we develop our approach and proposals will then be presented to the departmental management team for their consideration and prioritisation.</p>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<p>that the number of them that do not remain in education, employment or training is low. This work is a particular strength.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-directorate working is a notable strength of the local authority's work. The shared ambitions and cross directorate planning have secured effective working across all directorates that has supported education services well. This has helped the local authority to prioritise funding for education and work collaboratively, for example work with resources and social services to provide rounded support for school, children and young people and their families.</li> </ul> <p>There were two recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R1: Sharpen the focus of evaluation and improvement processes.</li> <li>• R2: Improve the quality and use of information about learning and teaching in schools to enable the local authority to best direct its resources towards areas for improvement.</li> </ul>	
<p><a href="#">Estyn inspection of Youth Service</a></p>	<p>Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vale of Glamorgan youth service is strongly based on the voice of young people and on providing the support that they need to grow as confident and informed citizens.</li> <li>• There is a clear vision for the service co-written with young people.</li> <li>• The quality of youth work is consistently high. Youth workers are very clear about the principles of youth work and reflect this in their practice.</li> </ul>	<p>The Youth Service continue to contract the URDD to deliver our Welsh language provision across the Vale; we are working in line with the WESP and targets set within to develop the wider reach. Staff training is offered to upskill and forms part of a range of opportunities alongside Continual Professional Development. This is a long-term strategy for the service. Our contract with the Urdd includes all aspects of Welsh youth work, this includes English speaking school lunch clubs, afterschool sessions, youth club, summer and</p>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an appropriate blend of universal and targeted provision. Provision is adaptable and available at weekends and in school holidays. It is responsive to demand and allows the service to deploy resources effectively.</li> <li>• Service planning, quality management and the use of data are robust. Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate. All staff are suitably qualified and registered with the Education Workforce Council. There is an ethos of continual development and reflection and a strong ongoing commitment to professional learning across the service.</li> <li>• Where opportunities exist, young people engage usefully in the Welsh language activities but overall, access to Welsh medium activities is not equally available to young people from all parts of the Vale. In addition, the range of opportunities to support staff to improve and use their Welsh language skills are underdeveloped.</li> <li>• There was one recommendation: Develop opportunities for Welsh medium and bilingual youth work provision.</li> </ul>	<p>holiday activities, and additional one to one support. All work is on track and evidenced within the WESP report.</p> <p>Corporate training is also offered to all staff, however take-up has been limited. There is the need to consider a wider strategy to support staff to develop Welsh language skills to support future delivery, whilst balancing this with the need to deliver other key strategies and Continual Professional Development to support service delivery. Where possible looking to ensure any recruitment moving forward will be targeted in its approach to delivering services that align to staff having their Welsh language, also conversations will discuss options available in partnership with the Urdd of having a Welsh language apprentice.</p>
<p><a href="#">Review of the Planning Service's Governance arrangements</a></p> <p>This regulatory report is also relevant to WBO4</p>	<p>The review of the Council's Planning Service governance arrangements concluded that the Service clearly aligned to the corporate well-being objectives, has a supportive working culture and effectively supports the Council deliver its well-being objectives, but there are some gaps in governance arrangements, making some procedures unclear.</p>	<p>Feedback from Planning Committee, Environment &amp; Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and the Governance &amp; Audit Committee is helping to shape the draft planning protocol. This will be circulated for further comment including with the Public Services Board partners. Following the engagement, the protocol will be considered by Cabinet, and</p>

Review	Findings	Our response
	<p>R1: The Council should strengthen its Planning Service’s governance arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a plain language Planning Protocol and include it in the constitution and on the Planning Service Council webpage so that it is easily accessible to members and the public. The Council should ensure members and officers understand and act in accordance with the Planning Protocol.</li> <li>• agreeing a Terms of Reference for the Council’s Planning Committee to clearly state its purpose, role and responsibilities. The Council should regularly review this Terms of Reference.</li> <li>• undertaking its planned review of the Scheme of Delegation to ensure the Planning Committee is focussed on the most strategically important planning applications.</li> <li>• ensure planning applications submitted by, or on behalf of, the officers in the Planning service and supporting services are considered by the Planning Committee and not under officer delegated powers, to safeguard against any perceived conflicts of interest and to promote independence and transparency</li> </ul> <p>R2: The Council’s Planning Service should clearly present its performance measures and targets in its service plan.</p>	<p>Governance &amp; Audit Committee prior to Full Council for approval.</p>

**Our key challenges**

- There is a need to continue to work with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service to address challenges with driving school improvement.

- Growing demand for social, emotional and mental health services outstrips our resources and capacity to meet needs. The reduction in Whole School Approach Grant (WSA) funding by Welsh Government has hindered plans to extend the school counselling service.
- Attendance levels continue to remain an area of concern across certain schools and clusters of schools. Secondary attendance continues to remain an area of focus with performance a reported performance of 84.96% against a target of 92%.
- Exclusions, specifically Secondary exclusions remain a significant concern with performance (0.09%) below our annual target of 0.04%. The rise in exclusions nationally is a pan Wales issue, post pandemic. Whilst the rate of exclusions is low when compared with other local authorities, this remains an area of concern.
- Year 13 NEETs has increased from 2.46% to 3.59% with biggest increase seen in the cohort of learners who have barriers that are preventing them from progressing. This is the highest number in this category for year 13 leavers for many years in the Vale.
- The exponential increase in learners presenting with complex ALN, particularly relating to neurodiversity and social, emotional and mental health needs continues to impact on the capacity of centralised staff to meet those needs. Additionally, there is a need to continue to work with our local providers to ensure there is sufficient variety of provision to meet identified needs.
- Financial challenges linked to uncertainty of funding over the coming year, especially when a number of our services are dependent on grant funding.
- Ongoing skill shortages, supply and cost pressures associated with capital and other major projects including the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme are becoming ever more challenging with reducing budgets.
- There are challenges around enhancing access to public arts and events, particularly for underrepresented groups on a cost neutral basis.
- Accessing new UK government funding streams such as Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds require considerable input of resources to build cases to access the funding. This is time and resource intensive particularly as they are due to end at the end of March 2025 and no replacement funding has been identified.
- Significant resource challenges posed in meeting the requirement to set up the Long-Term Plan For Towns Board and prepare a long-term Plan, with the Board required to be in place by 1st April and Plan produced by 1st August.
- The success of placemaking plans remains dependent on the support from communities and active involvement of Town Councils.
- There are challenges with capacity and the skillsets required to take forward major projects and support UK Government funding packages already secured (secured funding for major regeneration projects totalling £42M).

### **Areas for future focus**

- Work with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service to ensure up to date oversight of the quality of teaching and pupil progress to effectively target resources for school improvement.
- Support and challenge schools to raise levels of attendance with an emphasis on the secondary sector and specialist provision, whilst tackling persistent absence and addressing emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and needs of vulnerable learners.
- Develop whole school capacity to meet the increasing trend of learners presenting with SEMH needs and collaborate with Welsh Government and providers to explore opportunities to enhance capacity to deliver therapeutic interventions and counselling to meet growth in demand.
- Embed a preventative approach to minimising rates of fixed term and permanent exclusions through effective support and challenge of schools and the development of mechanisms to enhance early intervention.
- Reduce the overall rate of NEETs across the Vale through effective tracking of at-risk learners and embedding strategies to ensure early identification and intervention.

- Ensure sufficiency and variety of provision to meet the growth in learners presenting with complex Additional learning Needs, particularly relating to neurodiversity and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Continued focus on effectively leveraging external capital and revenue funding to support our communities and businesses and invest in our assets using financial assistance in the form of Transforming Towns, Placemaking Grant, and Loan Scheme to target empty and underutilised buildings in our Town Centres.
- Progress Placemaking Plans for the 4 main towns in the Vale of Glamorgan to support the economic and sustainable growth of our communities.
- Continue to work with Passenger Transport operators and the City Region to increase bus service provision to meet demand.
- Take forward plans to transform Barry in line with local priorities.
- Increase capacity and establish good governance systems and structures within the Project Management Unit to support a collaborative agenda and the delivery of major council projects.
- Build on good relationships with local education establishments, the Central South Consortium, independent apprenticeship providers and local employers to expand the local Apprenticeship offer, with a particular focus on 16-24 year olds

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## WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3: To support people at home and in their community

*We will work in partnership to maximise people’s physical and mental well-being to ensure they are safe at home and in the community and are able to make choices that support their overall well-being. We are committed to ensuring people have the necessary advice, care and support when they need it.*

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 3		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 3
		Green		Amber		Red		
Actions Measures		Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions Measures <sup>3</sup>
103	54	100(97%)	17(55%)	0 (0%)	4(13%)	3(3%)	10(32%)	<b>GREEN</b>

Overall performance (RAG) status for Well-being Objective 3 is **GOOD**. This judgement reflects the good progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period.

### What we said we’d do in our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

What we said we’d do	Performance Status
1 Co-ordinate a response that supports our residents, business, the third sector and council staff with the impact of the cost of living crisis including addressing food, fuel and period poverty through work with schools, a range of community initiatives and administration of funding schemes.	<b>Green</b>
2 Provide residents with advice, support, signposting and information on a range of issues including housing, debt, fuel poverty and energy costs, benefits, employment, and training through a number of services including the one stop shop, Money Advice Team and the Benefits Team.	<b>Green</b>
3 Take action to protect the vulnerable from illegal money lending activities & ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to protect consumers from food hygiene risks recognising the potential impact of the cost of living crisis.	<b>Green</b>
4 Work in partnership with Government, third sector partners and support providers to resettle vulnerable households into the Vale of Glamorgan and provide the services and support they require.	<b>Green</b>
5 Work in partnership with the Public Services Board to address health inequities, promote vaccination & screening and to implement the Move More, Eat Well Plan with a particular focus on reaching people in our more deprived communities.	<b>Green</b>
6 Work in partnership to facilitate and promote inclusive opportunities for leisure, play and sports development and arts and cultural services with a focus on tackling inequalities, the promotion of health and well-being and areas where there have previously been low participation rates.	<b>Green</b>
7 Continue to diversify the offer from our libraries in their role as hubs within the community.	<b>Green</b>

<sup>3</sup> RAG performance status was not applicable for 23 measures as they were either establishing baseline performance for 2023/24 or the data was not yet available.

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
8 Strengthen existing partnership arrangements with the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board in particular through the Regional Partnership Board and by working through the Vale Alliance to develop and implement more integrated models of care including meeting accommodation needs.	Green
9 Refocus the way domiciliary care is provided to enhance the individual's voice & control over their care arrangements through the expansion of 'Your Choice'.	Green
10 Work with community leaders/ partners and use the experience gained through the work in Llantwit Major to review and transform the range of support available to older people within their community.	Green
11 Work co-productively with children and their families through a strengths-based model to improve outcomes and enhance wellbeing.	Green
12 Deliver the priorities of the Regional Safeguarding Board, ensuring effective arrangements are in place to protect children and adults at risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation.	Green
13 Work with partners to promote and enhance community safety including priorities for positive social cohesion and community protection ensuring that we safeguard and support those who are most vulnerable including work on domestic violence, sexual violence and serious violence.	Green
14 Work with partners to implement the Youth Offending Service Post Inspection Action Plan, to enhance young people's outcomes.	Green
15 Maximise Council house building and acquisition opportunities including 138 new Council homes on six sites throughout the Vale.	Green
16 Implement a Local Housing strategy to address current and projected housing need and to increase the supply of good quality, accessible and affordable housing.	Green
17 Produce an Older Persons Housing Strategy to secure the best quality of life for older people living in the Vale & to enable older people to live as independently as possible in later life.	Green
18 Work with partners to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide housing and associated support including maximising the use of the homelessness prevention grant to sustain tenancies, expanding the supply of temporary accommodation and minimising the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.	Green

## What we've achieved

<p><b>1 . Co-ordinate a response that supports our residents, business, the third sector and council staff with the impact of the cost of living crisis including addressing food, fuel and period poverty through work with schools, a range of community initiatives and administration of funding schemes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established a cost-of-living reserve of <b>£854K</b> to fund work to alleviate the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis including supporting existing warm spaces and creation of new spaces across the Vale.</li> <li>- Over <b>700</b> adults have been supported through CELT+ (an employability project) and the Pod service to seek employment. Employment mentors worked with <b>95 young people</b> with <b>13</b> entering supported employment.</li> <li>- <b>31</b> community support organisations including <b>14</b> schools benefitted from the Council's cost of living grant totalling <b>£25k</b>.</li> <li>- Just under <b>£4million</b> of Shared Prosperity funding supporting projects across the Vale that provide a range of services for young people such as leisure activities including bike hire, skate parks and improved green spaces as well as the PSB tackling Deprivation and Poverty programme and a GVS grant scheme supporting community organisations and our communities most in need.</li> </ul>
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- **571** engagements achieved against a profile of **450** with **120** job entries and 57 training outcomes achieved through the communities for Work (CfW+) initiative.
- Collaborated with **Food Vale** and the **University Health Board** to survey Vale schools to understand appetite for local growing in school grounds, opportunities to fund cooking related activities in communities, and understanding and tackling food poverty, particularly in the Western Vale.
- **Over 90%** of infant pupils have taken up a Primary Free School Meal since its launch in September 2022, the highest uptake of all Welsh local authorities.
- **3118** School Essentials Grants have been awarded to assist families on low income to buy school uniform, sports kit, uniform for enrichment activities, school bags and stationery.
- Employability support is available at **11** different venues in the Vale to ensure outreach to people in the community. Venues include the Gathering Place in St Athan, CF61 in Llantwit Major, Castleland Community Centre, and the Buttrills community centre in Barry.
- Proactively **promoted cost of Living webpages** which signposts citizens to information on help and support available to residents through Council services and wider organisations including help with bills, help with food, finding employment, help with threatened homelessness, and health and well-being. The Webpages have been reviewed and received nearly **33,000** views this year.
- Successfully secured additional Welsh Government funding which has extended work at the **Pencoedre Learning Community** to tackle poverty via Family Engagement Officers and a Community Focused Schools Manager, resulting in a positive impact on school attendance and increased family and community engagement.
- **8,977** residents were assisted with their Council Tax charge through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with nearly **£11.532M** paid out in 2023/24.
- **44** organisations offering over **70** different volunteering opportunities benefitting local volunteers and businesses as part of the Value in the Vale scheme. **100%** of volunteers questioned said they were happy with their volunteering placement
- Free healthy snacks provided at **90** sessions of free open access playscheme and/or Play Ranger sessions delivered across all school holidays with **2,035** recorded participations, ensuring access to healthy food during holidays.
- **53** free play sessions delivered in outdoor community settings after-school or during weekends in term-time via play cubes with **732** participations. Further free play opportunities delivered in partnership with Flying Start, Foster & Adoption, Dinas Powys Library, Barry Town Council and Rotary Club at 7 family fun days accruing over **1,500** participations involving **1,000** families.
- The Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy makes specific reference to **allotment spaces** to encourage people to grow their own food in response to the cost of living crisis.
- Introduced and promoted a **Play Friendly Schools Scheme** with **21** primary schools already expressing an interest in the scheme. Four schools, St Helen's, High Street, Colcot and Jenner Park Primary Schools are being progressed into a pilot scheme supported by Welsh Government funding. Also promoted the **Play Streets scheme** with 2 streets in Barry successfully running a pilot scheme for a year. Both schemes aim to increase low cost/no cost community-based play for children.
- Targeted additional support to families with children on Free School Meals during the School Summer Holidays to the tune of **£220,000**.
- **631** people participated in taster adult learning activities during the summer with a further **400** engaged in taster sessions at 28 events.
- **All Youth Service venues are warm and safe hubs**, providing a range of activities based on healthy living providing warm drinks and food, and activities and sessions are free, with no cost to any young person attending any open access clubs. Hygiene and period dignity products are also provided at all clubs.
- Established **61** Period Dignity Collection Points in community settings across the Vale of Glamorgan including within Libraries, Civic Centres, Leisure Centres, Foodbanks, Gyms, Hostels, Youth Centres, Family Centres and Day Centres. All schools have accessed awareness sessions with over **2,000** bags provided to school pupils.

- Three schools delivered the **'Food & Fun scheme** targeting vulnerable children and young people over the summer break to give them access to free physical activities, healthy food as well as healthy eating advice, with an average **77%** attendance rate.
- Established a **Vale Food Security Working Group through Food Vale**, bringing together local food support providers to share learning, tackle emerging issues, and identify opportunities to work together to tackle food insecurity. Co-produced a draft Local Food Strategy with local growers, local food sellers, community members and food support providers.
- **Over £100,000** of Welsh Government funding has supported existing food partnerships such as the Llantwit Major Food Project, Vale Food Bank, Big Bocs Bwyd, Penarth Food Pod and new projects such as the Wick Food Hub and Food Share Pantry in St Athan further enhancing support to our communities. Over 8,660 food parcels distributed over the year.
- Nearly **100** members of staff accessed financial well-being support and training as part of a package of employee cost of living support measures.

**2. Provide residents with advice, support, signposting and information on a range of issues including housing, debt, fuel poverty and energy costs, benefits, employment, and training through a number of services including the one stop shop, Money Advice Team and the Benefits Team.**

- The **Family Information Service** has achieved the **Families First Quality Award**, recognising the excellent information, advice and assistance provided to families. Nearly 100% of service users were satisfied with services provided.
- The Family Information Service received over **1,420** queries in relation to childcare matters with 76% of these from parents and carers and the remaining 14% from childcare providers and other professionals. Additionally, there was nearly **40,000** web page views on childcare matters. **91%** rated their experience as excellent or very good. **86%** said support, advice or information provided was very helpful or helpful.
- Registered **153** children on the Index for Children with Disabilities or Additional Needs and promoted services in the community to parents, guardians and carers.
- All new tenants are provided a face to face appointment with a **Money Advisor** to ensure that appropriate benefits are claimed to cover housing costs.
- The One Stop Shop on Holton Road provided immediate access to advice and support and assisted **773** people with short, focussed interventions during the year with an average of 24 days in time spent receiving support.
- Implemented the **Refernet system** improve referrals to and from Citizen's Advice Service and/or other agencies.
- Raised awareness of illegal money lending and supported **25 victims** of loan sharks.
- Proactively promoted support available to Vale residents via the energy company E.On to support households in poorly insulated homes to make them more energy efficient and lessen the impact of rising bills. **25** ECO4 Flex applications have been approved to date. Additionally, **8** households have taken up the offer of interest free housing loans to make their properties more energy efficient.
- **Over 880** people accessed the armed forces/veterans advice service and were provided with advice and signposted to relevant council services and received tailored support, **330 were finance and benefits specific related enquiries**. The Service has received 3,244 referrals, 4,889 enquiries of which 1,262 were finance and benefits related enquiries since 2019.

**3. Take action to protect the vulnerable from illegal money lending activities & ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to protect consumers from food hygiene risks recognising the potential impact of the cost of living crisis.**

- **25** victims of illegal money lending supported during the year. Training on illegal money lending delivered to **21** different organisations training over **500** people. In addition, **13** public events attended to raise awareness of loan sharks.

- **90%** of reported scams/ doorstep crime incidents were prevented or resolved through intervention. Dealt with **151** doorstep crimes and **185** scams over the year.
- Nearly **97%** (1205) of Vale food establishments achieved a food hygiene rating of 3, with performance above the UK average.
- As part of preventative work, visited GP surgeries throughout the Vale to **raise awareness of how to spot scams and doorstep crime**, and how to report these for support and investigation and provided training to 50+ Forum volunteers on the same issues.
- **100%** (383) high risk food premises inspected during the year.
- Nearly **97%** (82) significant breaches rectified by Trading Standards intervention during the year.
- **100%** (2) Vale specific investigations relating to rogue trader offences resulted in successful prosecutions.

**4. Work in partnership with Government, third sector partners and support providers to resettle vulnerable households into the Vale of Glamorgan and provide the services and support they require.**

- Refugee households continue to be supported to settle into new homes across the Vale.
- A **90** unit scheme of modular accommodation is nearing completion at the former Eagleswell school site, Llantwit Major, and will provide accommodation to Ukrainian households forced to flee the war in Ukraine.
- **185** Ukrainian individuals supported across the Vale of Glamorgan.
- **144** people supported across other resettlement schemes.

**5. Work in partnership with the Public Services Board to address health inequities, promote vaccination & screening and to implement the Move More, Eat Well Plan with a particular focus on reaching people in our more deprived communities.**

- Worked in partnership to promote and support childcare and early years settings to achieve **Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award accreditation** as part of Move More Eat Well agenda.
- Delivered a **healthy start voucher scheme**, a number of **food insecurity projects**, and the **Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school scheme** as part of the Move More Eat Well Plan.
- Worked in partnership with the Health Board to **promote key health messages** e.g. MMR vaccination, delivery of foodwise in pregnancy sessions, get cooking and NYLO sessions and the Ageing Well national exercise referral programme.
- The **Senior Community Development Worker** who is undertaking work in our most deprived areas has worked closely with the UHB Immunisations Team to **link with schools and communities and provide information about childhood immunisations**.
- Worked as part of the Cardiff and Vale Amplifying Prevention Board to **promote key public health messages in areas where there is low take up of screening and immunisations**.

