

VALE of GLAMORGAN



# Vale of Glamorgan Council ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Communities  
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Future

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Corporate Performance, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry. CF63 4RU



[improvements@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:improvements@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

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# ○ I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (LGM) and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA) both place specific duties on the Council in relation to objective setting and reporting duties. Under the WBFGA, the Council is required to publish its annual Well-being Objectives by 31st March and review these annually to ensure they remain relevant and also to report on progress in meeting its well-being objectives from the preceding financial year. Under the LGM, we are also required to publish two documents each year: the first is a forward-looking Improvement Plan setting out our improvement priorities (known as Improvement Objectives) for the financial year ahead; and the second is an annual report to reflect back on the performance of that Plan.

In line with our approach towards a more integrated planning and reporting model, our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives for the period 2019/20 (under the WBFGA) and our Improvement Objectives for the same period (under the LGM) are one and the same. This has enabled us to focus on identifying the right steps to meet our objectives to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the Vale of Glamorgan whilst maximising our contribution to the Well-being Goals. This approach is in line with guidance from the Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner.

We have continually reviewed our Well-being Objectives throughout the year to ensure they remain relevant and reflect local priorities in line with our duties under the WBFGA. In developing the Corporate Plan, we were cognisant of the emerging findings of the Well-being Assessment which was being undertaken to inform the Vale of Glamorgan Public Service (PSB) Well-being Plan. Following its adoption, we have also used the PSB's Well-being Plan as an opportunity to review the relevance of our Well-being priorities so that we can continue to reflect the most important priorities for the Vale of Glamorgan. Annually, we have also engaged with residents as part of our budget consultation to ensure that our priorities and in-year planned activities remain relevant, are deliverable within the resources we have available and reflect the things that are important to our residents and communities. In line with our performance management framework, throughout the year we have also extensively reviewed the relevance of our Well-being Objectives via our service planning process and the continual monitoring of progress against Corporate Plan activities in terms of the key intended outcomes, achievements and challenges. Through this work, we are assured that our Well-being Objectives are appropriate and also continue to remain relevant to the priorities outlined in the Public Services Board's (PSB) Well-being Plan 2018-2023 and will complement the work of the PSB going forward. We have therefore concluded that these objectives continue to be relevant for final year of the Corporate Plan (2019/20) which this report assesses progress against.

Our Well-being and Improvement Objectives for 2019/20 were:

- Objective 1: Reducing poverty and social exclusion
- Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities
- Objective 3: Promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment
- Objective 4: Promoting sustainable development and protecting our environment
- Objective 5: Raising overall standards of achievement
- Objective 6: Valuing culture and diversity
- Objective 7: Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles
- Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living

This Annual Review of Performance 2019/20 (Improvement Plan Part 2) looks back at how we did on delivering our improvement priorities (Well-being Objectives) as set out in the Vale of Glamorgan Well-being Objectives and Improvement Plan Part 1: 2019/20 and is intended to comply with our legal duties under the WBFGA Act and the LGM as well as providing an assessment of our performance for our citizens.

Throughout the report we have attempted to build a coherent picture of how our integrated thinking and planning processes are helping us to take the necessary steps to meet our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and in so doing maximise our contribution to the national goals. Our approach to integrated planning is ensuring that where possible we are connecting our Well-being Objectives to achieve maximum impact. For example, we have set objectives to raise overall standards of achievement, alongside objectives to reduce poverty and social exclusion,

safeguard those who are vulnerable, provide decent homes and safe communities, promote regeneration, economic growth and employment, value culture and diversity and encourage and promote active and health lifestyles. Given the impact these other priorities will have on raising standards of achievement and citizens' well-being overall, it is important that we ensure that we are taking the right steps that will maximise our resources and chances of securing multiple outcomes in line with our objectives. We are working with our key partners, residents and communities to ensure that we do this consistently to enable us to achieve our vision of strong communities with a bright future. This approach is consistent with guidance from the Future Generations Commissioner's Office. However, we also recognise that there is a need to further embed this approach alongside the sustainable development principles in order to ensure success over the long term.