**6. Work in partnership to facilitate and promote inclusive opportunities for leisure, play and sports development and arts and cultural services with a focus on tackling inequalities, the promotion of health and well-being and areas where there have previously been low participation rates.**

- 268 partners involved in delivering a programme of inclusive activities across the Vale with a focus on increasing participation in leisure, play and physical activity.
- Over **42,500** participations in the **Active Young People Programme (AYP)** working with **133** organisations. Additionally, **26** schools benefited from nearly **£19K** AYP funding to support new extra-curricular physical activity clubs in response to pupil led consultation.

- **87%** (39) of primary schools and **100%** (8) of secondary schools and special school engaged in the in the **Active Schools** scheme with over **25,047** participations in over **1,105** sessions delivered with schools and through school-club links with a range of community clubs and coaches.
- **31** clubs benefitted from **£256,389** of **Be Active grant** funding with over **3,650** children taking part in primary challenges including the Daily Mile and foundation skills to be active for life; **140** young people participated in youth takeovers at our leisure centres to showcase opportunities available in the centres; **2529** participations in youth outdoor fitness sessions; **49** young people accessed the Energise YOUth scheme targeting least active 11-18 year olds; **60** young people attended over **38** sessions of the Kicks football project in Cadoxton and many more.
- Patronage at our leisure centres exceeded pre-covid levels for the first time since the pandemic with over **741,500** visits during the year.
- Proactively promoted inclusive opportunities for participating in sport and physical activity at our leisure centres through a variety of media, with nearly **750,00** website page views and **3.37m** reach on Instagram and Facebook.
- As part of the **Active Learning Scheme**, **501** individuals attended **64** different courses totalling **2502** training hours upskilling them to organise and deliver engaging, inclusive sport and physical activity opportunities. This contributed an additional **3432** voluntary hours which impacted positively on thousands of sessions and over **26,100** participations.
- Targeted inequality through projects providing **equipment loan** bags within food pods and libraries. This included **opportunities for young people with additional learning needs and disabilities**.
- **1352** children participated in **7** primary multi-sports events held across three different cluster areas, responding to improving school-club links, promoting opportunities and targeting the least active. **50%** of all Vale primary schools engaged.
- Trained training to **34** pre-school staff and childminders from **15** organisations to enable them to support their service users to become physically active, positively impacting on over **300** people. **100%** stated increased confidence to support children and their families to become more active.
- Over **5,500** residents participated our pilot active communities programme via our leisure centres.
- Provided **opportunities for improving the mental and physical well-being** of residents by hosting and promoting initiatives including the National Exercise Referral Scheme, Cardiac and Stroke Rehabilitation, Obesity.
- Collaborated on delivering a **wide range of ageing well activities** for all residents including Golden pass, walking football, walking netball, ageing badminton, Pickleball, concessionary swim, free swimming for 60+, musculoskeletal health hubs for ageing demographic (Good Boost, ESCAPEpain, 60+ independent living scheme project, and Arthritis Action coffee mornings) with a positive uptake of these schemes.
- Delivered a **balanced programme of activities targeting children and young people**, particularly under presented groups to increase participation including Young People Energise Youth, learn to swim, Holiday Camps, Outdoor Boot Camps, Sports Courses, Cardiff Kicks, Junior Gym, Parties, family swimming programmes, Inflatable sessions, Multi-sports, Promising Athlete Programme, and Rookie Lifeguard.
- **Over 3,500** people took up a **free 3 day leisure pass** to access our leisure centres and try out activities and our facilities as part of an ongoing offer to provide affordable opportunities to participate in leisure and sports activities.
- Increased opportunities through the **60+ Active Leisure Scheme** with **222** residents awarded a **Golden Pass** since the re-launch in August 2023. **72%** of participants completed at least 8 sessions on the Golden Pass. **92%** of participants who used their Golden Pass plan on continuing to attend a session or other physical activity, **64%** of participants who completed the programme reported an increase in confidence in taking part in physical activity and **54%** of participants who completed the programme reported an increase in social connections. **83%** of participants who completed the survey reported to have some form of disability, health condition or impairment.
- **90** sessions of free open access playscheme and Play Ranger sessions delivered across all school holidays with **over 2,000** recorded participations.

- Targeted work by the Healthy Living team in our most deprived and least active communities delivered **134** no cost sport/physical activity sessions impacting **699** children. **87%** of participants felt more motivated and confident to take part in activities and **60%** indicated that they wanted to join local clubs and continue their activities.
- Proactively promoted opportunities to participate in leisure, sports and physical activities at our leisure centres increasing our total reach to **nearly 3.4m** on Instagram and Facebook and a further **741.6K webpage** views.
- Increased memberships to over **5,500** fitness members per month at our leisure centres. On average, **2,502** customers per week participated in swimming lessons and a further 102, 658 attended fitness classes at our leisure centres, over the year.
- **1380** referrals were made by medical professionals to the Council's national exercise referral scheme with nearly half (**678**) of those meeting the criteria attending an initial assessment. **571** (84%) attended their first session of exercise with **219** (38.4%) completing the scheme. Nearly 1100% of those completing the scheme are still exercising with **87%** increasing their activity levels.
- The Pavilion continues its successful relationship with the Royal College of Music and Drama with events attracting an audience of **1,254** to the Pavilion.
- Enhanced **community facilities for residents using S106 contributions** including renewal and new outdoor fitness equipment and new tennis court fencing at Station Road East, new outdoor fitness equipment at Lougher Place, St. Athan, new tree, bulb and wildflower planting at Celtic Way Park, Rhoose and new play equipment installed at Drylla play area, Dinas Powys.
- **S106 contributions** helped to **provide new public art** for residents and visitors to enjoy including new murals in Lower and Upper Gladstone Gardens, Barry, new stained-glass windows installed in the former St. Paul's Church, Penarth, 'Bee Hapus' landscape art community garden completed at Heritage Gate development, Llantwit Major and new public art installed at Clare Gardens, Cowbridge.
- The **Pavilion's public arts and cultural events** generated **£32k** income and work is ongoing to review the operation and sustainability of the Arts service.
- The Events Network continues to thrive with **free events equipment available to support all events** in the Vale as part of a calendar of annual events to increase visitor numbers and footfall in towns in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Since December 2023 **over 100 filming requests**, generated nearly **£50k** of income to the Council, of which 20% will be re-invested back into Tourism and Events activities in the future. A new Filming portal has been developed as part of the Visit the Vale website [www.filminthevale.com](http://www.filminthevale.com).

#### **7. Continue to diversify the offer from our libraries in their role as hubs within the community.**

- **468,671** physical visits to our libraries and **107,836** virtual visits.
- Increased our well-being offer in libraries with **4,559** activities/ events attracting **71,682** participants. A further **10,611** people accessed advice and support sessions.
- **247** volunteers supported delivery on **20,176** hours via community and the local authority libraries.
- As part of supporting early literacy and creativity, our libraries hosted **2,049** children's events attended by **28,219** children and young people. Additionally, **335** school visit sessions were attended by **8,645** Vale pupils.
- Promoted our assets as **community learning spaces** offering a wide range of opportunities, informed by extensive engagement at taster and other events to meet local needs.
- Collaborated with partners to deliver a **wide range of new activities in our libraries** including a Jigsaw Club and Breastfeeding Club in Barry Library, a French Conversation class in Llantwit Library, Rhoose Library hosting a monthly Menopause Group, Cowbridge Library hosting two successful author talks with Huw Thomas and Louise Mumford and Dinas hosting Tai chi sessions and many more.
- **Increased the range of learning opportunities** available through provision of an **extensive learning programme, skills and employability programme** and a **digital skills programme**. Delivered **357** digital 1-1 sessions across our libraries and supported provided **318** residents via a digital drop-in service.

- **2,198** age friendly events delivered across our libraries with **22,048** people attending.
- Our home library service volunteers made **416** home visits to residents who can no longer get to their local library and provide **6** care homes with a selection of books on a three-month loan basis.
- In response to concerns by residents and small local businesses on the impact of local high street bank closures, we **piloted a banking hub at our Penarth and Barry libraries** which has been very successful and are working with other banking partners to explore opportunities to expand this to more libraries.
- **1,418** people participated in **275** makerspace events in our in makerspaces in Penarth and Barry, increasing opportunities for developing and improving digitally creative skills of our local communities.
- Our community libraries were supported by **171** volunteers giving **16,614** volunteer hours.
- The **Welsh Public Library Standards** identified a **95%** overall satisfaction with our library services. **96%** of people who attended training sessions said it helped them achieve their goals, and **99%** of adults thought that our libraries are enjoyable, safe and inclusive environments. Young people gave our libraries a **9 out of 10 rating** and **89%** felt that the library helps them learn and find things out.

**8. Strengthen existing partnership arrangements with the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board in particular through the Regional Partnership Board and by working through the Vale Alliance to develop and implement more integrated models of care including meeting accommodation needs.**

- Health and Well-being services in the Vale via Dewis Cymru received around **250,00 views**, with **1,111** resources available to people in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Our integrated health and social care single point of contact provided information and assistance across health and social care with **75%** of all calls resolved via information and signposting and **95%** of all urgent referrals referred to a contact within 48 hours.
- Extended the Vale's local cluster multi-disciplinary teams coverage across the Vale **providing early information, advice and assistance to people with complex needs.**
- All adult care homes registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are now listed on Dewis with vacancies broken down by bed type to support residents and professionals.
- Embedded working protocols to ensure seamless delivery of health, social care and well-being responses to people accessing the Well-being Matters Service.
- Strengthened operational arrangements between the Council and the Cardiff & Vale Carers Gateway and supported the delivery of the **'Time 4 Me'** initiative. Nearly **750** assessments undertaken with **494** young carers supported. **76%** reported improved mental health.
- Further **developed our telecare offer**, moving from analogue to a digital system linked with the falls response service.
- Completed a third **SMART house** in collaboration with First Choice Housing Association and Innovate Trust for three people with learning disabilities and secured funding for a fourth property, further supporting independent living and enhancing citizen well-being. Secured funding for a further property awaiting planning approval for development.
- The Bay Unit at **Ty Dyfan** is open providing short term residential reablement to support discharge and maximise people's independence.
- The Vale Integrated Falls Service has been successfully operating for a year, contributing to positive user outcomes and cost benefits to health partners (**cost avoidance of £750k**).
- Delivered the **'Active April'** campaign alongside a range of resources and opportunities to support the health and well-being of unpaid carers.
- Supported nearly **500** unpaid carers via the Carers Gateway providing information, advice, well-being support and short breaks.
- **544** new Telecare customers, up from **300** in 2022/23.
- **93%** satisfaction with Telecare services up from **92%** in 2022/23.
- **100%** of people who received a Disabled Facilities Grant feel the assistance has made them safer and more independent in their own home.



- Home care support varies significantly month to month. Supported **1,016** citizens receiving **16,058** weekly hours of care and support at home, averaging 15.8 hours a week. Demand for services has increased from 14,579 weekly hours provided last year.

#### **9. Refocus the way domiciliary care is provided to enhance the individual's voice & control over their care arrangements through the expansion of 'Your Choice'.**

- **18** agencies transferred to the 'Your Choice' model, further enhancing individuals choice over their care arrangements.
- Approximately **46%** (7217) hours of the total domiciliary care packages are provided under Your Choice, supporting approximately **48%** (412) of the citizens receiving domiciliary care.
- Transferred **13** citizens under the Mental Health Team and **21** from the Learning Disabilities Team to the Your Choice scheme as part of strengthening our understanding of the advantages of **outcome-based community care**.
- Our work with partners to enhance domiciliary care has contributed to several new agencies being accredited during the year, ensuring that **there are no current issues with domiciliary capacity in the Vale**.
- Reduced the **average number of days taken to place domiciliary care packages** from **22** days to 3 days, however this remains an area of significant demand.

#### **10. Work with community leaders/ partners and use the experience gained through the work in Llantwit Major to review and transform the range of support available to older people within their community.**

- The **Listening project is "live" in Llantwit Major** and a programme of engagement with local citizens is ongoing to inform the range of support available to older people.
- As part of work with partners to promote the **development of Dementia/Age Friendly Communities**, there have been **34** pledges, and **33** expressions of interest received in **Cowbridge** and a further **30** pledges in **Llantwit Major** with **30** working towards Dementia Friendly status.
- Vale of Glamorgan became the fourth local authority area in Wales to achieve Age Friendly Status.
- Extended existing initiatives to reduce social isolation and loneliness and support older people within their community with examples including the **Golden Pass scheme** supporting those 60 and over who are less active, **DEWIS Cymru** providing a directory of local support and activities, **Telecare** assisting people to live independently, **Greenlinks** providing volunteering opportunities and to enable access to transport particularly in more rural areas, and work to support the growth of **Dementia Friendly Communities**.
- Nearly **900** people in the Vale have committed to being **Dementia Friends**.

#### **11. Work co-productively with children and their families through a strengths-based model to improve outcomes and enhance wellbeing.**

- Continued to embed the '**Developing Services Together**' approach involving the families we support in service development, modelling the 'Building on Strengths' values.
- **72%** of assessments for children were completed within timescales.
- **11%** of children in care had to move 3 or more times during the year and **40%** of children looked after were returned home from care during the year.
- **75** service user compliments were received in relation to a range of children and young people services and support.
- **158** kinship carers providing family alternatives for children looked after, reducing additional demands for mainstream provision.

- Opened the **first children's residential home**, a **4** bedded provision in the Vale of Glamorgan and completed renovations to the second home, a **2** bedded provision, resulting in three children being offered a home locally, two returning to the Vale from placements out of area.
- Completed nearly **3,600** new assessments for children during the year, rising from 1746 last year.

**12. Deliver the priorities of the Regional Safeguarding Board, ensuring effective arrangements are in place to protect children and adults at risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation.**

- Further **embedded practices to safeguard and promote the well-being of learners** with schools compliance with annual safeguarding training at nearly **100%** for Level 2 Safeguarding training.
- Successfully **engaged with all schools** to deliver training on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Overall compliance with the Council's **Safer Recruitment Policy**, schools and corporate services was **99%**, mirroring last year's performance.
- Of the **825** adult safeguarding reports received, **300** proceeded to enquiry and of those **99%** were completed within the seven-working day time scale, a significant improvement on last year's performance of **72%**. Successfully reduced the number of reports that progressed to seven-day enquiries through effective screening and identification of more appropriate support.
- The Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Co-ordination (DAARC) service received **626** Public Protection Notices (PPNs) with **96** domestic abuse victims agreeing to equipment such as CCTV, intruder alarm, door locks and lighting in order to make them feel safer and enable them to remain living in their own home.
- **942** council employees were trained to group 1 of the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence with a total of nearly 4,700 staff trained to date.
- Following **53** underage products sales operations, **successfully prosecuted two businesses for underage sales of alcohol and vapes respectively.**

**13. Work with partners to promote and enhance community safety including priorities for positive social cohesion and community protection ensuring that we safeguard and support those who are most vulnerable including work on domestic violence, sexual violence and serious violence.**

- **Nearly 200** messages were sent out by the Community Safety Team through different online platforms, including safety advice for Mental Health, Knowing where your Children are during Half Terms, Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse and Fly tipping.
- CCTV upgrades and cameras were completed earlier in the year and are now operational and facilitating the safety of our communities. There are now **86** CCTV cameras live across the Vale.
- **628** incidents of aggressive behaviour, criminal damage, burglary, drug dealing, concern for welfare, arson, physical assault, commercial waste and missing persons in the Vale were captured on CCTV assisting Police and the Council with their investigations.
- **1142** adults and **109** children and young people affected by domestic abuse supported by Vale Domestic Abuse Services, via specialist professional (480) tenancy relating support (150), refuge accommodation (53), counselling and therapeutic group work (170) with 95% customer satisfaction.
- Supported those who experience domestic abuse across the Vale with **520** cases being discussed at the twice weekly meeting. Twice weekly meetings are fast action safeguarding meetings for professionals to support the high-risk victim and their family at the earliest opportunity, If further discussion is required, these cases will be referred onto the fortnightly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). 473 were female victims and 366 had children.
- There were 94 cases discussed at the fortnightly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), 92 victims were female and 72 had children.
- Public Protection Notices processed, **120** were female victims and **108** had children.

- Increased awareness and understanding of hate crime across the Vale through **social media campaigns** and proactive work in the community.
- Collaborated with leisure centres to provide **youth drop-in sessions at all Vale leisure centres** giving 11-16 year olds an opportunity to try new activities free of charge, funded by Vale sports development, contributing to reducing antisocial behaviour across our communities.
- Nearly **2,000** incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were reported to the Community Safety team, with **1,298** referrals processed. There has been a decrease in referrals through the ASB stages highlighting effectiveness in the deterring individuals from continuous ASB.
- Alongside Vale-wide community focussed work and a social media campaign, attended a number of events including FAN charity, Afghan community and the Vale 50+ forum to **increase awareness and understanding of hate crime and provide advice and support**.
- Developed a pack and offered additional training to local businesses to support the implementation of the **Safe Spaces** initiative.
- **18,100** Fixed Penalty Notices were issued by the Council's enforcement services for parking contraventions with a further **378** Notices for criminal offences such as littering, dog fouling, byelaws breaches, duty of care offences and fly tipping.

#### **14. Work with partners to implement the Youth Offending Service Post Inspection Action Plan, to enhance young people's outcomes.**

- **259** interventions undertaken by the Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) supporting children and young people in the Vale.
- **88%** of children and young people known to YJESS benefitted from preventative/diversion work, promoting the best possible outcomes. Consistently **maintaining the lowest First Time Entrance rates in Wales**.
- Our **proactive focus on quality work offered to victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour** has been recognised with the service contributing towards best practice guidance published by the Ministry of Justice as part of the Victim Code campaign.

#### **15. Maximise Council house building and acquisition opportunities including 138 new Council homes on six sites throughout the Vale.**

- Increased our Council house development programme, which has already delivered **90** homes with a further **226** currently under construction. Over the next 10 years the programme will deliver a further 939 homes with 150 homes per year scheduled to be built after 2035.
- We supported our Registered Social Landlord partners to purchase **23** former social homes across the Vale using over £2.3m of Welsh Government funding are currently exploring the potential bulk purchase of a number of homes from the Ministry of Defence to further **increase the supply of social housing**.
- Increased supply of Council rented accommodation across the Vale of Glamorgan by **250** units across 6 sites in Penarth, Barry and the rural Vale with **£29.1M** development spend on council house building programme.

#### **16. Implement a Local Housing strategy to address current and projected housing need and to increase the supply of good quality, accessible and affordable housing.**

- Completed a **Local Housing Market Assessment** to determine our future housing requirements which is informing our Replacement Local Development Plan.
- Revised our **Affordable Housing Partnership agreement**, which sets out the basis for joint working with Registered Social Landlord partners.
- Revised the **Empty Property Enforcement Action Plan** and strengthened our arrangements to enable us to proactively reduce empty homes and effectively tackle long-term problematic properties.

- **78** (10.6%) of empty private sector properties were brought back to use through direct action by the council during the year.
- **60% (222)** of the dwellings approved through the planning system during the year were designated as affordable housing.
- **91** additional affordable housing units were delivered during the year per 10,000 households.
- **222** new affordable housing builds delivered. 81 were funded via S106 funding with the remaining 141 delivered via the Social Housing Grant (SHG).

**17. Produce an Older Persons Housing Strategy to secure the best quality of life for older people living in the Vale & to enable older people to live as independently as possible in later life.**

- All approvals are in place and construction is due to commence on the new **Penarth Extra Care Scheme** in line with the implementation plan for the Older Person Accommodation with Care, Care Ready and Support Strategy.
- Additionally, commenced a review of our **sheltered housing accommodation** including the role of the scheme coordinator and technology used within schemes to support people to live as independently as possible.
- Work has commenced in collaborating with other council departments to appoint a land agent to collate and **assess new land opportunities for the provision of older persons housing** in the Vale.

**18. Work with partners to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide housing and associated support including maximising the use of the homelessness prevention grant to sustain tenancies, expanding the supply of temporary accommodation and minimising the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.**

- **61%** of households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless.
- Successfully **implemented a triage approach** at first contact as part of remodelling the housing solutions services to maximise opportunities for preventing homelessness. This has **reduced average waiting time** from **24** days to **6** days and contributes to more positive outcomes for tenants.
- Effectively supported **45** young people at risk of homelessness through early intervention, thereby reducing long-term referrals.
- Nearly 16% of housing stock in the Vale of Glamorgan is rented privately. Through work to support and sustain the private rented market (especially at the lower rental end), we have **continued to protect tenancies and relieve pressures on social housing**.
- Worked with private landlords in a number of ways to secure exclusive nomination rights to their properties to retain access to existing accommodation. **36** new properties were brought on board during the year.
- Prioritised homeless households in temporary accommodation under the Council's Housing Allocation Policy (Homes4U) which has **reduced the time people spend in temporary accommodation**. The changes will result in an additional **30** homeless households being housed in the coming year.
- Prevented **50%** of people presenting as threatened with homelessness, from losing their tenancy through the use of discretionary homelessness prevention grant funding to top up rents, offset arrears or pay towards remedial works in order to sustain tenancies. Alongside Department for Work and Pensions funding, in total just over **£216.4K** has been paid out this year to support people to sustain their tenancies.
- Dedicated workers have supported **22** private tenancies deemed to be at risk of homelessness to achieve a number of outcomes, enabling them to sustain their tenancy.
- Following the success of the modular accommodation introduced at the Court Road, Barry, new schemes are being brought forward, including the former Eagleswell school site, Llantwit Major, where **90** units of accommodation is nearing completion and will provide accommodation to Ukrainian households forced to flee the war in Ukraine.

- Established an in-house leasing scheme to increase the supply of temporary accommodation, which has secured access to **over 20 units** of accommodation with ongoing discussions with property owners to expand the scheme.
- **176** people successfully moved on from hotel accommodation during the year as a result of the progress made with homeless prevention, developing new homes, securing access to private rental properties and prioritising homeless households.

### Engagement activities: what our residents and service users said

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
<p>Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS)</p> <p>Citizens' experiences of the VCRS, support from care staff, communication, and involvement in service planning.</p> <p>Two separate consultations were undertaken. The first with Citizens, and the second with practitioners.</p>	<p><b>Citizens consultation</b> 39% response rate (130/337) questionnaires. A further 5 interviews were conducted and 25 telephone conversations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all (96%), felt the support helped them to complete the tasks important to them.</li> <li>• Nearly all who responded were actively involved in decisions surrounding their care and support.</li> <li>• 93% felt they were listened to throughout their involvement.</li> <li>• 86% felt they were enabled to make changes to the service if necessary.</li> <li>• Almost all felt the service was reliable.</li> <li>• A large proportion of respondents felt they had more control over their daily life after receiving support (88%).</li> <li>• Citizens felt that useful information and advice was available at the start of the service and as and when it was required.</li> <li>• Respondents felt that care workers and the service were reliable and were very respectful to them.</li> <li>• The service and support it provided resulted in an improvement to citizens' wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised service user guide and statement of purpose to outline the short-term nature of the rehabilitation service and dynamic rota arrangements, so our citizens are able to have clearer expectations.</li> </ul>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens felt safer both physically and emotionally, because of the service.</li> <li>• Many felt involved in the planning of the service and, also felt they could make changes if needed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Practitioner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff felt the team is very 'welcoming' to new staff.</li> <li>• Staff felt they share a wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise.</li> <li>• Staff feel the teams are citizen-centred and able to provide person-centred therapy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the induction process.</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities for more team-building activities to break-down barriers between health staff and social care staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Day Opportunities Staff survey</p>	<p>Feedback was received from 8 Responders to the 'Day Service Staff Survey 23-24'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Staff Members – 4 staff responders, reported they always felt valued by other staff and managers.</li> <li>• 6 staff responders believed they were able to spend as much time with citizens as they felt needed during the day.</li> <li>• 4 staff believed they had enough support to carry out their role.</li> <li>• 4 staff believed they had someone within the workplace to speak to if there was a concern they needed to share.</li> <li>• 2 responses welcomed staff consultation and would like to see more staff engagement in future and 1 of those stated this would be helpful without managers present.</li> <li>• 1 response said there is regular supervision, so they feel supported.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing consultation with staff moving forward.</li> <li>• Ensuring continued supervision for staff.</li> <li>• Improving transport services for citizens.</li> <li>• Ensuring that client activities are more tailored to individual's interests.</li> </ul>
<p>Children &amp; Young Peoples Services</p> <p>Considered views and experiences of children, young people, parents, and carers in relation to the</p>	<p>Placement Teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were three responses out of six approved Foster Carers from the VOG Foster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessors contacted Foster Carers to advise if appointments needed to be rescheduled, but there is some room for improvement.</li> </ul>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
<p>Placements Team, Flying Start Adoption Collaborative and 14 Plus Team.</p>	<p>Carers' Recruitment Survey 2023-24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All enquiries made regards Fostering within the Vale of Glamorgan were responded to in a prompt and efficient manner.</li> <li>• Information provided allowed all Expressions of Interest to progress to an Assessment.</li> <li>• One out of the three respondents stated from first appointment with Assessor to Panel Hearing took 4-6 months. One other stated this took 6-8 months, and the third respondent said it took 8+ months.</li> <li>• All felt the Assessment Process helped them to become a Foster Carer.</li> <li>• Respondents were not prepared or expecting to have to answer so many questions at Panel, based on speaking to other Foster Carers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring Foster Carers are made aware of the need to answer a high number of questions within Panel Hearing.</li> </ul>
<p>Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC)</p>	<p>14 respondents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 people were satisfied with the content of their Adoption Support Plan.</li> <li>• 7 Adopters had their Support Plan reviewed since placement.</li> <li>• All Adopters received a completed Life Story book.</li> <li>• All Adopters, except one received a completed Later Life Letter.</li> <li>• Adopters recognised the value in engaging with consistent staff / Social Worker throughout the process.</li> <li>• Some Adopters felt unequipped to deal with certain situations and would have liked to have received further feedback.</li> <li>• One Adopter raised that once the adoption was granted, they felt that support ceased.</li> </ul>	<p>Consistency in social worker engagement with adopters throughout the process and post adoption where needed.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
Flying Start Service Outcomes	<p>Little Bugs: Establishing Parents' / Carers' views on the changes made to sessions.</p> <p>43 Responses from this survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42 respondents felt the sessions were valuable.</li> <li>• 36 Respondents said the sessions met their expectations.</li> <li>• 38 Respondents did not feel anything extra needed to be added to what was already included.</li> </ul> <p>Parents and carers: Established satisfaction with services and identified areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of 18 Respondents, 15 were satisfied with communications with 3 partly satisfied.</li> <li>• 17 Respondents said they were able to contact a staff member when they needed to.</li> <li>• 14 respondents felt the Staff always spent enough time with them.</li> <li>• 15 respondents felt their concerns were always listened to.</li> <li>• 12 Respondents said they always had the support they needed, 6 Respondents said,</li> <li>• 'sometimes' and there were no Respondents saying rarely or never.</li> <li>• On a scale of 1-5 an average rating of 4.44 was achieved in relation to expectations being met.</li> </ul> <p>14 Plus Team outcomes: Established satisfaction with services and identified areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 4 respondents knew who to contact about care and support and felt they could speak to their worker if they needed to.</li> </ul>	<p>Followed up on feedback where respondents did not feel expectations were met to address areas these.</p> <p>Followed up on feedback where respondents did not feel expectations were met.</p> <p>Continued focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving young people in engagement and consultation opportunities to ensure they have a strong voice in service development via a variety of methods including via social media/ messaging services</li> </ul>



What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The preferred methods of communication included phone, text or messaging service, as well as video call.</li> <li>• 3 felt they are always treated with respect by those they had worked with, with the other 1 answering 'Mostly'.</li> <li>• 3 reported that they were always involved in decisions about their care and support and had always been able to access support when they needed to.</li> <li>• All respondents felt that support they had received improved their overall mental/physical health and well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring all care leavers felt involved with their future care planning and all felt they had been listened to.</li> <li>• consistency and quality of contacts made by Social Workers and Young Person Advisors (for those over 18).</li> </ul>
<p>Residential Care and Respite Services</p> <p>Residents, relatives, and staff views sought regarding the quality of care and support provided by residential care homes including Cartref Porthceri, Southway, Ty Dyfan and Ty Dewi Sant.</p>	<p>Residents: 14 respondents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 out of 14 respondents, rated their initial visit as excellent, 3 – good, 1 – poor, and 3 gave no response at all.</li> <li>• 9 residents rated their initial welcome, as well as their ongoing support from staff as excellent. One commented further 'This is my home'.</li> <li>• All respondents knew who to speak to if they had a concern about anything and were aware of how to lodge a compliment or complaint.</li> <li>• All respondents felt safe and that their needs were catered for.</li> <li>• 11 residents reported excellent opportunities to spend time with others, and felt they had choice about what activities they did, and when they did them.</li> <li>• All respondents felt staff treated them with courtesy and respect, with one commenting – 'They are angels on legs'.</li> </ul>	<p>Followed up on feedback where respondents did not feel expectations were met.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 residents reported that they were involved in their care planning.</li> <li>• 9 felt they were always invited to give their views on what matters to them, with 5 other respondents selecting 'sometimes'.</li> <li>• All but 1 respondent felt their overall wellbeing had improved by moving to Residential care.</li> <li>• Food and entertainment were the main themes highlighted when asked for suggestions for improvement.</li> </ul> <p>Relatives: 10 respondents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 rated their initial visit as excellent, and 3 – good.</li> <li>• 6 residents rated their initial welcome, as well as their ongoing support from staff as excellent.</li> <li>• All respondents were aware of how to make a complaint or provide a compliment, and 4 responded 'yes' to having already made a compliment /complaint.</li> <li>• 9 respondents agreed that their relative felt safe and that their needs were catered for.</li> <li>• 7 reported excellent opportunities for their relative to spend time with others, with 6 agreeing their relative had choice about what activities they did, and when they did them.</li> <li>• 9 respondents felt staff treated their relative with courtesy and respect, with one commenting – 'They go over and above'.</li> <li>• 6 reported that they, and their relative were involved in their care planning.</li> <li>• 8 respondents felt they were always invited to give their views on what matters to them, with 1 selecting</li> </ul>	<p>Followed up on feedback where respondents did not feel expectations were met including food, entertainment and communications.</p>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
	<p>'sometimes', and 1 gave no answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All respondents felt their relative's overall wellbeing had improved by moving to Residential care.</li> <li>Food and entertainment, as well as improved communication and the retention of staff were the main themes highlighted when asked for suggestions for improvement.</li> </ul> <p>Golau Caredig (20 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 residents state that they received enough information regarding Golau Caredig.</li> <li>16 residents felt that they knew who to contact should they wish to raise a concern.</li> <li>10 residents stated that they were involved in the review of their care and support plan.</li> <li>15 residents felt encouraged and supported to remain as independent as they could.</li> <li>One resident would like to see activities on the weekends included.</li> <li>One resident would like to see an improvement with the food.</li> </ul>	<p>Followed up on feedback where respondents did not feel expectations were met.</p>
Safer Vale Partnership Strategy Survey 2023/28	General agreement with the contents of the draft Strategy. 52 respondents to the consultation with comments centred around language and accessibility which were addressed in the final document.	Findings have informed the Draft Strategy agreed by Cabinet.
Murchfield Recreation Ground	Co-designing new recreational facilities with residents. Drop-in sessions were held at the Community Centre and with pupils at Dinas Powys Junior School including residents survey.	Agreed design reflective of community views, ensuring whole community benefits from new interactive family space.

## What our regulators said

Review	Findings	Our response
<p><a href="#">Vale Community Resource Service - Care Inspectorate Wales</a></p>	<p>People are very happy with the service they receive and are complimentary of the staff who provide their care and support. Service includes specialist reablement practitioners which means people’s recovery and reablement is maximised. People receive day-to-day care and support from skilled and dedicated reablement support workers (RSWs). Personal plans fully inform RSWs of people’s needs, personal goals and abilities. Encouraging people to reach their potential and regain their independence is at the heart of the service. The staff are skilled at making people feel at ease, and in a short amount of time trusting bonds are formed.</p> <p>RSWs receive training and support to meet the needs of people accessing the service. Policies and procedures are available to all staff, and most are informative and up to date. The service is operating without a responsible individual (RI). Oversight is being effectively coordinated by the management team until a successful RI application is received and accepted by the regulator. Systems are in place for auditing and monitoring of the service. People and staff are regularly consulted with to inform service improvement.</p> <p>No non-compliances with regulations were identified.</p>	<p>Steps taken to ensure consistent records kept relating to spot checks with RSW.</p> <p>Continued work on ensuring all staff feel valued and supported.</p>

## Our key challenges

- Provider failure is an ongoing concern. In the context of demand for care and support, market fragility remains an issue. The social care market's capacity and ability to respond to growing demand whilst they continue to be subjected to growing workforce and cost of living pressures continues to require close monitoring.
- The Vale Alliance has been complicated by Welsh Governments' Primary Care guidance for Pan Cluster Planning Groups which will require this to be re-evaluated in this context.
- The number and complexity of referrals into Children and Young People Services is still creating a high level of demand. This includes children in need of care and support and those in need of protection.
- Linked to increasing levels of demand, the number of children looked after has increased. This places increased pressure on our existing resources and in a placement context, the service has become further reliant on externally purchased care, particularly independent fostering agency placements and residential care where availability has also visibly decreased.
- Increasing complexities in the cohort of children Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) work with, who are impacted significantly by trauma and adverse experiences. This has manifested in relation to increasing safeguarding concerns and the risk management of serious youth violence in a contextual context. Additionally, reduction in funding presents a significant and ongoing threat to the effective delivery of YJESS services. For example, the ending of the 'Turnaround' funding in 2025.
- The drive for discharging patients from hospital to home safely continues to put additional pressure and demand on reablement/domiciliary care services to be able to ensure that residents needs are being met and are safely being looked after in their communities.
- Increasing costs of care provision within a societal context of austerity continues to present a significant challenge in terms of managing the adult social care budget.
- Ensuring that the citizens we work with are supported to access services in different ways and have the broadest choice of service models, in a person centred and cost-effective way.
- There continues to be challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff across key positions in the social care workforce. There remain capacity challenges within Children and Young People Services in relation to some Social Work positions due to increased demand and there is insufficient care staff (in both residential and domiciliary care) across the Council and the wider Vale. This also translates across into difficulties in commissioning sufficient care for our residents.
- Recruiting into certain technical positions in the Shared Regulatory Services continues to prove challenging due to national skills shortages and salaries not matching current market rates.
- Insufficient land for new house building remains an issue year on year and the homelessness challenge is more acute than ever due to the changes in homelessness duties, brought in by Welsh Government, and its unwillingness to fund the consequences of this legislation change. This is coupled with record numbers of refugees who we are also struggling to house.
- There is an ongoing shortage of housing accommodation and temporary housing and despite increasing supply of accommodation, levels of homelessness remain high.
- A reduction in funding to support target hardening measures to victims of domestic abuse has forced the team to be selective about the equipment offered and this is having an impact feeling of safety.
- A real terms reduction in the Housing Support Grant will necessitate the remodelling and reassessment of existing support services including One Stop Shop service provision and will require decisions about future projects.
- There is a need to widen access to public arts and cultural events on a cost neutral basis which presents challenges given current and ongoing resources constraints.
- Our coordinated approach to tackling poverty and cost of living challenges to our residents continues to deliver positive outcomes. However, the ongoing demand for these services poses a challenge for future council budgets.

## Areas for future focus

- Progress work with partners across Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan to develop projects to respond to the requirements of the social care market stability report.
- Progress work with key partners on developing and implementing the Vale Alliance Model to help support our residents.
- Continued participation in the local authority reductions programme to manage demand for children and young people's placements.
- Work via the capacity planning workstream of the Social Services Reshaping Programme Progress to continue to address the workforce attraction, recruitment, and retention challenges facing Social Services.
- Continued focus on delivering a preventative and early intervention programme to those at risk of offending to enhance young people's outcomes.
- Continue to offer staff opportunities to grow our own skills in a sustainable and manageable way, including technical posts to deliver transformational service change
- Promote social enterprises, co-operatives, user led services and other third sector organisations to further enhance support and preventative services, through the newly established Vale of Glamorgan Section 16 Forum.
- Work with partners to promote community models of care, and to minimise any unnecessary time spent in hospital.
- Lead and support the delivery of new affordable homes across the Vale of Glamorgan to respond to growing housing and homelessness pressures.
- Work with partners to identify and deliver effective interventions to support people at risk homelessness, including young people.
- Continued focus on preventative and early intervention work aligned to the Regional Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.
- Review public arts and cultural provision to maximise opportunities to widen access on a cost neutral basis.
- Progress work under Strengthening Communities theme of the Reshaping programme to address shared challenges such as tackling poverty and the cost of living pressures facing our residents and communities.

## WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

We are committed to protecting and enhancing our environment to ensure we can all be proud of the legacy we will leave for future generations

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 4	PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 4	
	Green		Amber		Red			
Actions Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures <sup>4</sup>	
82	31	74(90%)	8(57.2%)	0	3(21.4%)	8(10%)	3(21.4%)	<b>GREEN</b>

Overall performance (RAG) status for Well-being Objective 4 is **GOOD**. This judgement reflects the good progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period.

### What we said we'd do in our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
1 Implement Project Zero our Climate Change Challenge Plan, and work with the community and other stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions, focusing work on energy use, transport, land and food, ensuring that our response to the climate and nature emergencies is integral to all decisions	<b>Green</b>
2 Work with our partners to respond to the nature emergency including implementing a new Green Infrastructure Strategy, a tree management strategy and delivery of the Biodiversity Forward Plan	<b>Green</b>
3 Engage with local communities and explore the potential for community energy schemes as part of the Local Area Energy Plan including the potential to use council assets	<b>Green</b>
4 Improve existing school buildings and deliver new buildings in line with the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme making them low carbon and ideally zero carbon buildings to operate whenever possible.	<b>Green</b>
5 Deliver near zero carbon to or at a minimum A rated, new Council homes & develop Optimised Retrofit Programmes to meet carbon reduction targets for the existing Council housing stock & to help tackle fuel poverty also ensuring that the Council's housing stock continues to meet relevant standards for safety and construction	<b>Green</b>
6 Encourage and support sustainable changes to how people travel by increasing opportunities for active travel (walking and cycling) including Rhose and Eglwys Brewis Active Routes	<b>Green</b>
7 Work with our partners to improve access to public transport through support for socially necessary bus services & the transport infrastructure including delivery of bus stop e-timetable displays and the provision of new bus shelters in Rhose, Eglwys Brewis, Cogan, Dinas Powys and Barry.	<b>Green</b>
8 In conjunction with the Cardiff Capital Region increase the network of locally accessible electric vehicle charging points including in Council car parks	<b>Green</b>

<sup>4</sup> RAG performance status was not applicable for 17 measures as they were either establishing baseline performance for 2023/24 or the data was not yet available.

What we said we'd do	Performance Status
9 Implement the Road Surfacing Plan (2022 to 2025) to improve the condition of the highway for all users including buses, pedestrians & cyclists & implement the Welsh Government's proposals for 20 mph default speed limit on restricted roads within the Vale's local highway network.	Green
10 Undertake work to ensure more sustainable transport options for the Council's vehicle fleet & staff including cycle to work schemes and the use of e-bikes, electric, hybrid and alternatively fuelled vehicles and implementation of the Healthy Travel Charter.	Green
11 Progress the review of the Council's Local Development Plan with a focus on the assessment of candidate sites, and the preparation of a preferred strategy and deposit draft of the future plan following consultation.	Green
12 Invest in education, sustainable transport, community facilities and assets and arts and culture as a result of negotiating Section 106 payments from developers in areas where development has occurred as detailed in the annual Section 106 report.	Green
13 Continue to ensure sustainability of local facilities & assets such as certain sports grounds, parks, open spaces, allotments and public conveniences by working with and transferring to community organisations.	Green
14 Deliver improvements to waste management with a greater focus on the circular economy, operation of the new Resource Recovery Facility in Barry and the final roll out of the new recycling arrangements to Penarth and surrounding areas including kerbside collection of more items for recycling Vale wide, in line with the new 10 year Waste Management Strategy.	Green
15 Work with community groups to develop the 'adopt a street/area' concept and promote a litter & enforcement strategy recognising the role of the community in improving our local environment.	Green
16 Implement the Shoreline Management Plan and the revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and work with communities at risk from flooding to develop local solutions.	Green
17 Undertake local air quality assessments and take necessary action to ensure that national air quality objectives continue to be achieved.	Green

## What we've achieved

### 1. Implement Project Zero our Climate Change Challenge Plan, and work with the community and other stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions, focusing work on energy use, transport, land and food, ensuring that our response to the climate and nature emergencies is integral to all decisions.

- We have maximised approaches to **hybrid journeys** across council services to ensure that we continue to minimise unnecessary car journeys and continue to make use of pool cars where required.
- The libraries estate has benefited from infrastructure to contribute to carbon neutral status, e.g. **Rhose Library** have just had **solar panels** installed on the roof of the Activity Centre. Additionally, **promoting sustainability activities and conversations about climate change** e.g. 'Art from Waste, At a Loss exhibition, creative writing and other themed events at our in libraries and makerspaces.
- Sustran continue to work with agencies to identify carers who would like to access an **Ebike**.
- New services have been set up **to increase recycling participation** especially in areas with poor recycling rates such as flats and apartments. Additionally, the **new commercial service** to assist commercial businesses be compliant under the new **Workplace Recycling Regulations** is now set up and being marketed.
- Secured **high value contracts for recyclable material** fixed until the end of this financial year.



- A total of 44 improved energy performance certificates have been received this year from **Vale rental properties**, an estimated reduction in carbon dioxide (CO2) from these properties of approximately 127.1 tonnes.
- **Decarbonisation works have taken place in 3 community centres** using external funding to include new solar panels, batteries, and LED lighting.
- The **Project Zero hub** established this year continues to be an effective single point of contact for both citizens and staff
- Worked as part of Food Vale to develop a **draft Food Strategy for the Vale**.
- **Established a process for allocating the Project Zero reserve to fund a range of projects in line with the Climate Challenge Plan**, supporting changes around energy use, transport, engagement and nature.