Given the cross-cutting nature of our priorities and the breadth of activities being undertaken to contribute towards achieving our Well-being objectives, we have sought to minimise duplication in the annual report by focusing on outcomes for each Well-being Objective. For example, to demonstrate our progress towards, 'raising overall standards of achievement' the report highlights performance in relation to a series of planned activities, however, these are not stand alone and should be viewed holistically within the context of our other Well-being Objectives.

This report incorporates our statutory reporting requirements that include; outlining our overall Council contribution to the national Well-being goals; progress against our strategic collaborations; what our auditors say about us; how we have used our resources and how we have engaged with our residents. We have assessed progress in relation to all our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. However, certain aspects of performance, most notably, end of year national performance indicator information and national benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance. Our statutory statistical obligations from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government's Public Accountability Measures were suspended indefinitely at the end of 2019/20 to enable us to focus our energies on supporting our communities through the worst of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

This report also provides an opportunity to celebrate our achievements as well as acknowledge the significant challenges that have helped to shape our priorities going forward. Confirmation of our Well-being (Improvement) Objectives for 2020/21 as aligned to our new Corporate Plan for 2020-25 are outlined in the Council's forward-looking Annual Delivery Plan (Improvement Plan Part 1) which was published in May 2020.

Our Corporate Plan 2016-20 set out an ambitious vision for both the Vale of Glamorgan and its citizens to create 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future'. The majority of the priorities aligned to our vision focus on the long term and aim to address complex challenges, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act so, whilst good progress has been made in delivering on those priorities to date, there is still some way to go to demonstrate the full impact. On balance, looking back on the progress we have made during the final year of this Corporate Plan, we believe we have made significant strides forward in achieving our vision.

We have delivered on the majority of our planned activities for 2019/20 as outlined to the Corporate Plan Well-being (Improvement) Objectives, which has given us an overall performance (or RAG) status of GREEN. This is contributing to achieving our Corporate Plan well-being priorities and improving the well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

3 out of 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes (An Inclusive and Safe Vale and An Active and Healthy Vale) were attributed an overall Green performance status. Outcome 1 (An Inclusive and Safe Vale), Outcome 2 (Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale) and Outcome 3 (Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale) were attributed a Green status. Whilst Outcome 4 (An Active and Healthy Vale) was attributed an Amber status. A Green performance status was attributed to 7 of the 8 Corporate Plan Well-being (Improvement) Objectives which reflects the excellent progress that has been made with the delivery of planned activities relating to the aligned Corporate Plan priorities. Only Objective 8 (Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living) was allocated an amber status. In relation to Corporate Health, we continued to make excellent progress in the context of supporting Council services to implement the Corporate Plan priorities/Well-being (Improvement) Objectives and this is reflected in the overall Green performance status achieved at end of year.

It is important to review our progress and report to elected members and the public on improvements which have been achieved and where we can do better. Our Well-being (Improvement) Objectives are delivered through Service Plans, which detail the relevant actions and measures, resources, timescales and accountabilities for

delivery. Progress in delivering our corporate priorities is formally scrutinised quarterly by elected members and our reports are published online at [www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk). In line with corporate performance monitoring arrangements, progress against our Well-being (Improvement) Objectives is reported quarterly to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and to elected members via Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet, where areas of underperformance are challenged, and remedial actions agreed as appropriate. In addition, each of the 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes have been assigned a Sponsoring Director who is responsible for ensuring progress is being made in delivering our planned activities as aligned to our corporate priorities for the year, contributing towards achieving each Well-being Outcome.