## 2. Work with our partners to respond to the nature emergency including implementing a new Green Infrastructure Strategy, a tree management strategy and delivery of the Biodiversity Forward Plan

- **Completed rain gardens** on Active Travel route along Station Road. Additionally, a **green roof cycle shelter** has been provided to Romilly Primary School in partnership with the Local Nature Partnership.
- Funding has been secured to provide **biodiversity training** to secure enhancements across all the work undertaken by the Council.
- There was agreement on refreshing the existing Public Services Board Climate Charter to become a **Climate and Nature Emergency Charter**, and work has commenced to begin development.
- **Tree planting** at scale has been underway on the Restore the Thaw project, a three year programme of work to improve diversity along the river thaw including **12,094 hedgerow and tree saplings**.
- **Consulted on a 15 year draft Tree Strategy**.
- **Over 320 trees** planted in schools as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme.
- **Nearly 21,900 trees** planted by council services throughout the Vale, including through the Local Nature Partnership.
- Progressed work on further developing the **draft Green Infrastructure Strategy** informed by engagement work.

## 3. Engage with local communities and explore the potential for community energy schemes as part of the Local Area Energy Plan including the potential to use council assets.

- Commenced work on a **Local Area Energy Plan** which sets out the changes required to enable the Vale of Glamorgan to transition to net zero by 2050. Local Area Energy Plan approved by Cabinet in July 2024.

## 4. Improve existing school buildings and deliver new buildings in line with the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme making them low carbon and ideally zero carbon buildings to operate whenever possible.

- Working to implement a **Decarbonisation Framework** in all schools.
- Active participation in the **School Investment Operational Board (SIOB)** to ensure that we are collectively exploring opportunities for carbon reduction across our schools estate.
- Improved existing school buildings ensuring those with no green spaces have received items to help with carbon reduction, including **Wildflowers/ ponds/ planters**.
- Undertaken **Energy audits** of our schools with help provided to assist with reduction in energy bills.
- Proactively promoted and encouraged schools participation in the **Big Plastic count**.

- **Nearly all Band B schools have been completed** with only three schools remaining outstanding, St Richard Gwyn, the Ysgol y Deri expansion and St Nicholas and these are on track to be completed by the end of the programme in 2026. Alongside a key focus on improved facilities that provide enriching educational experiences for our learners for the future, completed improvements to date have incorporated carbon reduction approaches in construction with **new schools buildings built to BREEAM standards which delivers energy efficient buildings, enhances biodiversity and reduces carbon cost of construction.** Completed facilities have made use of **digital technology, innovative landscaping and outdoor spaces to support biodiversity, EV charging points and cycle stands, use of renewable energy sources such as solar power, air source heat pumps to list a few.**

**5. Deliver near zero carbon to or at a minimum A rated, new Council homes & develop Optimised Retrofit Programmes to meet carbon reduction targets for the existing Council housing stock & to help tackle fuel poverty also ensuring that the Council's housing stock continues to meet relevant standards for safety and construction**

- Ongoing surveys have begun to cover **all 4,000 Council homes**, this is projected to be completed by 2026 in line with WHQS timetables.
- **Completed refurbishment of four rural 'off-grid' properties** incorporating heat-pumps, solar PV and battery installation, heat recovery to wastewater and super insulated external wall and floors.
- **Completed external wall insulation and window upgrades to 84** properties reducing heat loss within the buildings.

**6 Encourage and support sustainable changes to how people travel by increasing opportunities for active travel (walking and cycling) including Rhose and Eglwys Brewis Active Routes**

- **Cogan Interchange** WelTAG Stage 2 work complete and presented to business cabinet by Transport for Wales (TfW). Supported **Local Bus Service B3 (Barry)** has been revised in order to serve the new Barry Dock Interchange.
- **Pedestrian improvements** made on Peterswell Road, Court Road and Dyfan Road Barry and on Bridge Street/Cawnpore Street and Pill Street, Cogan.
- Construction of **Active travel (AT) route** along Station Road, Rhose. The **Eglwys Brewis AT scheme** - boardwalk ordered through EP, pedestrian improvements of 'trees' estate authorised as well as additional layby works and the installation of a new footpath in front of The Gathering Place.
- Installation of a new toucan crossing near The Walston Castle in Wenvoe has provided a safe crossing point linking to the Port Road AT route.
- Scheme development progressing for the **Barry to Dinas Powys and Sully to Cosmeston AT route.** Routes around the east of Barry have been developed and costed.
- Study commenced with WSP and Cardiff Council on **future bike hire scheme**, the report will be available in Q2 of 24/25. SPF funding agreed for 4 Brompton Bike Docks in Barry, Penarth and Cogan to be sited close to train stations during 2024/25.
- Timed school street closure commenced at Fairfield Primary School and pilots held at other schools in the Vale with a view to further roll outs.
- Works have been undertaken to improve sections of the **Millenium trail** and other promoted routes across the Vale, connecting local towns and villages with the network on their doorstep, giving better access for all and encouraging sustainable travel. **Over 125 replacement kissing gates have been installed, 6 new footbridges, 150 new roadside signposts** installed and a **new recycled boardwalk** linking Cowbridge and Aberthin. In addition, the **Great Glamorgan Way** project has been carrying out improvement works across the network to develop and improve access for walkers/horse riders and cyclists.

**7. Work with our partners to improve access to public transport through support for socially necessary bus services & the transport infrastructure including delivery of bus stop e-timetable displays and the provision of new bus shelters in Rhose, Eglwys Brewis, Cogan, Dinas Powys and Barry.**

- Work has been ongoing to **tender services** identified for possible cancellation post-BTF 2023-24 funding. Passenger Transport is currently working closely with the South East Wales Region to try and retain as much service provision as possible within the funding available from Welsh government to the Region as well as Council's own budgets available. Local services tendered that serve the Vale of Glamorgan include Services 7, 88, 89A/89B, 93, 100, 303, 304, 305, 320, 321, X2. Cardiff Council has tendered Service 7, whilst the others have been tendered by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. **Service 305 is a new streamlined version** of Service 89A/89B, so Service 89A/B will not be awarded
- the **Cardiff Airport Passenger Terminal bus stop upgrade** has been completed, along with an upgraded bus stop facility on Fonmon Road, Rhose. The Cardiff Airport Passenger Terminal bus stop upgrade included provision of an **e-display**.
- Upgraded bus stop shelter and e-display at Cosmeston Country Park entrance.
- Introduced a weekend **free travel scheme** during the school summer holidays 2023, and a free travel scheme every day throughout the school summer holidays 2024 on Service 303 (Llantwit Major – Bridgend via coastal communities).
- The Council continues to **support a number of supported local bus services** using its established budget and Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG) from WG. BSSG also continues to help support **3 local community transport providers**, whilst Section 106 funds continue to support the Council's in-house CT provision, **Greenlinks**.
- Using its social media X account, Passenger Transport have been **actively promoting** Concessionary Bus Passes for persons aged 60+ or have certain disabilities, the My Travel Pass for persons aged 16-21 and Traveline Cymru for public transport information throughout the local area, Wales and beyond. These are also promoted with links on the Council's Transport website page.
- The Council continues to **undertake various online consultations/surveys** in order to engage with the public (e.g. Annual Satisfaction Survey for Public Transport and Road Safety during October annually, and with regard to service changes proposed).

**8. In conjunction with the Cardiff Capital Region increase the network of locally accessible electric vehicle charging points including in Council car parks**

- **Installed 34 EV chargers** (Phase 1 and 2) in various locations on-street and within car parks controlled by the council in partnership with CCR. Proposals well developed for a **further 24 EV charger bays** (Phase 3) to be progressed in suitable area both on-street and in council car park facilities.
- Developing a suitable **EV charging network** providing convenient and affordable charging covering urban areas of the Vale to facilitate a variety of EV charging options both on-street and off-street to offer flexibility and convenience for those residents / visitors in various communities.

**9. Implement the Road Surfacing Plan (2022 to 2025) to improve the condition of the highway for all users including buses, pedestrians & cyclists & implement the Welsh Government's proposals for 20 mph default speed limit on restricted roads within the Vale's local highway network.**

- A new contract has been procured with **added environmental benefits** as well as using the latest technology.
- Works to complete Welsh Government's **20mph default speed limit** substantially completed.
- **9,717 potholes** were repaired to improve the condition of the roads.

**10. Undertake work to ensure more sustainable transport options for the Council's vehicle fleet & staff including cycle to work schemes and the use of e-bikes, electric, hybrid and alternatively fuelled vehicles and implementation of the Healthy Travel Charter.**

- Undertook a Council **Staff Travel survey** to help identify what percentage of staff use a private vehicle for their daily commute. Work is now being undertaken to try to reduce this number.
- Number of **Electric Vehicles (EV's)** within the **Council's fleet increased by 8**, now 6.8% of fleet.
- Cycle to work scheme held during the summer months to encourage uptake.

**11. Progress the review of the Council's Local Development Plan with a focus on the assessment of candidate sites, and the preparation of a preferred strategy and deposit draft of the future plan following consultation.**

- Preferred Strategy and evidence base prepared.
- Political reporting and public consultation undertaken.
- A Revised Delivery Agreement timetable has been approved.
- Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Preferred Strategy public consultation has been completed, in line with Revised Delivery Agreement.

**12. Invest in education, sustainable transport, community facilities and assets and arts and culture as a result of negotiating Section 106 payments from developers in areas where development has occurred as detailed in the annual Section 106 report.**

- Investment in sustainable transport including **Green Links**, community facilities and parks as a result of negotiating Section 106 payments from developers.
- New **outdoor fitness equipment** in St. Athan is complete.
- New **fencing at the tennis courts** off Station Road East, Wenvoe is complete.
- Approval has been given to upgrade the Council owned public open space to the north of South Road, Sully. A feasibility study will be undertaken in 2024/25 to inform these works.
- The land transfer for the new school site at northwest Cowbridge is now complete, surveys have been undertaken and the layout /design of the site is now being considered.
- A **new modular classroom** unit at Dinas Powys Junior School is now complete.
- A New **toucan crossing** on Ffordd Mileniwm between East Quay and the transport interchange is now complete.
- Additional **street lighting** on Llanmaes Road, Llantwit Major installed.
- Repairs have been completed to the Boardwalk, Cowbridge.
- Numerous new **benches** and a bike pump / repair station has been installed in St. Nicholas.
- A replacement bus shelter has been installed near Cosmeston Lakes Country Park.
- **Pedestrian improvement works** have been agreed in the vicinity of Sully primary school, within and adjoining Lower Gladstone Gardens, Barry, on Gladstone Road near The Memo, Barry and S106 money is funding **'free' bus travel** on the 303 service during the summer school holiday period.
- **Public open spaces enhancements** have included replacement benches and bin on Dinas Powys Common, extension to footpath at Seel Park play area, Dinas Powys with **additional tree planting** at Central Park, Barry, and at Pencoedtre Park, Barry. Replacement benches installed at Chickenwood Park, Barry and interpretation panels and entrance signs at Upper and Lower Gladstone Gardens, Barry.

**13. Continue to ensure sustainability of local facilities and assets such as certain sports grounds, parks, open spaces, allotments and public conveniences by working with and transferring to community organisations.**

- Progress continues to be good to review and implement options for community organisations to operate facilities with further adverts been placed in the local press advertising the disposals.

- Officers **continue to engage with developers** to ensure that planning permissions deliver open space to support new developments and address existing need, to meet the policy requirements in the **Adopted Local development Plan (LDP) and relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**.
- Officers continue to engage with developers to ensure **opportunities to transfer space/ facilities** to community organisations are maximised
- The **improvements to toilets** in the Western Vale are under way following the successful bid of a £300k grant

**14. Deliver improvements to waste management with a greater focus on the circular economy, operation of the new Resource Recovery Facility in Barry and the final roll out of the new recycling arrangements to Penarth and surrounding areas including kerbside collection of more items for recycling Vale wide, in line with the new 10-year Waste Management Strategy.**

- **Established an Agreement with FCC Environment** for the management of household waste recycling centres (HWRC).
- Introduced a **new commercial service to sustainably reduce waste** by increasing our provision of recycling material to be reused in the private sector.
- The remaining 17 blocks of flats and apartments not recycling, were delivered bins and are now participating.
- **New reuse shop** is open in Barry, and one is being explored for the Western Vale along with an alternative Household Waste Recycling Centre site.
- Promoted the "**Be Mighty**" **national recycling campaign** and Recycling Officers have provided support to residents where waste reduction is required and there is a need to increase recycling participation.
- Successfully **completed the roll out of separated recycling arrangements into Penarth**, further increasing the quality of recyclable material and contributing to achieving national recycling targets.
- Utilized our **council roundabouts to advertise recycling within the home** with the assistance of funding from WRAP. We have used strategic locations on strategic routes to provide the greatest impact.
- Developed a project plan on the implementation of the **Wales Workplace Recycling Regulations**. We have spoken with all our existing customers and new customers about the changes ahead.

**15. Work with community groups to develop the 'adopt a street/area' concept and promote a litter and enforcement strategy recognising the role of the community in improving our local environment.**

- A project to **improve parking issues** at Treferad has been delivered. This has responded to local calls for improved road access and increased parking to homes surrounding council owned land.
- Local projects to **tackle rubbish dumping** and litter are being developed with tenants at several locations. Approach taken includes elements from the successful Clean Slate project.
- Continue to work to **improve Local Environmental Quality** by engaging widely with community groups to deliver community **litter picking projects**, educational / preventative methods.
- Successful **litter hubs** continue to be run throughout the Vale, enhancing local environmental quality.
- All **Green and Blue Flags for 2023 were retained but no applications made in 2024**.

**16. Implement the Shoreline Management Plan and the revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and work with communities at risk from flooding to develop local solutions.**

- Revised **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy** is now completed.
- **Wave and meteorological** monitoring ongoing at Penarth Pier.
- **Lidar survey of the Penarth headland cliffs** is completed and a follow up survey following recent cliff falls is planned for next financial year. **Visual inspections** of a number of recent cliff falls have also been undertaken at Lavernock and Penarth headland.

- Additional **coastal surveys** completed at Whitmore Bay, Barry Island, The Knap (Cold Knap Point to Bull Cliff), and Bull Cliff.
- Delivery of enforcement function is ongoing with several development sites being monitored in relation to **sustainable drainage systems (SuDs)**. Delegated authority has now been confirmed for SuDs Approving Body enforcement action and the constitution updated accordingly.

**17. Undertake local air quality assessments and take necessary action to ensure that national air quality objectives continue to be achieved.**

- All 3 Annual Progress reports for Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale were reported to the respective Cabinets of the 3 partner councils and all reports approved and submitted to Welsh Government for review and acceptance.
- Responded to 158 out of 210 commercial and industrial noise and air pollution complaints within one working day, a **performance of 75.24%** which exceeded our target of 75%.

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**Engagement activities: what our residents, service users, stakeholder and partners said**

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
20 MPH Speed Limit Exceptions Report	General acceptance of the routes specified.	A small number of routes were amended due to the consultation and input from Cabinet.
Tree Strategy	Wide range of views have been sought with engagement findings currently under review. These will inform the final draft Tree Strategy which will be presented to Cabinet for approval in due course.	Engagement findings currently informing the final strategy and Cabinet approval will be sought to adopt the 15 year strategy.
Murchfield Recreation Ground	Co-designing new recreational facilities with residents. Drop-in sessions were held at the Community Centre and with pupils at Dinas Powys Junior School including residents survey.	Agreed design reflective of community views, ensuring whole community benefits from new interactive family space.
RLDP- Growth options (spatial and level of growth), objectives, key issues, etc. Leading to engagement on Preferred Strategy, including specific sessions in the community at the settlements where key sites are proposed.	Some support for the Strategy, and some objection to the level of and location of proposed growth. Some objecting on the basis of too much growth, some to too little growth.	Preferred strategy consultation report to be reported to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council. Consultation report addresses and responds to all of the representations received. Proposed changes to wording of strategic policies as a result of feedback from consultees. Feedback relating to the need for Placemaking will result in specific work on this with Town and CCs once the Strategy has been through Council, in order to understand and respond to community needs/priorities regarding those places.
Public Transport Road Safety Survey 2023/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to public transport - 157/248 (63%) persons unsatisfied.</li> <li>• Electronic bus stop information displays - 138/227 (61%) persons unsatisfied</li> <li>• Bus stops and shelters -73/226 (32%) persons unsatisfied.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council working with Welsh Government and the S.E. Wales Regional LA's have secured funding to maintain existing local bus service provision, at a time when many services (supported and commercial) were under threat of cancellation</li> <li>• The Council continues to increase its estate of in-shelter and solar/battery powered flag displays throughout the Vale of Glamorgan. Currently the Council's estate of in-shelter e-displays totals 76 and solar/battery powered e-flag displays total 5.</li> </ul>

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently improvements to certain stops and shelters in the Sully ward area being progressed using local S106 funding for this area, with an additional request for S106 funding for Cowbridge Town Centre bus stop shelter upgrades has been requested.</li> </ul>

### What our regulators said

Review	Findings	Our Response
Review of the Planning Service's Governance arrangements in WBO2 is also relevant here.		
<a href="#">Review of the Planning Service's Governance arrangements</a>		

### Our key challenges

- Delivering our commitments to achieve net zero by 2030 will present significant challenges in the short to long-term due to ongoing financial pressures and the challenge associated with decarbonising the supply chain.
- Ensuring that the public highway is repaired effectively (Insurance Claims are within limits and public satisfaction is improved), within the budget available remains extremely challenging.
- Maintaining the waste and recycling services in a competitive HGV driver market remains challenging.
- There are challenges to supporting the shift to a circular economy.
- There is a need to manage expectations when working with and delivering services within our communities given the ever-reducing budget/ funding and capacity available to us going forward.
- Ongoing supply issues and the escalating cost of materials continue to have an impact on the deliverability of remaining projects within Band B of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme and will be the subject of consideration when developing the rolling Programme going forward.
- Across the Vale of Glamorgan's school estate there are a number of Victorian schools that also have listed status. This impacts on the extent to which we can refurbish/retrofit these buildings to a carbon net zero in operation status.

### Areas for future focus

- Continued focus on a collaborative approach to embedding the sustainable development principle in the management of our physical and digital assets.
- Progressing delivery of our commitments in the new Carbon Management Plan.
- Taking forward work with Public Services Board partners to strengthen the nature emergency content within the PSB Climate Emergency Charter.
- Progress work to develop and implement the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Delivering the Project Zero Learning and Engagement Plan.
- Progress delivery of the Biodiversity Forward plan alongside a continued focus on awareness raising of the importance of embedding biodiversity across Council work.
- Progress audit work for Cycle Friendly accreditation.
- Continue to further explore opportunities for developing the energy efficiency of our buildings as part of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.
- Encourage use of more sustainable transport options by our workforce with a focus on the Healthy Travel Charter.



- Complete and deliver the Environment and Parking Enforcement policy.
- Progress work to identify a new Household Waste Recycling Centre in the Western Vale near Llandow.
- Progress the community asset transfers currently in advanced stages of negotiation including a number of single use sports facilities and other community assets.
- Progress the Local Area Energy Plan.
- Progress the review of the Council's Local Development Plan.
- Continued partnership working with community groups to deliver improvements in local environmental quality
- Progress work with landlords and letting agents to improve energy ratings of properties rated F or G.
- Progress alternative sewage arrangements at Channel View, Marcross and Croft John, Penmark in consultation with residents.
- Take forward work to switch the Council's fleet from diesel powered vehicles, ensuring EV's are given first consideration as part of the tendering process.
- Progress PAS2035 surveys covering all 4,000 Council homes, this is projected to be completed by 2026 in line with WHQS timetables.
- Progress emerging projects to decarbonise the Learning and Skills building estate via the Decarbonisation sub-group of the School Investment Operational Board.

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## 7. Our Year in Numbers 2023/24

In the absence of national benchmarking data we have continued to assess our performance using local trend data and other service data insights where available. We continue to work with Data Cymru to develop a national self-assessment core dataset to enable us to compare our performance across a range of services. Progress against our Corporate Performance Measures Framework has been reported to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet every quarter, including an [end of year \(Quarter 4\) report in July 2024](#). **Update with Cabinet Q4 link end of August**

Below is a selection of performance indicators across our four Well-being Objectives for which data is available and compares our current performance with that of last year's (2022/23).