It is important to note that our annual review of progress for 2019/20 has been written at a time of unprecedented challenge, which has required the Council to respond quickly to a global pandemic (COVID-19). The pandemic has put our council services under immense pressure and has significantly disrupted how we deliver services that are often vital to our citizens and a lifeline to our most vulnerable in society. Despite this disruption, the Council has risen to the challenge by effectively reprioritising, redirecting and repurposing its resources to where they were needed most. Our core focus throughout this crisis has been to keep our citizens and communities safe whilst ensuring key frontline services keep running. By working closely with our partners and an army of volunteers we have managed to effectively navigate our way through what we hope is the worst of the crisis. The effectiveness of our response to this crisis is testament to the flexibility, dedication and determination of our staff. As we transition from response to recovery, this Annual Report presents us with an opportunity to take stock of the challenges, our achievements and what we have learnt along the way.

Our policy and legislative landscape is in a continual state of flux as a result of the effects of COVID-19 and the ongoing negotiations around a Brexit Trade Deal. Tackling these issues in tandem is likely to significantly challenge how we continue to serve our communities both now and in future. Since this will remain an evolving picture, our priorities for the forthcoming year, 2020/21, have been shaped with these challenges in mind. The volatile nature of the situation could also impact on how we progress our priorities during 2020/21, but we are poised to adapt our response so that we can continue to deliver services in ways that matter most to our citizens. The COVID-19 crisis has shone a light on how we can harness new ways of working and it also presents us with opportunities to transform services that are agile and 'fit for the future'.




Like all other councils in Wales, the Vale of Glamorgan Council continues to face challenging financial times. Despite making approximately £59 million of savings over the last 10 years, we still need to make further significant savings, approximately £11 million, over the next three years (from 2021 to 2023) whilst delivering on an ambitious programme of improvement and the local government reform agenda. We have continued to respond proactively to these challenges through our evolving Reshaping Services Programme which focuses on alternative models of service delivery alongside a collaborative agenda with partners and other key stakeholders. Through this progressive agenda we anticipate we will be able to mitigate the impact of cuts on our services to ensure that we can continue to safeguard services that matter the most to our citizens.

Despite these challenges, we continue to set ourselves challenging targets for improvement, reflecting our commitment to continuously improve the services we provide to citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan. We are mindful of the significant financial and service demand pressures we are facing and so our targets and milestones for our Well-being (Improvement) Objectives have been set within this context. This means that in some areas it will be an achievement to maintain existing levels of service performance whilst absorbing reductions in funding, managing increasing service demand or both. These issues were considered during internal challenge of our Well-being (Improvement) Objectives and targets.




Looking forward to 2020/21 and beyond, the financial and socio-economic challenges for the Council remain, significantly heightened by the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the UK Government's ongoing negotiations with Europe on a Trade Deal. We are still in the process of understanding the short, medium and long term impact that COVID-19 will have on the Council. In addition, achieving a trade deal with Europe by December 2020 is increasingly looking unlikely given the limited progress made in negotiations to date. All of which makes for unprecedented levels of uncertainty and continual change for the Council over the coming year. As we slowly transition from crisis to recovery, we will take this opportunity to transform how we learn, plan and make decisions and work collaboratively to deliver and support sustainable service models and ways of working. Now more than ever, our communities will be looking towards us to do what we do best, that is, providing essential local public services and particularly care and support to the most vulnerable members of our society for the long-term future.


## 1.2 OVERALL STATUS OF CORPORATE PLAN (WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES)




### Our overall RAG status for the Corporate Plan for 2019/20 is GREEN


Presented below is a summary of our performance in relation to each of the Well-being Outcomes outlined in our Corporate Plan. Against each of the Well-being Objectives an overall RAG Status and Direction of Travel is given, as well as an overall RAG status and Direction of Travel for the Outcome as a whole. The Direction of Travel provides an indication of the direction of performance when compared with the previous quarter. For instance, where our RAG status (performance) has improved it is indicated by , where our RAG status has remained the same compared with previous quarter it is shown by  and where our RAG Status has declined it is represented with .




At end of 2019-20, 3 out of 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes were attributed an overall RAG status of **GREEN** reflecting the strong progress made in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities for 2019/20. A **GREEN** status was attributed to Well-being Outcome 1 (An Inclusive and Safe Vale), Outcome 2 (Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale) and Outcome 3 (Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale). **AMBER** Status was attributed to Outcome 4 (An Active and Healthy Vale).


Overall Objective	RAG	Direction of Travel <sup>1</sup>
Objective 1	G	
Objective 2	G	
Overall Outcome	G	







Overall Objective	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 3	G	
Objective 4	G	
Overall Outcome	G	




Overall Objective	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 5	G	
Objective 6	G	
Overall Outcome	G	




Overall Objective	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 7	G	
Objective 8	A	
Overall Outcome	A	



Our integrated planning activities focus on corporate planning, procurement, workforce planning, financial planning, performance management, risk management and asset management which act as enablers for delivering the Corporate Plan. Through enhancing our integrated planning processes, we have strengthened our approach to corporate governance. Depicted below is a snap shot of how we are performing in relation to key aspects of our Integrated Planning activities.



Overall Outcome	RAG	Direction of Travel
	G	

<sup>1</sup> Direction of travel compares our end of year RAG status position for each Objective and Outcome with the RAG status position for the previous quarter (quarter 3). It is not possible to compare our RAG status performance for 2017/18 with the previous end of year performance (2016/17) as this new performance reporting style was not introduced until 2017/18.

## 1.3 OUTCOME PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT IN DETAIL


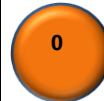
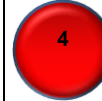
### OUTCOME 1: AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE VALE

#### ACTION SUMMARY


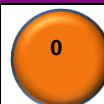
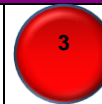
Our performance against the Corporate Plan actions is on track for delivery, giving us an overall **GREEN** RAG status for this outcome.

#### Service Plan Actions


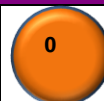

##### Objective 1: Reducing poverty and social exclusion

			N/A	Total
			0	15

##### Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities

			N/A	Total
			0	36

#### Total for the Outcome

			N/A	Total
			0	51


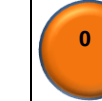
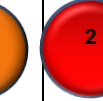
### OUTCOME 2: AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND PROSPEROUS VALE

#### ACTIONS SUMMARY

Our performance against the Corporate Plan actions is on track for delivery, giving us an overall **GREEN** status for this outcome.

#### Service Plan Actions


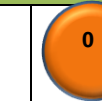
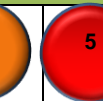
##### Objective 1: Reducing poverty and social exclusion

			N/A	Total
			0	30

##### Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities

			N/A	Total
			0	54

#### Total for the Outcome

			N/A	Total
			0	84

### OUTCOME 3: ASPIRATIONAL AND CULTURALLY VIBRANT VALE

#### ACTIONS SUMMARY

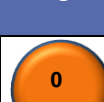
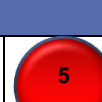
Our performance against the Corporate Plan actions is on track for delivery, giving us an overall **GREEN** RAG status for this outcome.

#### Service Plan Actions


##### Objective 5: Raising overall standards of achievement

			N/A	Total
			0	27

##### Objective 6: Valuing culture and diversity

			N/A	Total
			0	40

#### Total for the Outcome

			N/A	Total
			0	67

### OUTCOME 4: ACTIVE AND HEALTHY VALE

#### ACTIONS SUMMARY

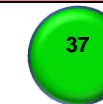
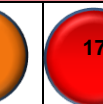
Our performance against the Corporate Plan actions is on track for delivery, giving us an overall **AMBER** RAG status for this outcome.