### Well-being Objective 1: To work with and for our communities

Sickness absence rate improved from <b>12.82</b> days per full time equivalent employee to <b>10.32</b> days.
<b>170</b> residents used other community transport, less than the previous year's figure of <b>230</b> .
<b>1137</b> residents used the Council's Greenlinks transport service, less than last year's figure of <b>1,517</b> .
Nearly <b>77%</b> of customer enquiries to C1V resolved at first contact, down on last year's figure of <b>87%</b>
<b>93%</b> rate on annual canvass returns, slightly down on last year's figure of <b>97%</b> .
<b>No Ombudsman complaints upheld</b> against the Council, maintaining the same result from last year.
<b>57%</b> of corporate complaints dealt with within target timescales, down on last year's figure of <b>51.4%</b> .
<b>51.1%</b> of scrutiny committee recommendations agreed by Cabinet, increasing from <b>50%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>2,605</b> Average daily reach figures for Vale of Glamorgan Life Facebook page, down slightly from last year's daily average of <b>2,871</b> .
<b>5,541</b> Average daily impressions for @VOGCouncil Twitter account, down from last year's average of <b>7,320</b>
<b>4.01</b> Council diversity staff ratio up from last year's figure of <b>3.11</b> .
<b>£7,394,081</b> spent on agency staff, up from <b>£6,540,848</b> last year.
Net expenditure per head of population <b>£2,205</b> up from <b>£2,057</b> in 2022/23. This is below the 2022/23 Welsh average of <b>£3,219</b> .
<b>95.3</b> amount of council tax collected as a percentage of the total collectible debit, up from <b>94.6</b> last year, and just below the Welsh average of 96.
<b>10.93%</b> of employees voluntarily left the organisation during the year, up from <b>9.20%</b> in the previous year.
We spent <b>£294.422m</b> on delivering public services for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, up <b>£21.864m</b> from last year. With a population of 133,492 this equates to <b>£2,205 per person</b> up from <b>£2,057</b> in 2022/23. <b>Education and Schools</b> accounted for £128.45m ( <b>44%</b> ), almost half of the Council's budgeted expenditure. <b>Social Care Services</b> £89.76m ( <b>30%</b> ), <b>Environment &amp; Housing Services</b> £32.16m ( <b>11%</b> ), <b>Planning, Economy &amp; Regeneration Services</b> £4.44m ( <b>2%</b> ), and <b>Corporate Support Services including elections, the Council tax reduction scheme, fire, borrowing and interest and property costs</b> £39.61m ( <b>13%</b> ) accounted for the remaining expenditure, contributing to delivering our key priorities as outlined in the Annual Delivery Plan and Corporate Plan.
Number of adult Welsh learners increased by <b>29%</b> to <b>592</b> in the 2022/23 academic year, exceeding the target 400.

### Well-being Objective 2: To Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

<b>0.64%</b> of young people NEET upon leaving Year 12, down on last year's figure of 0.24%, still ranking 2 <sup>nd</sup> in Wales.
<b>1.21%</b> of Year 11 leavers became NEET, improving upon last year's figure of <b>1.50%</b> , and performance compares favourably with the Welsh average of 2.0% .
<b>3.59%</b> of young people NEET upon leaving Year 13, slightly below last year's performance of <b>2.56%</b> , ranking 10 <sup>th</sup> in Wales.
<b>95%</b> success rate on accredited courses for priority learners, slightly down on last year's figure of <b>98%</b> .

<b>98%</b> of householder planning applications determined within 8 weeks decreasing from just over <b>99%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>24</b> community led organisations financially supported through Strong Communities funding, less than last year's figure of <b>43</b> .
Whilst average vacancy rate in the Vale's main town centres increased slightly from <b>8.9%</b> in 2022/23 to <b>10.9%</b> , this remains better than national average of 16%.
<b>290</b> tenancies maintained 6 months after receiving money advice, increasing from <b>239</b> tenancies in 2022/23.
<b>£6.373m</b> of investment dedicated to transport improvement schemes, increasing on <b>£3.686m</b> in 2022/23.
Number of apprentices on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes within the Council fell slightly from <b>4.4</b> to <b>4.31</b> per 10 per 1,000 employees.
<b>4.4</b> number of learners enrolled in local authority community learning per 1,000 population, up from <b>3.6</b> , and above the Welsh average of 5.
<b>55</b> childcare settings benefited from <b>£470,000</b> of funding to raise the quality and enhance childcare provision in the Vale, up from <b>50</b> settings and <b>£396,000</b> last year.

### Well-being Objective 3: To support people in their homes and in their community

<b>64%</b> of clients' health improved on completion of national exercise referral programme, down from <b>90%</b> last year.
Our leisure centres hosted <b>741,551</b> paying visits compared to <b>406,353</b> in the previous year. Additionally, there were <b>5,575</b> fitness members paying a monthly fee compared with just over <b>4,000</b> last year.
<b>72.5%</b> of adults 60+ have a concessionary bus pass, slightly up on last year's figure of <b>71.3%</b> .
<b>92%</b> of Supporting People service users said they were satisfied with the support they received, slightly improving from <b>91%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>91%</b> of Supporting People service users said the support they received helped them to maintain their independence, mirroring last year's performance.
<b>367</b> days taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant, down on last year's performance of <b>297</b> days in 2022/23.
<b>100%</b> of people who received a disabled facilities grant felt that the assistance made them safer and more independent at home, remaining static with the <b>100%</b> figure in 2022/23.
<b>60.7%</b> of presenting households successfully prevented from becoming homeless, up from <b>52%</b> in 2022/23, above the Welsh Average of 59% (2022/23).
<b>82%</b> of domestic abuse victims felt safer as a result of target hardening (safety measures taken), down from <b>100%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>94</b> high risk cases of domestic abuse were discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, down from last year's figure of <b>285</b> .
<b>1.31%</b> of rent lost due to properties being empty, compared to last year's figure of <b>0.01%</b>
<b>10.1%</b> of children in care had to move 3 or more times, down on last year's performance of <b>8.3%</b> .
<b>91</b> additional affordable housing units delivered during the year per 10,000 households, up from <b>62</b> last year.
<b>Nearly 59%</b> of additional affordable housing units granted planning permission during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units granted planning permission during the year down from <b>72%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>99.63%</b> satisfaction with people accessing Families First services, improving on <b>95%</b> last year.
<b>84%</b> adults who completed a period of reablement did not need a package of care after 6 months, mirroring last year's performance.
<b>69%</b> of young people in contact with social services reported they had advice, help and support to prepare them for adulthood, same as last year.
<b>46%</b> of children were supported to remain living with their family during the year, down on <b>88%</b> last year.
Health and well-being services in the Vale of Glamorgan have received <b>over 261,800</b> detailed views on Dewis Cymru up from <b>253,194</b> views last year.

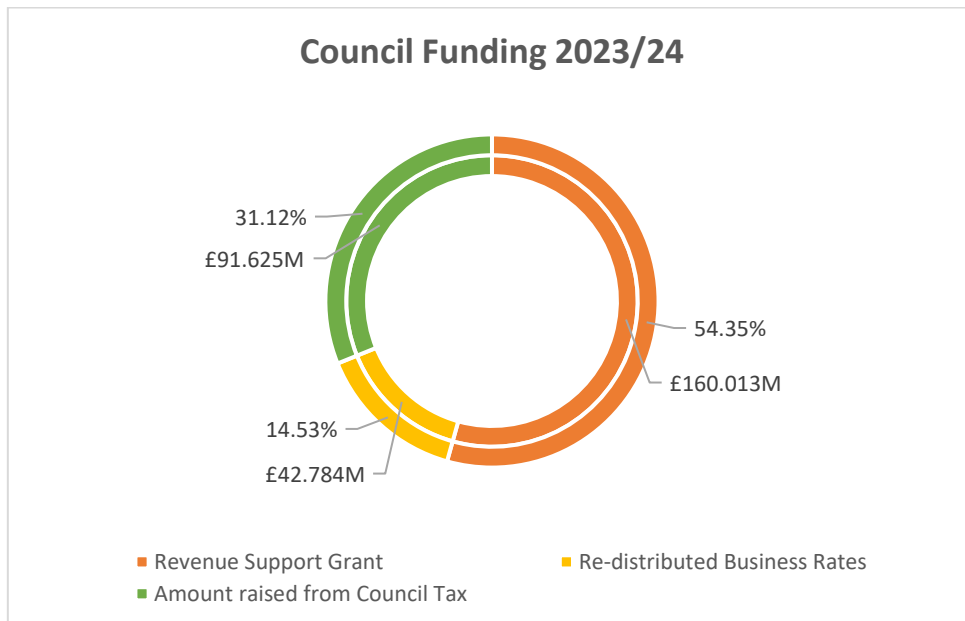
<p>Advice and assistance was provided in relation to <b>9,520</b> children’s social care contacts up from <b>3,698</b> last year. <b>544</b> new Telecare customers, up from <b>300</b> in 2022/23 with <b>93%</b> satisfaction with services improving on last year’s figure of <b>92%</b>.</p>
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**Well-being Objective 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment**

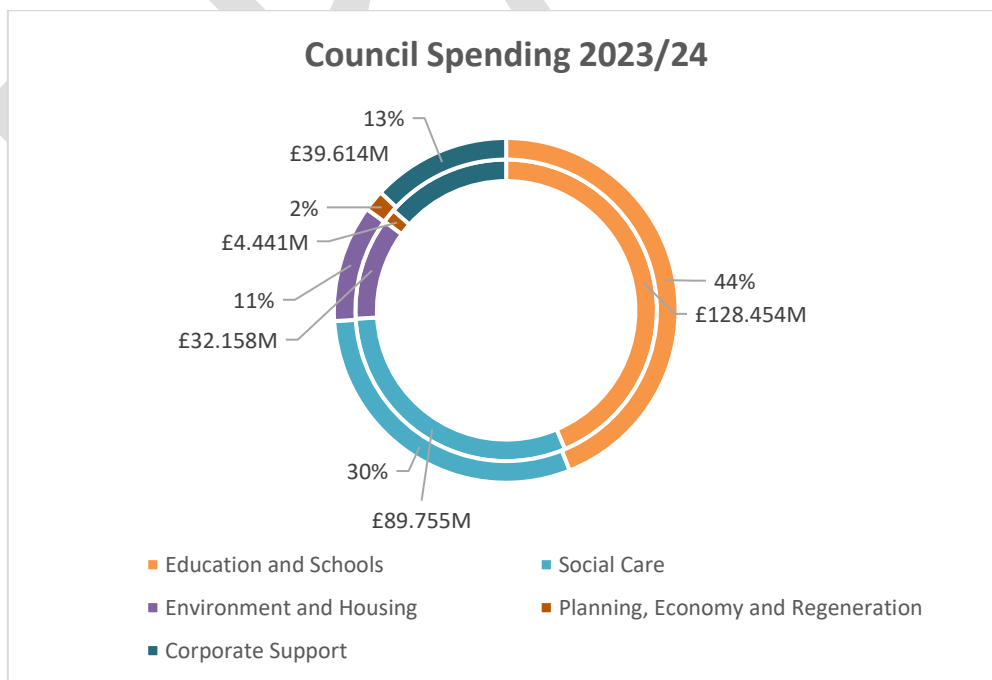
There were <b>252</b> facilitated visits to country parks and heritage coast down on last year’s <b>265</b> .
Works to complete and increase LED assets has continued this year with <b>93%</b> of Council streetlights converted to LED, improving on <b>91%</b> last year.
<b>4,374 visits to public libraries</b> during the year per 1,000 population, greatly improving on <b>2,695</b> visits in 2022/23.
<b>44%</b> satisfaction with public transport in the Vale of Glamorgan, greatly improving on <b>15%</b> in 2022/23.
<b>70.3% of household waste</b> collected was either prepared for reuse and/or recycled, improving on last year’s performance of <b>67.8%</b> and comparing favourably with the 2022/23 Welsh average of <b>65.7%</b> .
<b>117kg</b> of residual waste that is not reused, recycled or composted generated per person, improving on last year’s performance of <b>128kg</b> , and above the 2022/23 Welsh average of <b>172kg</b> per person.
<b>100%</b> of electricity purchased from renewable resources, mirroring last year’s performance.
<b>2.5%</b> of local authority vehicle fleet are hybrid, mirroring last year’s performance.
<b>356,87.62m2</b> of parks, open spaces, and highway land sown with wildflowers or maintained as a naturalised area, up on last year’s figure of <b>312,403m2</b> .
Facilitated or financially supported <b>24 events</b> as part of a wide calendar of events throughout the year, up from <b>12 events</b> last year.
<b>100%</b> of dangerous structures were inspected within 1 working day, mirroring last year’s performance.
<b>8</b> Green Flag awards achieved same as last year.
<b>99.7 %</b> of highways and relevant land inspected were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness, slightly down from <b>100%</b> last year.
Overall cleanliness indicator for the Vale is <b>66.5</b> , declining from <b>72.20</b> last year.

## 7.1 Where our money comes from and how we spent our budget in 2023/24

The Council's revenue budget is funded from Welsh Government, Council Tax and Business Rates, in 2023/24 the total revenue budget was £294.422 million.




















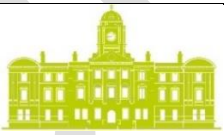










The below diagram shows how spending in 2023/24 was spread across different services with education and schools and social care representing 74% of total spend.



\*Corporate Support includes elections, the Council tax reduction scheme, fire, borrowing and interest and property costs.

## What our budget was spent on in 2023/24 by the average Vale of Glamorgan council taxpayer (Band D property council tax: £1,464.75)

The below information illustrates how monies raised through council tax funds (which are just over 31% of the Council's revenue budget) contribute to the range of council services and activities provided during the year.

 <p><b>£602.03</b> Education and Schools</p>	 <p><b>£432.25</b> Social Care</p>	 <p><b>£47.06</b> Black Bins and Recycling</p>	 <p><b>£15.33</b> Street Cleaning and Resort Management</p>
 <p><b>£8.29</b> Libraries</p>	 <p><b>£3.33</b> Swimming Pools, Leisure Centres and Play Schemes</p>	 <p><b>£10.68</b> Supporting Businesses and the Community</p>	 <p><b>£6.88</b> Homelessness Prevention</p>
 <p><b>£54.28</b> Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Business Rate Relief</p>	 <p><b>£28.67</b> School Transport &amp; <b>£4.29</b> other Transport</p>	 <p><b>£29.80</b> Roads and infrastructure</p>	 <p><b>£29.80</b> Other housing including Disabled Facilities Grants</p>
 <p><b>£38.07</b> Fire Service and National Park Payments</p>	 <p><b>£12</b> Democracy</p>	 <p><b>£1.70</b> Tourism and Events</p>	 <p><b>£2.14</b> Public Protection, Licensing &amp; Environmental Health (Shared Regulatory Services)</p>
 <p><b>£8.33</b> Parks and Gardens</p>	 <p><b>£10.58</b> Running our Buildings</p>	 <p><b>£3.59</b> Revenues and Benefits and Financial Assessment</p>	 <p><b>£1.71</b> Public Conveniences</p>
 <p><b>£3.96</b> Youth Services</p>	 <p><b>£5.19</b> Countryside Management</p>	 <p><b>£1.78</b> Community Safety and Resettlement</p>	 <p><b>£1.52</b> Adult and Community Learning</p>
 <p><b>£5.22</b> Planning and Building Control</p>	 <p><b>£1.85</b> Coroner</p>	 <p><b>£64.81</b> Corporate Support Services</p>	 <p><b>£29.62</b> Interest Costs and Asset Repayment</p>

## 8.0 The Annual Engagement Calendar and Key Insights 2023/24

Citizen engagement features as one of the Council's core themes within our Corporate Plan and we proactively encourage residents and customers to share their views and experiences of our services as it promotes engagement, gives us useful customer insight on the relevance of services and enhances our approach to service development. We recognise the importance of working together with Vale citizens and our communities to identify, shape and deliver sustainable community-led solutions to meet our key challenges for the long term. This has become ever more important given the significant challenges we face. If we are to develop innovative responses to them, we will need to harness the talents and potential of all members of the community. That means giving people both a voice and a meaningful role in local decision making.

The Council's Public Participation Strategy published in May 2022, sets out through the Participate Programme how we will make it easier for residents to take part in the decision-making process. As part of this work we have continued to develop and strengthen the Council's internal 'insight' which brings together a wide range of data sources to help understand local issues and take action to address them. Alongside this, we have also strengthened public engagement and participation through developing a rolling programme of thematic engagement aligned to our annual Well-being Objectives. This cross-cutting engagement across multiple channels which includes our engagement platform Participate Vale and the recently launched e-petition process, is helping to inform multiple programmes of work and Council decisions.

### 8.1 Life in the Vale Public Opinion Survey 2023

Engagement insights and our response to these have been reflected throughout the Annual Self-Assessment Report aligned to our four Well-being Objectives and these have informed the areas of focus identified.

The [Life in the Vale Public Opinion Survey 2023](#) commenced on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023 and concluded on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 with 4,009 residents completing the survey. Analysts (Data Cymru) have calculated that this sample is statistically representative of the Vale of Glamorgan population by using a margin of error calculation across all questions. As the survey was primarily conducted online, further engagement with some groups who are not as well represented in the sample of respondents has been undertaken.

The survey asked residents about their experience of living in the Vale of Glamorgan, which public services are important to them, why and how these services can be improved for the future. It also sought views on issues such as cost of living, climate change, volunteering, and travel.

Overall, people are generally happy with the Vale as a place to live. **60%** of respondents stated that they are either very or fairly satisfied with the **Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live**, and **80%** would **recommend the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live**. The results also showed that the Council's priorities are broadly in line with those of residents with **78%** of respondents stating that they are either very or fairly concerned with the **Cost-of-Living crisis**, **68%** are either very or fairly concerned with the **climate emergency** and **65%** are either very or fairly concerned with the **nature emergency**. **73%** of respondents are also very or fairly concerned about **services and support for older people** and **61%** are very or fairly concerned about **services and support for young people**. All of these are areas of priority for the Council as reflected in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and the Budget Strategy for 2024/25.

In terms of service priorities respondents ranked the following from most important to least important to them:

1. Easily access care and healthcare services when my family or I need them.
2. Live in a neighbourhood that is clean and tidy.
3. Buy or rent a good quality home.

4. Access to regular recycling and waste collections.
5. Enjoy the natural environment.
6. Travel using well maintained public highways.
7. Shop for food and everyday items within my local area.
8. Access good quality local nurseries and schools for my children or those in my community to attend.
9. Things to keep me fit and healthy for free or at a price I can afford.
10. Take part in formal learning to help gain new skills.
11. Engage with arts, cultural or heritage events for free or at a price I can afford.

In terms of what respondents are able to do in the Vale of Glamorgan, the top chosen responses were being **able to enjoy the natural environment (83.3%)**, **being able to shop for food and everyday items within their local area (76.0%)**, **access to regular recycling and waste collections (59.7%)** and **buy or rent a good quality home (55.3%)**. The least common responses were **being able to travel using well maintained public highways (21.8%)**, **being able to take part in formal learning (26.4%)**, **engage with arts, cultural or heritage events (30.5%)** and **things to keep me fit and healthy for free or at a price I can afford (34.1%)**.

However, the results also showed there is more work to be done in how we explain our work, public perception of our work, and engage residents in decision making. More respondents stated that they disagreed than agreed with statements that the **services provided by the Vale of Glamorgan Council are of a high quality (29.3% strongly or slightly agreed)**; that the **Council acts in the interest of local residents (25.5% strongly or slightly agreed)**; that the **Council takes residents' views into account when making a decision (16.1% strongly or slightly agreed)**; and that the **services provided by the Council represent good value for money (16.4% strongly or slightly agreed)**.

In terms of the democratic function, **52%** of respondents **know who their local councillor is** while **48% do not**. **32.4%** of respondents were **aware of all the responsibilities of their local councillors**, compared to **49.1% who were aware of some of the responsibilities** and **18.5% who were aware of none of them**. **39.5%** of respondents have **attempted to influence a decision or decisions made by the council** compared to **60.5% who have not**. Most common methods chosen for attempting to influence a decision were, **signing a petition (56.2%)**, **attending or responding to a consultation (42%)**, **39.5% have contacted their local councillor** and **30.5% have emailed the council's contact centre**.

Key survey findings and insights are being shared with our key partners to help shape joint work to deliver services in our communities. We have also shared our findings with Local Authority networks, particularly those involved in public engagement and participation with a view to benchmarking and sharing best practice. The development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30 and the next phase of the Council's Reshaping Programme are also being informed by the survey findings.

In response to the survey findings, we have reviewed our Public Participation Strategy and commenced work in four key areas highlighted as immediate priorities. These include establishing and promoting the e-petitions process; delivering a campaign to enhance understanding of what councillors do and how the Council functions; and developing a series of case studies to showcase where effective public participation has resulted in positive outcomes for stakeholders and the community.

## 8.2 Social Media Sentiment

Throughout the year we share news and information about Council services, decision making, and events in the Vale of Glamorgan via our social media accounts.

There are thousands of interactions with citizens (measured by likes, shares, comments, and link clicks) via these channels every month. We also occasionally seek feedback on our services directly using social media.



The way in which citizens engage with the content we share online tells us a lot about how they view our services and how we can get better at informing people about our work.

The content that we share receives a lot of interaction, particularly on Facebook. Engagement is generally positive. The greatest number of positive interactions typically come from posts sharing news and information about new community facilities and services.

For example, the announcement of the Pencoedre Splash pad opening for summer 2024 received 2,915 engagements (reactions, comments and shares). A post sharing work to upgrade the Richard Taylor memorial skatepark in Barry received 2,044 engagements. The opening of new showers at Penarth seafront received 874 engagements. The opening of the new Ysgol Sant Baruc received 633.

However, we do also see significant levels of negative engagement when sharing other types of content. The greatest number of negative interactions typically come from us sharing news and information relating to changes to council services, particularly those perceived as reductions in service frequency or standards. For example, an update on the new chargeable garden waste service attracted 402 comments, reactions, and shares.