#### Service Plan Actions

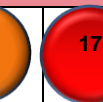
##### Objective 7: Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles

			N/A	Total
			0	18

##### Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living

			N/A	Total
			0	54

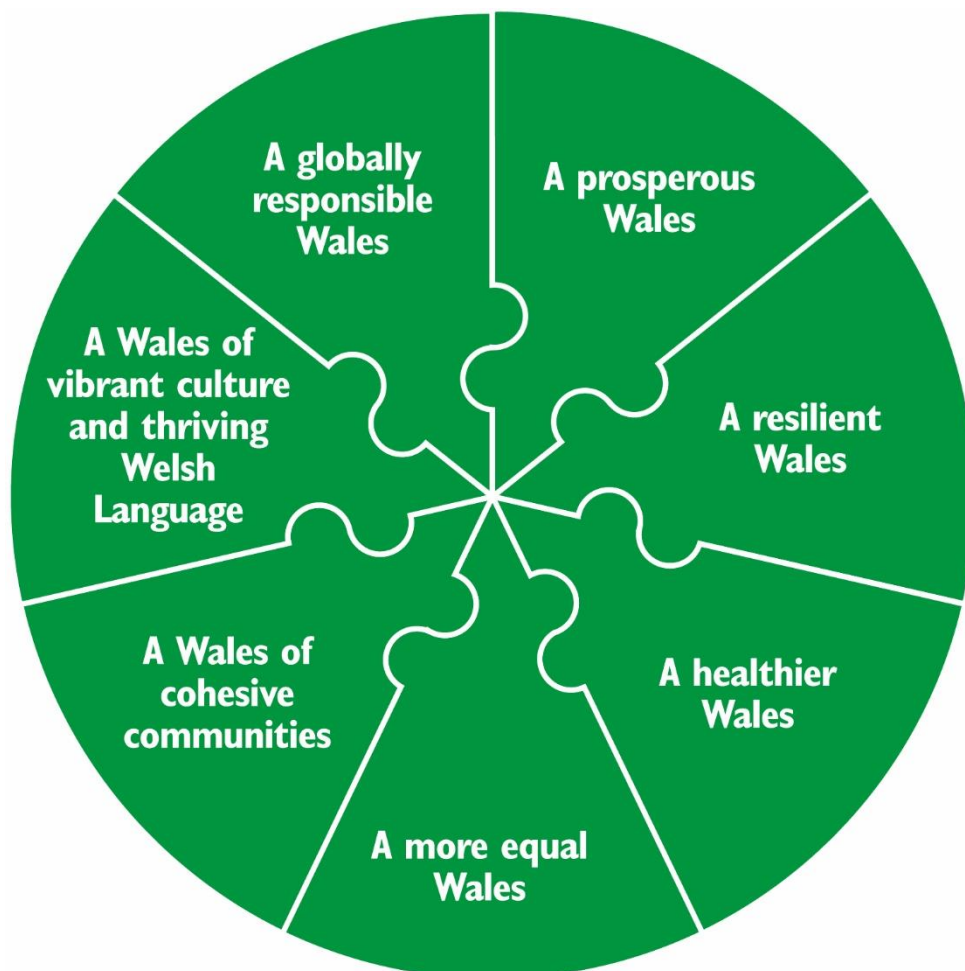
#### Total for the Outcome

			N/A	Total
			0	72

## 1.4 OUR CORPORATE PLAN (WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES) CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL GOALS<sup>2</sup>

Our Corporate Plan embeds the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 through the development of four Well-being Outcomes and eight Well-being Objectives. This forms the framework of the Corporate Plan which can be aligned in a cross-cutting way to the seven Well-being Goals of the Act. Our Well-being Objectives reflect what the Council is trying to achieve and addresses immediate issues as well as having longer term benefits. In delivering these objectives we are contributing to the seven Well-being Goals whilst ensuring that the needs of Vale citizens of all ages and future generations are at the forefront of service delivery. Illustrated below is an overview of how our performance in relation to our Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes and Objectives are contributing to the achievement of the national Well-being goals associated with the Act.

Overall, we have made significant progress in delivering the priorities associated with the final year of the Corporate Plan 2016-20, and we have contributed positively to the national Well-being Goals for Wales. Our achievements to date demonstrate our commitment to improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our citizens and promoting the principles of sustainable development in all our activities. However, these remain long term strategic priorities for the Council and the success achieved in 2019/20 is an excellent starting position for progressing the Council's new Corporate Plan 2020-25 where our long-term vision will shift towards 'working together to create a brighter future'.



<sup>2</sup> The chart above provides an illustrative assessment of how we are contributing to the well-being goals. The RAG status of each goal has been based on our overall RAG status against the Corporate Plan.



	AN INCLUSIVE SAFEVALE		ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE & PROSPEROUS		ASPIRATIONAL & CULTURALLY VIBRANT		ACTIVE & HEALTHY		Overall RAG Status for Wellbeing Goal
	Objective 1: Reduce poverty & social exclusion	Objective 2: Decent homes & safe communities	Objective 3: Promoting regeneration, economic growth & employment	Objective 4: Promoting sustainable development & protecting our environment	Objective 5: Raising standards of achievement	Objective 6: Valuing culture & diversity	Objective 7: Encouraging & promoting active & healthy lifestyles	Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living	
Prosperous Wales									
Resilient Wales									
Healthier Wales									
More equal Wales									
Wales of Cohesive communities									
Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language									
Globally responsible Wales									
Overall objective RAG Status									
Direction of Travel									
Overall Outcome RAG									
Overall Corporate Plan									

## 2. OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the greatest global health crisis of our lifetime. It has impacted on just about every aspect of our daily lives where friends and families have been forced apart and it has significantly impacted on our homelives, how we socialise, how we work and learn and how we provide ongoing access to our services. Many have endured the pain of losing a loved one whilst for others it has threatened their livelihoods, relationships and ultimately their well-being. One positive to have come from this crisis is that it has fundamentally challenged our outlook on public services in terms of who and what we value in society.

Although the immediate impact of COVID-19 is clearly visible across all our communities the full longer-term impact is not yet known. Whilst, the 'Stay at Home, Save Lives Policy' was effective in protecting the NHS and saving lives, the social and economic cost will be significant over the longer term and this is likely only to serve to further exacerbate existing health inequalities in society. The pandemic has further magnified health inequalities by disproportionately impacting on those living in deprivation and those from Black and Asian Minority Ethnic Groups. The reasons for this are still not fully understood, but the pandemic has exposed how disadvantage and discrimination fuel such inequalities.

The pandemic has put council services under enormous pressure which has significantly challenged how we deliver our services and fulfil our statutory roles and functions. These challenges are likely to be with us for many months ahead. What is critical is our response to these challenges and how our organisation has quickly evolved and adapted to a rapidly changing landscape, so that we can emerge from the crisis a stronger and more resilient organisation.

Although our response to the crisis to date has been very much guided by the national response, our knowledge and understanding of our citizens and our local communities has enabled us to effectively tailor our response to support our communities most in need and protect the most vulnerable in our society. Our approach has been defined by our ability to quickly galvanise our workforce to work in new ways that has enabled us to reprioritise and repurpose our resources and redirect them to the front line where they were most needed. Our capacity to respond quickly to the crisis has been further supported by our collaborative efforts with our partners, including in the health and third sectors. By working closely with our partners and our communities, we have been able to maximise the use of volunteers to help those in need.

Outlined below is a summary of how we have responded to the crisis including highlights of the extraordinary efforts of staff to support the needs of our residents.

The newly formed **Crisis Support Team within C1V** have contacted **4,440** of our **most vulnerable residents** who have been advised to shield to ensure they have the support, food and medication to meet their needs.