To seek to address this we are always working to find more effective ways to present information with clear and simple explanations of how decisions have been taken and the impact we believe they will have. This is something we will continue to do.

During 2023/24 we have trialled referring to the relevant decision-making forums where changes to services have been agreed, such as Cabinet or Full Council. We have also attempted to give clearer explanations for any service disruption.

## 8.3 Member Champions

In April 2022, the Council adopted the Public Participation Strategy. To put the strategy into action, the Participate Vale Programme has been developed and looks to progress three workstreams: Reach, Involve and Represent.

The Reach workstream is looking to ensure opportunities to participate are as widely shared as possible through a broad range of mechanisms. The Participate Network brings together officers across the Council who undertake public participation work on behalf of the organisation. It includes representatives from the Vale Youth Service, the Placemaking team, the Healthy Living team, and the Council's Communications, Equalities, and Policy functions. The group meets monthly to share the insight gained from their work, make connections between up-coming projects, coordinate attendance at public events, and discuss best practice. Together the group has also shaped the development of the new Participate Vale online hub.

The Involve workstream seeks to ensure voices that are often seldom heard are given a platform and opportunity to participate. This work is done through the Equalities Consultative Forum, bringing together representatives from organisations representing people with protected characteristics. Comprising representatives from over twenty organisations, plus around twenty officers from a range of Council departments and six elected members, the Forum is chaired by the Equalities Member Champion with regular attendance from the Equality, Diversity and Disability Champions and the Executive Leader.

The Represent workstream seeks to progress the [Public Participation Strategy's](#) actions via elected members, including Cabinet and also the Member Champion Network.

Member Champions in the current administration are largely not Executive Members and rather are those who have a particular skill, experience or knowledge associated with the issue they are championing. The Council's Member Champion Network comprises 19 Member Champions covering a breadth of subject matters including tackling poverty, climate change, equalities, older persons, youth, carers, mental well-being, domestic abuse, safeguarding, disability, biodiversity, armed forces and veterans and diversity. Over the last couple of years the Member Champion Network has been established to regularly bring together these Members to consider, respond and help shape participation activity, such as:

- Creating a list of local, regional, and national organisations representing groups whose characteristics link to the portfolios of our member champions. The list was drawn up following a session with the champions where they each identified groups, they were aware of and/or would like to link in with. The member champions undertook to update the list with local contacts to develop their understanding and provide a mechanism to engage with the groups.
- Reviewing the Council's Annual Self-Assessment report and providing feedback on its content and presentation, including whether the perspectives of people with the represented protected characteristics were reflected in the Assessment.
- Feeding into the development and later analysis/interpretation of the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey. This enabled Member Champions to consider the questions to be asked and also to analyse the responses through the lens of different protected characteristics.
- This work has enabled Champions to gain a greater insight into the issues they are championing and also to shape the work of the organisation through a complementary approach with Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.
- Feeding into the development of key council plans such as the Replacement Local Development Plan, Council Planning Protocol, Strategic Equality Plan, and the Reshaping Programme.
- Providing challenge on Equality Impact Assessments on proposed council changes to services and policies.
- Feeding into the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB) emergency ambulance review and UHB community engagements.
- Several Member Champions have been involved in actively shaping the work of Age Friendly Vale. The Older Persons Champion has been particularly active in supporting and developing this work and has helped facilitate two workshops held in October 2023 and April 2024 to develop the Public Services Board's Age Friendly Vale Action Plan. The workshops saw over 60 partners and key stakeholders share feedback on the draft Action Plan, which outlines the focus for work between 2025 - 2028 across the Vale to help make the Vale a place where people of all ages are supported to age well. Attendance at the workshops also included the Veteran and Youth Champions, recognising that whilst the work is centred around making the Vale of Glamorgan a better place for our older residents to age well in, we are all ageing and many of the challenges and issues important to our older residents are often echoed by our younger residents. The feedback helped shape the actions included in the draft version shared for public consultation between June and August 2024. Regular meetings are held with the Older Persons Champion to share local and national updates and to shape emerging areas of focus.
- The Older Persons Champion has provided support to the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum by encouraging residents to attend meetings and events to have their say on important issues locally, and to help increase membership. A number of other champions have also been actively involved with the Forum. The Equalities Member Champion has also supported the work of the Forum, attending the Forum's Executive Board meeting in September 2023 to answer questions on how the survey would capture views of the older population, to encourage completion of the Let's Talk survey and for members to share information with wider members and networks. The Climate Champion has also helped shape the work of the Forum by attending their Climate Change community event in July 2023, the event included breakout sessions to understand hopes for a climate friendly future and how the Forum can help achieve this future in the Vale. The information gathered at the event led to the development of a new Climate Change group being established by the Forum in February 2024 to provide a space for older residents to learn more about

climate change, to actively engage in future decision making on this topic, and to connect with other interested groups and individuals.

- Over the year, the Member Champion for Climate Change has met the Project Zero Programme Manager to discuss the climate work in the Vale with further meetings involving a local climate group lead to discuss the group's ideas for a climate event with council support provided. The Member Champion has also supported with a community mapping exercise, which will feed into the development of the community pages on the Project Zero online hub in 2024/25. In addition, two learning sessions on Project Zero and our carbon emissions were run for all elected members with both the Climate and Biodiversity Member Champions in attendance. The Biodiversity Champion noted that Scrutiny reports often had limited information on the implications of broader work on climate change and nature, and these needed to reflect true impacts. A review of scrutiny reports has been carried out as a result.
- The Council's two Armed Forces Member Champions have proactively engaged with the Armed Forces Member Champions Network, which has helped inform Council decisions over the past year. Additionally, collaborations with the Veteran Advice Service/Armed Forces Liaison Officer, and the Armed Forces Lead have championed essential changes and development to support the Armed Forces Community in the Vale of Glamorgan leading to significant improvements in how we support veterans, service personnel, and their families. For example, proactive measures, including identifying Armed Forces members during service interactions has enabled immediate identification of veterans, active service members, and their families, ensuring they are directed to the appropriate services and receive tailored support. Additionally, signing up to the Pride in Veterans Standards. These measures have greatly enhanced the Council's ability to provide responsive and relevant assistance to the Armed Forces community. Quarterly Armed Forces Covenant Forums held with stakeholders, charities and organisations has enabled the sharing of information, good practice and ideas to further embed a proactive and supportive approach. The Council now offers a mandatory e-learning toolkit and Armed forces Covenant training provided by the AFLO, designed to increase awareness and understanding of the Armed Forces community's unique needs. The toolkit has been instrumental in ensuring that our staff are able to serve the Armed Forces community with the sensitivity and knowledge required. The Member Champions have contributed to hosting and supporting services of remembrance to honour the Armed Forces throughout the year and have used these events as important opportunities to encourage community engagement with the Armed Forces, further reinforcing the Council's commitment to upholding the values of the Armed Forces Covenant. The work of the Elected Member Champions has contributed to the Council receiving its Gold award for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, and an award from the Welsh Veterans Awards in 2023. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was the First Local Authority and the 3rd in Wales to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in 2011.
- Two Member Champions have supported the unpaid carers work in a number of areas throughout 2023/24. A Member Champion has regularly attended and represented the Council in a number of carers events, for example the Unpaid Carers Assembly and the Vale of Glamorgan Unpaid Carer Events. One National Organisation commented after a conversation with them that 'It is great to have someone in such a senior position who understands the needs of unpaid carers.' This Champion also promotes the Unpaid Carers pledge and the priorities and aspirations of the Regional Partnership Board unpaid carers workstream. The other Member Champion continues to be engaged in relation to events and other forums where unpaid carer developments and improvements are discussed. The input of Member Champions in relation to carers is supportive of the work we are undertaking in relation to the Unpaid Carers Charter.
- The Member Champion for safeguarding is a standing representative on the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group (CSG). CSG monitors and oversees arrangements in place to ensure that all of council employees play their part in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and adults who may be at risk of harm. Through this representation the Champion has regular updates and communications in terms of the priority safeguarding areas across the local authority. They are also cited on any significant safeguarding issues arising within the local authority and they give advice and support in relation to these matters where appropriate. Additionally, the Champion is engaged on key strategic and operational matters in relation to safeguarding.

- The Youth Member Champion regularly attends the monthly Vale Youth Council meetings, providing youth members with an update on council matters as well as championing the views of members on issues affecting them e.g. climate change, school transport, school based counselling support, waste management, school recycling. The Champion supported the Climate Conversations event that took place in October 2023 and provided youth members with public speaking practise. The Member Champion also supported the elected Chair and Vice Chair of the Youth Council to attend Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee Meetings, encouraging them during these meetings to speak up and informs them of particular agenda items that may be of interest. Thrice yearly meetings of the School Council Network are attended by the Youth Member Champion which brings together secondary school pupils from all Vale of Glamorgan schools to share pupil voice news and take part in council consultation work. During these meetings, the Youth Member Champion alongside the Cabinet Member for Education, provide pupils with an update on Education and Council Matters. Throughout the year, the Champion has also supported youth service related work and events as well contributing to the Estyn Inspection of Youth service which received a positive inspection report.

As outlined above, over the past year, Member Champions have focused on working closely with relevant officers and groups within the Council and externally to raise the profile of their interest areas, highlight good practice, and ensure that the engagement insights from their community role both as Councillors and Member Champions continue to inform Council decisions that impact on the relevant communities.

## 8.4 Complaints and Compliments

Corporate compliments and complaints snapshot 2023/24	
<b>737</b> complaints received up from <b>495</b> in 2022/23.	<b>57.4%</b> complaints resolved within target timescales up from <b>51.8%</b> .
<b>15%</b> early resolution of corporate complaints down from <b>24%</b> .	<b>8.36%</b> of complaints escalated to stage 2 up from <b>5.5%</b> last year.
<b>77</b> complaints received by PSOW up from <b>49</b> in 2022/23.	<b>0</b> complaints upheld by PSOW, same as last year.
<b>183</b> compliments received up from <b>115</b> in 2022/23.	

We have two separate procedures for dealing with complaints depending on whether they relate to children and young people and adult social care or all other services (corporate). Both have a commitment to being person-centred, fair and clear, with timely outcomes. Whilst each procedure has its own characteristics and response standards, both come under the umbrella of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). This creates a consistent final point of referral if a person remains unhappy after completing the complaints process.

Learning from complaints remains an area of key focus to ensure we continually improve how we manage, monitor and learn from complaints. The insights gained from how we manage complaints not only inform improvements to the process, but

they will also be used alongside other customer and service datasets to improve understanding of our residents' experience of accessing council services and how we can shape our services in response.

In 2023/24 just over 57% (423/737) of all complaints (under the **corporate procedure**) were dealt with within target timescales compared to nearly 52% (205/395) in the previous year. Additionally, complaints escalated to stage two of the procedure increased to **8.36%** compared to **5.5%** in 2022/23. Whilst slightly higher than last year, this performance shows that there is effective investigation and management in place, however we recognise that there is further work to do and have identified actions to take to further strengthen performance. The improvement in performance can be partly attributed to a refreshed corporate approach to managing complaints following the launch of the new complaints software (GovService) just over year ago. However, whilst overall recording of the causes of complaints have improved, there remain issues regarding adherence to deadlines and recording of learning outcomes which continues to impact overall performance.

In terms of lessons learnt during the year, corporately we have identified the need to focus on a number of areas which, in terms of the top three priorities, include: the need to focus on staff training and development

(51.38% of recorded learning outcomes) and ensure all are aware of service standards (16.06% of recorded causes of complaint); the need to review and revise information and communication that we provide to our customers (15.9% of learning outcomes); and the need to ensure that all complaints are recorded accurately on GovService to facilitate learning from complaints. To support colleagues in managing complaints effectively we have continued to provide refresher training to front line staff and those with responsibility for investigating complaints, including a ‘retrospectives’ session with colleagues responsible for administering complaints. We have also created new functionality in the software which will further enhance the complaints management process.

Where residents have exhausted the Council’s complaints procedures and remain unhappy they are entitled to escalate their complaints to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales for consideration. During 2023/24, no Ombudsman complaints were upheld against the Council, mirroring the previous year’s performance.

56 complaints relating to **Social Services** were received during the year, 24 of which were discontinued during the year (either through no further contact or the complaint was not able to be considered within the complaints process). Of the 32 remaining complaints, 12 (38%) were resolved within the designated timescales, 17 (53%) were resolved outside of timescales and 3 (9%) of complaints remained open at end of year, so continued forward into 2024/25.

<b>Social Services compliments and complaints snapshot 2023/24</b>	
<b>56</b> complaints received, up from <b>51</b> in 2023/23.	<b>38%</b> complaints resolved within target timescales, down from <b>89.2%</b> .
<b>192</b> complaints and enquiries received, up from <b>98</b> last year.	<b>18.8%</b> of complaints escalated to stage 2, up from <b>12%</b> last year.
<b>17</b> complaints received by PSOW up from <b>3</b> in 2022/23.	<b>0</b> complaints upheld by PSOW, same as last year.
<b>163</b> compliments received, up from <b>103</b> in 2022/23.	

Key lessons learned include: the need to strengthen adherence to timescales for communicating and for clear and ongoing contact with service users and families to keep them updated and provided with relevant information and documentation as necessary; the need for learning, outcomes and recommendations to be captured and communicated on a regular basis to improve our approach to complaints; ongoing review of training and other opportunities to address identified issues informed by our learning.

In response, practice standards are being developed to reinforce statutory standards required to fulfil social care work, a review of communication and engagement policy is being undertaken and will be disseminated to all staff, and current training is being reviewed to re-enforce approaches to having challenging conversations to ensure that these remain strength-based, positive and inclusive. The length of time responding to stage two complaints continues to exceed timescales with contributory factors being changes in staff, capacity and availability of Independent Investigation Officers (IIO) when required. The availability of IIOs remains challenging and reflects the national picture. In response, we have introduced mid-point monitoring of stage two complaints timescales in order to identify any anticipated delays and support appropriate oversight of the process and any barriers to completion.

Social Services complaints are increasingly becoming more complex, and this is also a key contributory factor that impacts on the timeliness of our response. It must be noted that all complaints dealt with outside of the designated timescales have been undertaken with the agreement of complainants to an extension, although this is not reflected in the statutory timescales.

## **8.5 Collaborative Working including Town and Community Councils and Third Sector**

To deliver the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives we need to work together with a range of partners, stakeholders and our communities. The Council is not able to deliver the outcomes required on our own. Efficiently and effectively collaborating enables us to take advantage of the synergies created by combining resources, skills, expertise and ideas to deliver value and sustainable outcomes that holistically tackle our critical challenges.

The [Compendium of Strategic Working initiatives](#) provides an oversight of the strategic level collaborative working activity in which the Council is involved, and progress is monitored throughout the year. Alongside these, the Council also collaborates with community partners on delivering a wide range of services to residents taking advantage of their invaluable community based insight and specialist expertise to deliver efficiencies and cost savings, contributing to seamless services and ultimately better outcomes for residents.

Significant achievements over the past year and a half have further demonstrated the potential for collaborations. For example, this has led to improved co-ordination and integration of activities to respond to cost of living challenges facing our residents and tackling poverty, a critical challenge facing the Council. Focused on alleviating the pressures faced by communities through a range of activities to support residents relating to skills, employment, housing, access to affordable food, and energy advice both across the Vale and in the particular areas of most acute deprivation, this work has brought together third sector organisations led by Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), Social Enterprises, Town and Community Councils, our schools, community groups and communities. By sharing data insights, resources, skills and expertise, we have been able to directly target services to meet areas of acute need particularly in our more deprived areas with successes including Big Bocs Bwyd and other food and advice projects running in a number of schools that have identified a need; a community school approach at Pencoedtre Learning Community, which takes a whole family approach, joining up services based on the needs of families and pupils in the area; establishment of a re-use and recycling shop supporting people to mend items and source replacement items at a low cost; period dignity support in all schools and over 60 community settings; Senior Community Development Officer engaging with our most deprived communities; Vale Food bank; Food pantries at CF61 in Llantwit Major and Penarth Food Pod, Llantwit Food Project and More than Food Hub; access to housing, employment and benefit advice at food banks; access to free activities for families, children and young people to name a few. This work continues to evolve informed by new and emerging data insights and as new partners come on board.

In line with the Council's commitment to strengthen our relationship with the Third Sector, Social Enterprises, Town and Community Council's and community groups, we engaged Cwmpas to undertake a programme of engagement to inform our approach and future opportunities for work. The work with Cwmpas is due to be reported in September 2024 and is taking account of four Audit Wales reports which focus on poverty, social enterprise, community resilience and the third sector. As a result of the work with Cwmpas and their findings work has commenced to develop a relationship statement as part of the new Corporate Plan. This statement will set out some key working principles and will be consulted on as part of the Corporate Plan consultation and will reflect the Council's Reshaping Programme. This will build on strengthening existing models of good practice in place and identifying new opportunities.

## 8.6 Key Council Decisions 2023/24

This section provides a brief overview of some key council decisions that have been made during the year, how stakeholders informed decisions and the resulting changes and impact on residents and communities. A Key decision in this instance refers to an Executive or Council decision that will have a significant impact on Vale communities or involve significant budgets.

Month	Proposal	Stakeholder Involvement	Decision and what has changed/ improved	Well-being Objective contribution
April	Establishment of a Play Streets scheme.	Residents from different parts of the Vale expressed an interest and have approached Play Wales and the Vale Play team for support to close their streets for Play. Local authority partners were in agreement with establishment of a scheme in the Vale, as it contributed to key council commitments e.g. tackling inequalities, education, and community participation.	Approval has enabled residents to apply for their local streets to become play streets which has increased opportunities for free, child led play contributing to increased community cohesion and a sense of collective responsibility for children's well-being. So far 5 streets in Barry and Penarth have applied with sessions being run once a month for the past year in Romilly Road and Dunraven Street in Barry.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
April	Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023-28	Public consultation undertaken on draft Plan and stakeholder engagement. Plan is informed by a well-being Assessment. Consultation undertaken on the draft Well-being Objectives, priorities and commitments in the Plan.	Approved the Plan as a PSB statutory partner. Priority areas include, work with our most deprived communities, Age Friendly Vale and tackling the climate and nature emergencies. Alignment undertaken between the partnership plan and Council activities.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
May	Development of the Penarth Esplanade.	Residents, visitors and businesses fed back on aspects of the Esplanade that they value and where concerns existed and presented potential solutions to support ongoing improvement and development of the area, and these have informed community mapping and development of place making plans.	Approved the development of a programme of priority actions informed by concerns and needs of residents, visitors and businesses operating on the Esplanade. This is subsequently informing improvement of the area through community mapping that supports Placemaking activity, with proposed developments reflecting the six Principles that underpin the Place-Making Charter Wales (2020): People and Community; Location; Movement; Mix of Uses; Public Realm and Identity.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
May	To become a Placemaking Wales Charter Signatory and develop Placemaking Plans for the Vale's four main towns.	Engagement with all council departments which supports an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan, ADP priorities and the next Reshaping Services programme.	Approval has ensured our eligibility and success in securing Welsh Government funding to develop Placemaking Plans of the Vale's main towns - Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. Future grant funding of towns will be dependent on an adopted placemaking plan which puts us	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4

Month	Proposal	Stakeholder Involvement	Decision and what has changed/ improved	Well-being Objective contribution
			in a strong position to secure funds to improve our towns.	
May/ September	Increase Capacity for Welsh Medium Education by Expanding Ysgol Iolo Morganwg from 210 Places to 420 Places from September 2025.	Engagement with all key stakeholders with 86 out of 91 respondents to the engagement indicating support for the proposal.	Approved proposal being progressed. New building will accommodate the increase in capacity and growth in Welsh medium primary education, supporting the Council's WESP and Welsh Governments 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
May	Formation of a Housing Partnership Programme with Cardiff Council	Engagement with council departments, the Strategic Housing Board, Welsh Government and Cardiff Council on a collaboration that would see the establishment of a housing partnership programme.	Approval has seen establishment of a Partnership arrangement which has now commenced a procurement exercise to appoint a Development Partner to support delivery of the Council's ambitious housing development programme.	WBO3 WBO4
June	Strong Communities Grant Fund awards	Engagement with Waterloo Foundation, Natural Resources Wales and representatives of the Town and Community Councils and third sector to support projects which make a real difference to the quality of life and range of services available to people and communities in the Vale.	Approved scheme has enabled community groups, the third sector and town and community councils to apply for £179,553K of revenue and capital funding that promotes initiatives within the Vale of Glamorgan consistent with the Council's vision of 'Working together for a brighter future'. 24 community led organisations have benefitted from grants in 2023/24.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
June	Increase the capacity of St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School from 813 places to 1,050 places from September 2025.	Engagement with all key stakeholders including parents, with 43 responses, all (100%) of whom were in support of the proposals.	Approved proposal addresses the current and future demand for school places in the catchment area as well the poor condition of the existing building. Construction has commenced and is on track for completion ready for September 2025.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
July	Joint Area Plan	Collaborated with the Health Board and local authority partners within the region to prepare, develop and assure the Joint Area Plan.	Approved Joint Area Plan details key commitments that will enhance Vale residents of all ages ability to access integrated social care and support, including the support needs of carers.	WBO1 WBO3
September	Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for exceptions to the Wales 20PMH default speed limit and	Engagement with public on proposed 'exceptions' map with 153 contributors and 193 responses of concern received.	Five changes were approved in relation to the proposed TRO resulting from the public consultation with those roads either defaulting to 20pmh,	WBO1 WBO3 WBO4