We have arranged the delivery of up to **568 Welsh Government food parcels to be delivered each week to those who are shielding.**

Through the Crisis Support Team we have worked in partnership with key partners such as Glamorgan Voluntary Services and Age Connect to make sure our most vulnerable residents have support. **Nearly 300 referrals were made to GVS and Age Connect during the period March to June 2020.**

We have worked in collaboration with GVS to launch the **Vale Heroes** site to help coordinate volunteering in our communities and bring together those looking to offer their help with those that need it. **118 support organisations are now listed on the site.**

We worked in partnership with Admiral Insurance to ensure that **Foodbanks in the Vale of Glamorgan** had adequate supplies of food for those households and individuals who are in desperate need of support at these challenging times.

**Raised the profile of volunteering** through the Vale Heroes site and **over 2,000 volunteers have come forward to support vulnerable residents in their communities.** The Council has given GVS a £2,000 grant to support small volunteer groups such as Bro Radio, Barry Round Table, Barry Waterfront Residents' Association, Sully Village Group, Llandow Village Hall and Oakfield PTA.

**A new Vale Heroes Crisis Fund was established to offer grants of up to £3,000 to community groups, the voluntary sector, town and community councils and eligible businesses.** This funding was used to help communities most severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We successfully **redeployed staff into a range of business-critical areas** such as domiciliary and residential care, our Crisis Support Team and our Neighbourhood Services Team (refuse and recycling). During the pandemic, **168 members of staff volunteered to be redeployed into new roles and approximately 65 staff were redeployed into new roles** who we have hailed our Rainbow Heroes.

**Our Rainbow Heroes Campaign has recognised the efforts of our own staff and community volunteers-** by installing signs across the County to express our thanks for their contribution.

We have supported our workforce to work flexibly and safely from home so that core back office services could continue to function. **Our ICT Service has enabled approximately 2,000 staff to work remotely to ensure continuity of services.**

We have **provided more than 250,000 items of personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep our front-line staff safe while carrying out their duties** as well as supplied our private care sector partners. The Council has been assisted by local businesses, such as the manufacturing firm Cabot providing PPE and Hensol Castle Gin Distillery supplying hand sanitisers.

Innovations such as the Tannoy trucks were used to broadcast the #StayHome-StaySafe messages. **Our Tannoy vehicles have covered in excess of 4000 miles taking the stay home, protect the NHS, save lives message across the Vale.**

**Nearly 2,000 grants totalling more than £23 million have been issued by the Council to companies hit by the coronavirus crisis.** The Council have also co-ordinated the administration of the Welsh Government's 'Start Up Grants' for new businesses to support them to survive the economic consequences of the pandemic.

We have helped to keep businesses sustainable, by offering advice and administering financial assistance and support. **The Council has applied for nearly £10 million of rate relief to some businesses meaning they will have no rates to pay this financial year.**

**Established a new appointment booking system for our Household Waste Recycling Sites to enable us to safely reopen our amenities** enabling residents to dispose of their waste and recycling and to help reduce incidences of fly tipping. This approach is now being considered by other local authorities.

**With £100K investment, we have expanded our online Library Services to provide greater access to reading materials.** The Library is also offering a 'Click and Collect' Service to borrow books, audio-books and DVDs. Our weekly library groups have gone digital with Rhyme and Sign and Bilingual Storytime sessions available live and on demand via Facebook, while our reading group meetings are now taking place over the WhatsApp and Zoom platforms.

The Learning and Skills team have worked closely with our schools to **establish 14 childcare hubs for the children of key workers at schools across the Vale.** These facilities, run by school and council staff, provide vital support to those who are working in key roles to keep us all safe.

**We have ensured that all children and young people eligible for free school meals can continue to access to food.** Our Learning and Skills Team have **processed more than 3,000 food vouchers every fortnight. This represents a 96% take up of electronic food vouchers. Since lockdown there were an additional 161 new claimants.**

**We have worked alongside our hub schools at Romilly, Cadoxton, Gladstone and Ysgol Y Ddraig schools to provide food parcels and cleaning and care packs** to our most vulnerable families with additional donations from Morrisons and Admiral Insurance.