Month	Proposal	Stakeholder Involvement	Decision and what has changed/ improved	Well-being Objective contribution
	implementation of ancillary speed limits.		extension of the default 20mph or removal of 20mph.	
October	Proposals for the use of the £854K Council's Cost of-Living reserve.	Engagement with all Council departments which supports an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan and ADP priorities.	<p>Approval secured ringfenced funding of 25K in 2023/24 and a further £25K in 2024/25 to support community projects. Approval of 30K Cost-of-Living reserve to provide funding to Citizens Advice in 2024/25 in addition to the funding already agreed. Approval of an additional £50K Cost-of-Living reserve to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund in 2023/24 and again in 2024/25.</p> <p>The funding is supporting organisations that provide assistance to residents experiencing cost of living difficulties, additional support to Vale Food bank to meet the rising numbers accessing their services, and discretionary housing payments to those in need.</p>	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
October	Independent Living Policy for the Vale of Glamorgan.	Engagement with all Council departments, elected members in developing an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan and ADP priorities.	Approval has provided private homeowners with a range of processes and grants to allow disabled facility adaptations to take place in most homes where needed.	WBO1 WBO3
November	Replacement Local Develop Plan (RLDP)	Engagement with all key stakeholders including elected members in shaping the Draft Preferred Strategy.	<p>Approved RLDP Delivery Agreement submitted to Welsh Government for their approval in accordance with the Town and Country (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005.</p> <p>Approval of the Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy for public consultation.</p>	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
December	Safer Vale Partnership Strategy 2023-28	Engagement with all key stakeholders including residents in the development of the strategy and its priorities.	Approval of Strategy 2023-28 and associated funding will enable continued focus on our key priorities of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder, the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual abuse agenda, substance misuse, the counter terrorism	WBO1 WBO3

Month	Proposal	Stakeholder Involvement	Decision and what has changed/ improved	Well-being Objective contribution
			<p>agenda and responding to the serious violence duty. Achievements to date include the successful upgrade of public space</p> <p>closed circuit television (CCTV) across the whole of the Vale, the development of twice weekly discussions to improve the ways in which high risk victims of domestic abuse are supported and the implementation of new data collection systems that have significantly improved the ways in which we monitor, report and plan our work.</p>	
December	Becoming a Strategic Partner in the Central South Sports Development initiative.	Engagement with key stakeholders including the Health Board and regional educational establishments to agree a partnership model to deliver sports development in line with the commitment to grow physical activity levels a support community well-being.	Approval ensures that Sports Development in the Vale continues to function efficiently and effectively to support community well-being in line with our priorities. Work will be taken forward through the newly established limited company partnership.	WO1 WO2 WO3 WO4
January	Proposals for the next Reshaping Programme.	Engagement with all Council departments, elected members, voluntary sector, town and community councils, Public Services Board and Regional Partnership Board in developing an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan and ADP priorities. Proposals are being shaped by engagement and other insight including the findings of the recent Life in the Vale Survey.	Approved proposals being taken forward in the development of a new transformational programme aligned with the new Corporate Plan 2025-30.	WO1 WO2 WO3 WO4
January	Acquisition of Residential Properties in the Vale of Glamorgan for social care services.	Engagement with all Council departments in developing an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan and ADP priorities.	Approved proposal will enable delivery of a scheme that supports independent living in the community for people with care and support needs, in line with identified need.	WBO1 WBO3
February	Improvements to the Colcot and Buttrills	Engagement with all Council departments, residents and other key	Support for the proposed schemes will secure significant public realm and recreation	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3

Month	Proposal	Stakeholder Involvement	Decision and what has changed/ improved	Well-being Objective contribution
	recreation sites in Barry.	stakeholders in developing an integrated approach aligned with the Corporate Plan and ADP priorities.	facilities improvements to the Colcot and Buttrills area to benefit the surrounding communities.	WBO4
February/ March	Proposals for Draft Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29.	Engagement with council departments, elected members and other key stakeholders including the public have informed the budget proposals, alongside consideration of other key insights including the Life in the Vale survey findings.	Adoption of a council tax rise of 6.7% which was below the Wales average figure.  Resources allocated to deliver council services had given due consideration to the Life in the Vale and Budget consultation findings.  Implementation of arrangements to deliver £7.676M in savings.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4
March	Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25.	Engagement with council departments, elected members, key partners and other key stakeholders including the public have informed the Annual Delivery Plan commitments alongside consideration of other key insights including the Life in the Vale survey findings.	Delivery of key service activities and performance targets aligned to our 2024/25 ADP commitments.	WBO1 WBO2 WBO3 WBO4

## 8.7 Engagement on the Annual Self-Assessment performance judgements and emerging findings

Our Annual Self-Assessment comprises three main judgements: an Annual Delivery Plan Performance Assessment; an assessment of our use of resources (people, assets, finance (including procurement including and commissioning), performance, risk and engagement insight,); and an assessment of our governance, risk management and effectiveness of internal controls through an Annual Governance Statement.

A key part of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment is to sense-check our performance judgements and the emerging findings in terms of areas for future focus to ensure that we remain outward focussed as an organisation, responding to the things that matter the most to our citizens and partners.

### **External Partners and Stakeholders**

Following an internal peer challenge and moderation exercise, an external partner and stakeholder drop-in event was undertaken in July 2024. As part of the development of the new corporate plan 2025-30 a wide range of partners and local organisations were invited to discuss our draft well-being objectives and the outcomes we need to deliver. At this event, we also took the opportunity to talk to them about our performance judgements and the emerging findings from the Annual Self-Assessment process and how those

findings are helping to shape future activity. 16 people attended the event including representatives from the Public Services Board, Town and Community Councils and local organisations.

Summary of the key findings were as follows:

- Generally most considered our judgements across all themes to be fair on balance.
- Our overall judgement of 'Fair' in relation to Engagement and Insight was considered appropriate by most, with the general consensus being that they agreed with our desire to improve on representativeness in our engagement and how that insight is used.

In relation to emerging areas for future focus the following areas were highlighted:

- Support for local art development and access to it, not just public art.
- Taking a needs led approach to growing social care services.
- Strengthening our focus on well-being within the community in relation to social care services.
- Strategically owning and leading on planning and plans for the Vale, and appropriately challenging housing developers.

Whilst there was support for the majority of the emerging areas for focus identified, there was also concern about how these would be funded without continually increasing council tax.

#### ***Elected Member Event***

An online event was also organised for elected members which set out the draft objectives for the new Corporate Plan and also the emerging findings from the Annual Self-Assessment and how these are contributing to the development of the new Plan. 15 members were in attendance. This session provided members with an opportunity to discuss and shape these key work activities early on, prior to them formally considering both at scrutiny committees during the autumn.

In relation to the Annual Self-Assessment, elected members noted the process, judgements and emerging findings with no further comments made at the event.

#### ***Staff Engagement***

The Annual Self-Assessment report has been discussed with the Strategic Leadership Team and communicated to staff. We have also promoted this on the Council's StaffNet and an online event was led by the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources to give colleagues further opportunity to feed into the overall findings. The event attended by 30 colleagues, outlined the judgements and emerging annual self-assessment findings and how these were informing the strategic plans for the next Corporate Plan. Colleagues were asked to feed back through an online poll as to whether the judgements and emerging areas for future focus felt right. The majority agreed with the judgements and emerging areas and a request was made for further feedback once colleagues had looked at the report in detail. This forms part of the internal challenge process enabling colleagues across the Council to sense-check the emerging findings, ensuring they are reflective of the current position and to identify how they can contribute in their roles to the Council's improvement journey. Any additional feedback including new areas for future focus, opportunities for innovation across service areas and the Council as a whole will be reflected in the final Annual Self-Assessment report.

#### ***Change Forum***

The Director of Corporate Resources outlined the judgements and emerging annual self-assessment findings and how these were informing the strategic plans for the next Corporate Plan. The Change Forum noted the process followed for the Annual Self-Assessment and no further comments were made by trades union representatives regarding the Annual Self-Assessment judgements and emerging findings.

#### ***Equalities Consultative Forum (ECF)***

Members of the ECF were taken through a presentation outlining of the judgements and emerging findings from the annual self-assessment and how these were informing the next Corporate Plan. There were no specific comments on both judgements and emerging findings by ECF members at the meeting and the presentation has been circulated to members for their consideration and feedback.

### **Public Engagement**

A number of community events were attended between July and August across the Vale of Glamorgan in Barry, Cowbridge, Penarth, Dinas Powys and Llantwit Major to communicate and invite views on the judgements and emerging findings of the Council’s Annual Self-Assessment including sense checking the areas for future focus identified through process. Overall, there were very few comments on the self-assessment judgements with those commenting stating that they considered these to be fair. Most were broadly supportive of the areas for future focus and were provided with further information on how these would be used to inform the development of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2025-30.

Additionally, we are running a twitter poll until September to gauge views on emerging areas for future focus. A summary document is also being produced and will be promoted online for residents to feedback on. **The findings of these activities will be reflected in the final draft report on conclusion of the consultation programme.**

In relation to the twitter poll which commenced in July, these have been pushed 10 times to date reaching between 500 to 1,000 each time. Presented below is a snapshot of results to date by the key themes. With the exception of the building sustainable communities theme, there is broadly good support for the emerging areas for future focus identified in the Council’s Annual Self-Assessment findings.

<b>Twitter Poll results</b>			
<b>Do you agree with these areas? 👉</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
Improving our work processes	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%
Building sustainable communities	33.3%	50%	16.7%
Supporting young people	83.3%	16.7%	0%
Working with partners to reshape care services	92.3%	7.7%	0%
Promoting public participation in the council’s work	90.9%	9%	9.1%

### **Governance & Audit Committee & Audit Wales**

The Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) has been subject to initial challenge via the Governance and Audit Committee and will be reviewed by our external auditors as part of the audit of the Council’s Statement of Accounts and will continue to reflect any governance issues identified right up to the date the Auditor General for Wales signs off the Statement of Accounts. The draft AGS was recommended for adoption by the Leader and the Chief Executive subject to consideration being given to including further commentary on the Oracle Financial Systems implementation and corporate complaints.

## **8.8 Overall conclusion**

For the period 2023/24, we have judged that **the Council has made Good progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2020-25.** We achieved 85% of 591 planned activities and associated targets set in what was an ambitious Annual Delivery Plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. However, we also recognise that there are areas where we have not performed as well as we should, and these areas of underperformance remain areas of focus in 2024/25 and are reflected in our Annual Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans for the period.

During the past year, we have continued to increase at pace our collaborative activities in order to enable us to tackle our critical challenges in an integrated and holistic way, building on the success achieved to date. Against the backdrop of ongoing financial and economic pressures, these partnerships have contributed significantly to the achievements described within this report. However, we also recognise that in order to meet the increasing demand for all our services, we need to escalate this work with a wider range of partners, stakeholders and our communities in order to deliver sustainable solutions and positive outcomes for our citizens. Work has already commenced in refreshing our transformation programme with a focus on doing this, aligned to the development of our new Corporate Plan 2025-30. The Strengthening Communities workstream of the Reshaping Programme is now taking shape and reflects the Council's role as an enabler and facilitator as well as a provider of services. This is an important step towards securing the sustainability of vital and valued services with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

Since the last annual report, we have taken on board feedback from the Council's Governance & Audit Committee and all Scrutiny Committees to improve how we monitor and report progress against the Annual Delivery Plan and our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives across the Council and publicly. The draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24 provides a **'Reasonable Assurance' judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on our governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness**, which indicates that from a governance perspective our systems and processes are generally sound. Additionally, an Internal Audit Opinion of either 'substantial or reasonable assurance' has also been given to 82% of risk-based reviews undertaken in-year testing the effectiveness of the internal control environment with 92% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. However, we acknowledge that further actions are needed to strengthen existing arrangements to ensure the Council's governance arrangements continue to improve to support the delivery of its services and ensure that all key stakeholders are involved in decision making. This work is being taken forward through the Council's Internal Audit Annual Work Plan, the Annual Performance Calendar of activities, Effective Scrutiny Principles Action Plan and the Public Participation Strategy.

The Council returned a breakeven position on the 2023/24 budget, however, this was achieved after a drawdown on reserves to meet significant demand pressures in a number of service areas including Social Services and Additional Learning Needs which is not a sustainable option for the long term. Whilst **an overall judgement of Good was attributed to our use of resources**, this reflects an aggregation of individual directorate level judgements given to how well we have used our people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on our Annual Delivery Plan commitments. A **judgement of Fair was attributed to our finance, commissioning and procurement** to reflect the ongoing demand pressures in service areas and subsequent impact on the budget. Similarly, a judgement of **Fair** was attributed to engagement insights reflecting the need to embed existing pockets of good practice across all council services and take forward the learning from the findings of the Life in the Vale Survey 2023. These challenges are key considerations informing the development of a new Reshaping Programme for the Council.

Considering our judgements and the findings of the engagement activities undertaken as described in section 8.7 above, we are assured that on balance our Annual Self-Assessment judgements of **'Good' against the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24, 'Good' for how we are using our resources** and a **'Reasonable Assurance' judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on our governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness** are reflective of progress to date, contributing towards achieving our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

## 9.0 How we are using our resources and governance?

Overall judgement for 'how we are using our resources' is **GOOD**.

A resilient Council is one that is well governed, is innovative, plans effectively for now and the future and lives within its means. To support the delivery of our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and contribute to the national goals, we have to make sure that we are using our resources efficiently, effectively and equitably. This is in line with the sustainable development principle set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Throughout the year we have continuously assessed how well we are using our resources to enable us to deliver on our commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24. [Annual Directorate Self-Assessments](#) aligned to the performance calendar enable us at end of year to bring together key insights from across the council’s services to inform an overall judgement of how well we have used our resources. The assessment also enables us to sense check our progress in embedding the sustainable development principle in how we work to meet the changing demands on core services and ensure their sustainability for the long-term. Current and emerging medium to long term challenges and opportunities identified through this assessment will inform our Annual Self-Assessment findings, the development of the New Corporate Plan 2025-30 and Annual Plans for 2025/26.

An internal peer ‘critical friend’ challenge of Directorate Self-Assessment findings has been undertaken, followed by further challenge through a moderation exercise led by the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Resources and the Executive Leader of the Council to confirm the overall council judgement. Based on our assessment (which included a reflection on last year’s judgements), we have attributed a council-wide rating of ‘**Good**’ to reflect our progress as outlined below, which mirrors last year’s judgement.

Through the moderation process, a number of directorate level and overall council judgements were revised. Pre-moderation Directorate ratings of ‘Good’ assigned to the Finance, Commissioning and Procurement theme by Corporate Resources and Learning & Skills were both revised to ‘Fair’ following moderation. Additionally, the rating for Engagement and Insight assigned by the Place Directorate was revised from ‘Good’ to ‘Fair.’

In light of the above changes, an overall council rating of ‘Fair’ from ‘Good’ was reached in relation to Engagement and Insight. This was considered more reflective of our current position and acknowledges that whilst good foundations have been established (via the Public Participation Strategy) with pockets of good practice in place, we need to further build on those foundations to ensure consistency across the Council both in how we engage and in the use of that insight.

The overall council rating for Finance, Commissioning and Procurement, was also revised from ‘Good’ to ‘Fair’ in recognition of the significant and ongoing financial pressures facing all council services which have been exacerbated by increased demand for services and external factors beyond the Council’s control. Additionally, there was recognition that despite budgets and associated savings targets being met across most council services, these were not wholly from sustainable sources.

### Pre-Moderation judgements

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	2021/22 Rating	2022/23 Rating	2023/24 Rating	Direction of Travel (DoT)
People	Good	Good	Good	↔
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Good	Good	↔
Assets	Good	Good	Good	↔

Performance	Good	Good	Good	↔
Risk	Good	Good	Good	↔
Engagement and Insight	Good	Good	Good	↔
<b>Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>↔</b>

### Post-moderation judgements

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	2021/22 Rating	2022/23 Rating	2023/24	Direction of Travel (DoT)
People	Good	Good	Good	↔
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Good	Fair	↓
Assets	Good	Good	Good	↔
Performance	Good	Good	Good	↔
Risk	Good	Good	Good	↔
Engagement and Insight	Good	Good	Fair	↓
<b>Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>↔</b>

A judgement of 'Good' means that, '*across our services we have good evidence of how we have used our resources economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably to enhance performance, achieve outcomes and meet need and are in a strong position to secure future service improvements sustainably.*'

## 9.1 What have we achieved?

### People

- Embraced more creative approaches to address our recruitment challenges resulting in success in key service areas such as Social Services, Shared Regulatory Services, Learning & Skills, Planning & regeneration and Neighbourhood Services and Transport which has delivered some success.
- Adopted a new People Strategy which has provided a framework for taking forward a range of workforce related activity, including attraction, retention, reward, strategic workforce planning, development and inclusion.
- Further developed our staff diversity networks to ensure we are an inclusive employer, successfully maintaining our Stonewall Workplace Silver award.
- Developed and adopted HR dashboards highlighting key directorate metrics, including from an equalities perspective to strengthen strategic workforce planning.
- Engaged with staff on benefits and entitlements offered to Council staff which saw the launch of the Staff Volunteering Policy and development of a revised reward offering and new staff discounts.
- Relunched the Learning Café and a programme of new events to upskill staff informally.
- Emphasised the expectation that all employees receive an annual review and quarterly touch points to focus on their wellbeing, development and performance through the relaunched #itsabout me process.

### Assets

- Sustained investment in digital infrastructure across the Council and schools to improve our resilience over the medium to long term. This has also contributed to increased inclusion and service access, reduced costs and increased transparency to citizens and other stakeholders as well as improved outcomes for learners.
- Developed and delivering an ambitious £388M Capital Programme, investing in our highways, schools and housing.



- Adopted a Digital Strategy 2023-2028 setting out how digital progress will be monitored. Additionally, adopted a Data Strategy to support data derived insight and evidence-based decision making.
- Collaborated with partners and the third sector to maximise use and ensure sustainability of our assets through community asset transfers, new operating models and other arrangements e.g. single use sports facilities, parks and car parks.
- Made positive progress in delivering a housing model that meets the needs of residents with a development spend of £29.1M on 220 units under construction at Hayeswood Road, Clos Holm View Phase 2, Coldbrook Road East, former Colcot Clinic (all Barry); Eagleswell Road, Llantwit and St Cyres Road, Penarth with a further 51 new homes completed with 14 at St Cyres Road, Penarth; 14 at Hayeswood Road, Barry, 23 acquisitions and 23 at Burley Place, St Athan.
- Resolution of the Vale Enterprise Centre (VEC) site, removing a deteriorating and costly site from the Council's long term portfolio and progressed renovation of office space such as BSC2 for external letting.
- Maximised use of our buildings and secured savings through relocating our Customer Contact Centre (C1V) and other services within the Civic Offices, successfully concluding the first phase of the office rationalisation (Eich Lle) project.
- Successfully collaborated with the third sector on increasing residential provision for children across the Vale resulting in one home opening with another awaiting registration.
- The new Well-being Matters Hub based at the Civic Offices has been designed to make best use of collaborative working to facilitate seamless services to service users/ citizens.
- Established a social value framework which will ensure a Council-wide approach to generating community benefits building on the work undertaken through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

#### *Finance*

- Lobbied Welsh Government for a fairer grant settlement and a genuine multi-year settlement to enable effective financial planning for the long term.
- Published our Financial Strategy and rolling five-year Medium Term Financial Plan and developed budget proposals for 2024/25 informed by the priorities of Vale citizens.
- Continued to take an integrated approach to maximising our use of various grant funding streams in creative ways to achieve maximum outcomes as aligned to our Well-being Objectives.
- Our contract with Legacy Leisure for delivery of leisure services remains the only similar arrangement in Wales that continues to realise an income for the Council. The projected income from April 2024 to December 2029 is £471.5K. User numbers at the Centres are now up to their pre-covid levels and extensive improvement works have been undertaken at several of the buildings, which has improved safety and the customer experiences.
- Successfully secured Levelling up funding and Long Term Plan funding for Towns which will bring over £50m into Barry over the next 10 years.
- Strengthened project management capacity by establishing a capital development project manager post to support work with colleagues and partners including the third sector in response to the requirements to grow services in line with social care market stability report.
- Established a Vale of Glamorgan Section 16 Forum to promote local micro-community enterprises and other community opportunities to support citizens well-being.
- Adopted a Non-Treasury Investment Strategy to support income generation.
- Re-selected Matrix as the provider for Agency provision for the Council with a focus on value for money, and ethical and sustainable practices in this area.

#### *Performance and Risk*

- Enhanced performance reporting with new reports to the Strategic Insight Board, Strategic Leadership team and elected members outlining progress against our critical challenges of cost of living, organisational resilience and Project Zero.

- Refreshed our Risk Management Strategy and Register to reflect our changing risk landscape as part of the development of the new Corporate Plan. This supports our efforts to assess and prioritise risk, increase awareness across the council and being proactive in taking mitigating action.
- Exceeded the national domestic waste recycling target of 70% with a performance of 70.35%. The successful roll out of source segregated recycling across the Vale and new recycling recovery facilities alongside ongoing awareness raising have contributed to this achievement.
- Achieved performance better than the UK average (97%) for the proportion of premises that are broadly compliant with food hygiene requirements (scoring a 3\* food hygiene rating or above).
- Increased the timeliness of reviews which enabled more responsive and tailored social care services. This proactive approach enhanced the overall quality of care and support, promoting individual well-being, independence, and dignity.
- Achieved the Families First Quality Award, the third in Wales to do so. The national Award recognises Family Information Services (FIS) that demonstrate excellence in providing information, advice, and assistance to local families.
- Supported the independent sector to increase the capacity and availability of domiciliary care. In recent years this had become a significant problem resulting in delays in arranging this care for our residents and we are now in the position where this is no longer the case.
- The Estyn inspection acknowledged that strong relationships with our schools has helped support and challenge schools well to improve their rates of attendance and this is having a positive impact, particularly in primary schools.
- Overall standards across our schools are high. At A level there has been consistently high performance at grades A\*-E, A\*C and A\*-A. Similarly at GCSE, we have continued to exceed the national performance measures for literacy, numeracy and science.
- Co-produced a Transgender Toolkit which has been adopted by all schools.
- The Pencoedtre Learning Community (PLC) model, a cluster based approach to reducing impact of poverty on children and young people continues to have a positive impact on attendance and engagement with families and the approach is being replicated across the Vale's schools.
- Significant investment in ALN has enabled growth of specialist provision. For example, the expansion of Ysgol Y Deri, establishment of Derw Newydd, Early Intervention Base and Gwaun y Nant Welsh-medium base, has enabled the directorate to maintain learners with complex needs within their locality.
- Progressed the recommendations from Audit Wales local and national studies, making connections between these and key areas of focus such as poverty, cost of living, warm spaces and food support involving key partners including third sector organisations and our communities.

### *Engagement & Insight*

- Alongside a programme of engagement covering a wide range of council services, we successfully ran the County wide Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey providing important community insight and building relationships with seldom heard groups. Over 4,000 residents participated.
- Strengthened our work with key partners including the voluntary and third sector to embed an integrated approach to co-ordinating our response to key challenges and supporting community initiatives e.g. tackling the cost-of-living crisis, community regeneration initiatives.
- Proactively promoted digital opportunities including via the Participate Vale online hub to widen engagement and participation including from seldom held groups and children and young people.
- Reached a diverse range of groups as part of placemaking engagement in our 4 main towns through promoting a wide range of engagement and consultation opportunities. This is informing community mapping work which will underpin the placemaking work.
- Enhanced access points to social care services via digital and other means which is not only providing service users with more choice and control over the services they receive, but also providing us with insights on lived experience which will help to inform future service developments and models of delivery.
- Continued to engage with our more deprived communities to understand their needs to best inform future projects and local services.

- Since launching an e-petition facility, which allows residents, community groups and organisations to create e-petitions on issues that matter to them to be considered by the Council, there have over 800 views and 2 e-petitions established.
- Improved how we use, analyse, and embed data, evidence and insight into our decision making. This includes both hard data and softer intelligence, including insight gained from more conversations with our communities.
- Hosted 83 projects on the Participate Vale platform enabling residents to easily access and engage with the Council on a variety of projects.

**Engagement activities: what our residents and service users said**

What we engaged on	What the key findings were	What changed/improved as a result
<p>Life in the Vale Survey Also referenced under WBO1 and can be viewed from the links provided.</p>	<p>4,000 plus participants representative of the Vale of Glamorgan population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60% of respondents stated that they are either very or fairly satisfied with the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live, and 80% would recommend the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live.</li> <li>• The Council’s priorities are broadly in line with those of residents. However, more work needs to be done in how we explain our work, public perception of our work, and engage residents in decision making. More respondents stated that they disagreed than agreed with statements that the services provided by the Vale of Glamorgan Council are of a high quality; that the Council acts in the interest of local residents; that the Council takes residents’ views into account when making a decision; and that the services provided by the Council represent good value for money.</li> </ul>	<p>Revised our Public Participation Strategy and identified four key areas of work to respond to the survey’s findings.</p>
<p>The following applicable consultations are referenced earlier under Well-being Objective 1. 2024/25 Budget Consultation, Data and Digital Strategies and Staff Reward Strategy.</p>		

**What our regulators said**

**Review/ Findings/ Our response**

Also applicable is Audit Wales's reviews of our [use of performance information](#) and [Digital Strategy](#) referenced earlier under Well-being Objective 1. These can be viewed via the links provided.

## **Our key challenges**

### *People*

- Significant challenges remain in some service areas in attracting and retaining staff, exacerbated by budget pressures, national skills shortages and market forces. Nationally, local government remains the lowest paying part of the public sector and consequently lacks attractiveness as a career choice. Thinking long term, there is an opportunity to work collaboratively with education establishments, independent apprenticeship providers and other public sector organisations for the development of new skills and capability career pathways into local government to attract new talent which will help to develop the pipeline of skills we need to create a resilient workforce for the future.
- We need to work towards ensuring that our workforce remains supported and engaged to build resilience and reduce work related stress and burnout.

### *Assets*

- Responding to the developing digital agenda, including increased risks to cyber security, and the required digital capacity and skills to support Council services to transform.
- Supporting services to deliver complex digital projects at pace and ensuring that lessons learnt from the final implementation of Oracle Fusion, which was a major challenge, including responding to increased costs, time pressures, system configuration issues and clear political interest in the system's introduction.
- The success of placemaking plans remain dependent on active Community and Town Councils involvement in identifying a shared vision. In addition, deliverability will increasingly depend on how successful we are at securing external funding which is often short term in nature, this presents capacity and resource challenges in supporting communities.
- The level of investment required to sustain progress and meet increasing demand for quick, efficient and highly responsive digital services from our citizens and other key stakeholders over the long term will be challenging given already stretched budgets and resources.
- A limited amount of capital funding has meant that many built assets are falling into a state of disrepair, and some may have to be closed on health and safety grounds if longer term solutions for their management and maintenance cannot be established.
- Insufficient land for new house building remains an issue year on year and the homelessness pressures are more acute than ever due to the change in the legal duty to house, brought in by Welsh Government and associated financial challenges. This is coupled with record numbers of refugees that require housing.
- The continuing degradation of highway surfaces has seen the pothole repair budget significantly overspent to avoid increased third party liability claims. There are similar concerns with the remaining highway infrastructure, with many street lighting columns and structures already reaching, or shortly to reach the end of their safe working life.
- Developing support for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement across the council portfolio remains challenging given reducing budgets.

### *Finance, Commissioning and Procurement*

- Single year financial settlements continue to impact on long term financial planning and financial sustainability, and we will continue to make the case for multiyear settlements and for more long-term certainty around funding and budgets.
- Significant budget pressures arising from growth in demand for services continue to impact on our ability to deliver a balanced budget for key areas such as social care services and education services.

- Setting a balanced budget in future years will be a challenge given the stark financial projections for both revenue and capital funding. This will require an increasingly collaborative way to support colleagues to find innovative ways of funding essential services, including the development and delivery of the transformational change programme, Reshaping. There will be a challenge in delivering a capital programme with depleted resources and asset renewal with depleted maintenance budgets, leading to more scope for reactive emergencies.
- Monitoring the quality assurance of our externally commissioned service providers is increasingly challenging due to the capacity and resources required to undertake this work.
- Effectively utilising grant funding to support the delivery of society-wide initiatives and ensuring that all organisations involved can contribute, influence and work differently to support communities will become ever more important giving declining budgets. We will need to become even more creative and flexible to maximise opportunities, despite the often-complicated funding conditions associated to these grants.
- Inflationary pressures continue to have a significant impact on the tendering process for capital schemes and this is monitored to ensure affordability of schemes.
- Managing public expectations when working with and delivering services for our community with reduced funding and less resources available to us will continue to present challenges and these will need to be carefully managed.
- We need to proactively investigate new income opportunities with a view to maximise income from all sources to enable us to continue to deliver valued services into the long term.
- Ongoing financial challenges will impact on deliverability of the Council's digital and key transformational programmes.

#### *Performance and Risk*

- Pupil attendance continues to be a key area of focus. Post-pandemic we have seen a fall in attendance rates, particularly across our secondary schools and particularly for learners with vulnerabilities. Maintaining capacity to embed strategies that can bring about positive change in the most entrenched persistent absenteeism / emotionally based school avoidance cases is challenging.
- We are seeing a rise in exclusions across schools linked to the growth in complex Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs and the increased number of learners that are exhibiting significant signs of dysregulation. Schools are experiencing resource and capacity pressures in meeting these more complex SEMH needs. There are also challenges with the current systems and processes for learners (without an Individual Development Plan accessing appropriate provision options outside of a mainstream school setting that meets their needs).
- There continues to be a growth in learners presenting with complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN), particularly relating to neurodiversity and social, emotional and mental health needs. This impacts on the capacity of centralised staff to meet those needs. There has been an exponential increase in demand from schools on specialist centralised staff for advice, support and guidance for children identified as having increasingly complex learning needs.
- Although the numbers of young people who are (not in Education, Employment or Training) NEET has remained relatively low, we have seen a rise in the Year 13 and 12 cohort of learners who are NEET. This has been as a result of barriers preventing them from progressing onto further education or employment.
- Challenges around enhancing access to public arts and pavilion activities/events, particularly for underrepresented groups on a cost neutral basis, remains an area of challenge.
- The increasing resource and skill requirements needed to support UK Government regeneration funding streams and associated projects e.g. Shared Prosperity Funding, Levelling Up Funding and Long Term Plan for Towns funding continue to impact on the capacity of the Project Management Unit and other supporting services. There is a need to strengthen capacity, skills and establish good governance systems and structures within the Project Management Unit to support a collaborative agenda and the delivery of major council projects.
- The increasing demand for social care services, reflected both in demand and complexity of need remains challenging in the context of limited finances and sustained staffing challenges.

### *Engagement and Insight*

- There is a need to further enhance the inclusivity of our engagement activities to ensure we can effectively reach 'seldom heard voices' and protected groups to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of individual groups and community needs. We also need to embed a focus on using engagement as a mechanism to further understand the 'lived experience' of our service users, learners and citizens to better identify and map community needs with the insight shaping the design and development of sustainable services into the longer term.
- Responding to the findings of the Life in the Vale survey via the Public Participation Strategy will be a challenge, especially in terms of demonstrating quality services and value for money to residents and that we are a council that listens and responds to residents' needs.

### **Areas for future focus**

#### *People*

- Address ongoing service recruitment and capacity challenges especially in critical areas to ensure continued service delivery.
- Support the continued recruitment, development and retention of high demand/specific skills sets to deliver transformational change in the Council e.g. Reshaping Programme and key UK government funding packages.
- Further strengthen strategic workforce planning and modelling within the context of ongoing budgetary pressures to support delivery of our long term improvement priorities.
- Continue to offer staff opportunities to grow our own in a sustainable and manageable way.
- Increase resilience through cross-directorate working to support professional development of staff to help address capacity pressures and single points of dependency within the council.
- Showcase the benefits of diversity within the workforce and actively work across the Council to make the organisation more diverse and reflective of our communities.

#### *Assets*

- Deliver a comprehensive Highways Asset Management Plan, moving more quickly on land and asset transfers and assessing options for more burdensome assets.
- Work collaboratively to identify assets across the Council which can be put to better use.
- Work collaboratively to develop support for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement across the council portfolio.
- Apply new planning policy to reduce carbon output as aligned to our climate change priorities.
- Work collaboratively to identify capital improvement and development projects for social care to respond to the requirement to grow services in line with the market stability report.
- Further develop digital services and the rigour around digital progress to maximise new ways of working and ensure responsive services for citizens and colleagues.
- Keep under review the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and asset renewal priorities in the context of the unpredictability of the condition of our housing and ongoing financial pressures.
- Work collaboratively across the council and schools to identify and implement financially sustainable investment in digital technology/infrastructure to support delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy.
- Deliver major regeneration projects under the Levelling up and Shared Prosperity funding schemes totalling £42M.

#### *Finance, Commissioning & Procurement*

- Take a longer-term approach to Regeneration and Planning budgets given the multi-year nature of major projects which, can be adversely affected by year-on-year savings requirements.

- Develop resilience around the Building Control trading account and services ensuring adequate resources to deliver responsibilities.
- Work with the Welsh Local Government Agency, Corporate Joint Committee and UK Government to seek extension of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) programme (due to end in 2024/25) to ensure continued support for major regeneration projects.
- Deliver Reshaping Programme to achieve transformational change across the organisation and continue to operate within fiscal restraint.
- Work across directorates to maximise opportunities to access external funding sources to promote integration and sustainable service delivery.
- Support the development of a whole-authority transformation strategy that supports the longer term financial sustainability of education provision and our schools.
- Enhance capacity and the skills of our staff to focus on more commercial aspects of service delivery and support processing payments from the public.
- Facilitate cluster-based working in the context of budget expenditure, procurement, use of agency staff and savings to enhance the financial resilience of schools.
- Collaborate across the council to enable longer term planning and more creative mixed uses of funding to support service sustainability across council services.

#### *Performance and Risk*

- Achieve Listed Building Consent Delegation from CADW to improve our performance in dealing with applications that require listed building consent.
- Work collaboratively to deliver resolutions to our long-term empty properties.
- Implement the recommendations of the Disabled Facilities Grant review to improve response times in delivering adaptations.
- Implement Audit Wales recommendations associated with local reviews of our Digital Strategy, Third Sector Partnership Working, Reshaping Services, Workforce Planning and Assets, User Perspective and Service Outcomes, Review of the Planning Service's Governance Arrangements and Application of the Sustainable Development Principle in Service Areas.
- Work across directorates to embed a placemaking approach in planning, designing and maintaining our community spaces contributing to creating integrated and sustainable communities for the future.
- Introduce a social services quality assurance framework to support service performance evaluation that drives effective, accountable, and evidence-based practice that informs service improvement. Additionally, collaborate on undertaking preparatory work for a replacement system for the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) to support performance management.
- Implement a Section 16 Forum to promote social enterprises, co-operatives, user led services and other third sector organisations for the provision of support and preventative services in the Vale of Glamorgan. Additionally, explore how we can support communities to support each other by developing more and enhancing existing connections including rolling out the dementia friendly communities programme.
- Continue to support and challenge schools to raise levels of attendance with an emphasis on the secondary sector and specialist provision, whilst tackling persistent absence and addressing emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and needs of vulnerable learners.
- Embed a preventative approach to minimising rates of fixed term and permanent exclusions through effective support and challenge of schools and the development of mechanisms to enhance early intervention.
- Reduce the overall rate of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) across the Vale through effective tracking of at-risk learners and embedding strategies to ensure early identification and intervention.
- Strengthen processes to proactively identify vulnerable children and young people and ensure effective monitoring to minimise the risk of learners missing education and improve learner outcomes.

- Improve the quality and use of information about learning and teaching in schools to enable us to best direct local authority resources towards areas for improvement with a focus on enhancing the performance of vulnerable learners and pupils entitled to free school meals (eFSM).
- Support and challenge school leaders to ensure additional learning needs (ALN) is 'everybody's business' and to develop evidence-based additional learning provision (ALP) to meet the needs of learners with complex ALN and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). Additionally, collaborate to explore opportunities to enhance sufficiency in provision for post 16 learners with ALN.
- Develop a whole school capacity to meet the increasing trend of learners presenting with SEMH needs.
- Work with schools to better capture and record data and the demographic of their communities to effectively target support to learner's needs over the short, medium and long-term with a focus on addressing poverty and enhancing our monitoring to better evidence impact.
- Deliver our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan priorities with a specific focus on generating demand for Welsh medium education facilitated through our School Investment Strategy and working collaboratively to develop pathways to support Welsh speaking students/graduates into employment opportunities.
- Enhance the capacity of schools to apply a whole school approach to bullying and discrimination including effective challenge to inform improvement planning.
- Work in collaboration with Welsh Government and partners to refine target groups to support employability and seek alternative mechanisms to address need.
- Widen access to public arts on a cost neutral basis.
- Sharpen the focus of evaluation and improvement processes across our services to demonstrate the impact of our work.
- Streamline and reinvigorate the performance and democratic/scrutiny process following the development of a new Corporate Plan.
- Lead and support the delivery of new homes across the Vale of Glamorgan to respond to growing housing and homelessness pressures.
- Support the delivery of net-zero ambitions through the continued delivery of recycling services and the management of our fleet and vehicles.
- Respond to the recommendations of assurance procedures and emerging risks to ensure the delivery of robust contract management, project management and procurement procedures within the Environment & Housing Directorate.
- Strengthen capacity and establish good governance systems and structures within the Project Management Unit to support a collaborative agenda and the delivery of major council projects.
- Work with partners to promote community models of care, and to minimise any unnecessary time spent in hospital in line with the Welsh Government Frailty Standard.
- Support the placemaking work in our main town centres as well as the Long-Term Plan for Towns in Barry, ensuring appropriate leads to drive progress.
- Support and challenge schools to improve the timeliness and quality of school-based data to inform strategic and operational decision making.
- Further improve our response and learning from complaints.

#### *Engagement & Insight*

- Enhance our communication with the public, explaining service pressures and ensuring service delivery responds to feedback and that digital provision enables and informs customers.
- Improve public engagement regarding the Local Plan process and any process associated with the future development of a Strategic Development Plan (SDP).
- Improve engagement with the planning system to help the public understand the process.
- Enhance opportunities for communication with staff and residents to highlight engagement opportunities, future changes, and the Council's challenges associated with the financial and demand position.
- Develop our oversight of engagement activities across the Council to strengthen insight and promote its use to inform decision making and communicate what has changed and/or improved as a result.



- Further develop and enhance pupil voice and youth service provision through embedding the School Council Network, developing our Welsh medium offer across our Youth Service provision and enhancing the Welsh language skills of our staff.

## 9.1 Governance

The Council, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, undertakes an annual review of internal control and governance with the resulting [Annual Governance Statement](#) (AGS) included within the Statement of Accounts. The AGS therefore provides an assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identifies where improvements need to be made.

Key performance and other insights from the annual performance calendar of activities have informed the evidence base for the AGS which describes how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance as aligned to the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 with a focus on the following principles:

- A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

There is **'Reasonable Assurance'** on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2023/24, based on the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion. An Internal Audit Opinion of either 'substantial or reasonable assurance' has been given to 82% of risk-based reviews undertaken in-year testing the effectiveness of the internal control environment with 92% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. The key challenges identified in the Annual Governance Statement are consistent with the key challenges and emerging areas for continued focus identified in the Directorate Self-Assessments and Annual Delivery Plan Performance Assessment for the period 2023/24.

A judgement of **'Reasonable Assurance'** means that, ***'there is reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in our risk management, governance and control processes, based on review, assessment and ongoing monitoring work undertaken during 2023/24 and that the governance arrangements for the Vale of Glamorgan Council continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.'*** This judgement is subject to scrutiny by the Governance & Audit Committee, Cabinet and our external Regulators.

## 10. Reviewing our Self-Assessment approach

It is important that our approach to self-assessment continues to evolve to drive improvement as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and the national well-being goals. Based on our review throughout the process and feedback from key stakeholders and partners, the following areas will require continued focus in readiness for the 2024/25 annual self-assessment. These will be considered alongside feedback from Welsh Government, Audit Wales, the WLGA and any identified best practice from colleagues across Wales.

- Further embed our approach to Directorate Self-assessment dovetailing this with our arrangements for quarterly self-reflection undertaken by Directorates as part of corporate arrangements for performance monitoring and reporting of progress against our annual priorities. Our approach will reflect any new performance arrangements to monitor the Corporate Plan 2025-30.
- Further align the reporting requirements of other regulatory bodies e.g. CIW and Estyn within the Directorate self-assessments to demonstrate integration of working with the findings informing multiple corporate work programmes as aligned to delivery of our well-being outcomes.
- Strengthen our use of performance and other data insights throughout the year to support performance judgements at end of year. This forms part of ongoing work to develop our internal insight function which will help to strengthen our evidence base for the Council's Self-Assessment.
- Further strengthen our internal 'critical friend' challenge by involving external key stakeholders in sense checking our judgements and emerging findings from our annual self-assessment. Engagement with these key stakeholders will also ensure we become more outward facing.
- Further strengthen elected member involvement in the Peer Challenge process. Extending the breadth of participation will ensure that we have a broader spectrum of involvement in the process and will also ensure a wide range of perspectives are taken into account whilst ensuring there is ownership of any changes being identified and proposed.
- Further strengthen aspects of the Annual Self-Assessment Report informed by constructive feedback from internal and external challenge processes including:
  - Promote an easy read public summary document as part of engagement work informed by feedback from residents and members on how they would like the Council's performance information reported. Continue to use a variety of media to reach stakeholders including social media, tailoring information to suit target audiences.
  - Continued focus on how major council decisions have been informed by citizens, communities and other key stakeholders, the resulting changes and impact.
  - Continued focus on how partnerships and collaborative working including work with the Third Sector and Town and Community Councils have contributed to delivering our Annual Delivery priorities and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, giving greater visibility to successes and challenges.

# Working Together for a Brighter Future

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