**600 items of IT equipment and 250 wifi devices have been issued to families without IT equipment at home** to support pupils home learning. To supplement the curriculum-based learning, some schools have been offering learning opportunities such as virtual cooking classes and providing sports equipment, so children can keep physically active whilst at home.

In the absence of school/ community-based sports and play sessions, our **Sports and Play Development team** have created online activities for adults and young people to enjoy at home to enable them to stay active.

We have worked in collaboration with the construction firm ISG, who is working on two of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century School projects, to adapt an existing app that will be used as a resource by school-based staff to support the safe operation and return of pupils to school. The app offers general information and examples of how to introduce social distancing in a school setting, as well as highlights good practice in a range of classroom scenarios.

In recognition of the dedication of our front-line staff such as care workers and refuse collectors we have awarded a 10% pay enhancement. We are the first local authority in Wales to have taken this action and hope this sector leading practice will be adopted by others as a way to value and reward the efforts of our front line workers.

Our Telecare team have supported those most at risk from Covid-19 and between March and June Our Telecare operators handled over 17,962 calls and during March 57 new clients were added to the service. During this time the service also offered free telecare installations to those that took up the service.

As we transition from our response to recovery phase, now is the time to think about the potential challenges that lie ahead and how we can address them. COVID-19 is likely to have a profound impact on our services for some time, as the challenges we face begin to take shape. It is unlikely our recovery will be a return to our previous state but the formation of a new normal. Our recovery will also not be linear; it will be influenced by challenges that at times may impede our recovery and at other times present us with opportunities. How we respond to these emerging challenges will be critical to how we manoeuvre our way through the crisis. It will require difficult decisions to be made by balancing demand for services versus continuity of key services to the most vulnerable citizens in our communities. Outlined below are some key challenges we anticipate the Council will face over the coming months and years:

- The pandemic will have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future. **Sustaining and improving levels of service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for services at a time when resources are stretched is going to become increasingly more challenging.** As a consequence of the pandemic we anticipate there will be the **emergence of greater health and economic inequalities and increased need for crisis support for families, a greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs.** We anticipate that the impact of COVID-19 will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable in society.
- Of huge concern is the **impact that the pandemic will have on children and young people at risk of abuse and or child sexual exploitation.** During the pandemic, many children may be at risk as traditional face to face contacts with statutory services such as teachers, health care professionals have been reduced. Although, services have adapted their processes to operate digitally, it does not replace the benefit of regular face to face contact when it comes to safeguarding matters. The pandemic has heightened our awareness of the 'Duty to Report' and we have undertaken a Facebook campaign to enhance the public's awareness of Social Services and the '101 telephone number' to report any concerns about the safety/welfare of children, young people and adults. The concern is that the impact of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions will contribute to a surge in demand for our children and young people services.
- Our workforce is our greatest asset, initially the challenge has been centred on how we can keep our key frontline workers safe whilst continuing to operate our critical services. As we move towards our recovery stage and more of our operations begin to restart, the challenge will be how we can **safely manage the return of staff to the workplace where staff are unable to undertake their duties at home.** We anticipate that home working will continue to be in place for many staff for several months, but we recognise that for some staff the experience has been challenging as they have had to balance the demands of work with home schooling and/or other caring responsibilities. Therefore, our challenge going forward is how we take into account the **social impact this crisis has had on our staff and how we can check in and connect with our workforce, whilst supporting their mental health and well-being.**
- This pandemic will continue to test how we operate our services both now and, in the future, therefore this unique situation provides us with an opportunity to look towards new ways of working and

delivering services that matter most to our citizens. The challenge going forward is how we **involve and engage our workforce and our citizens in shaping these changes to transform our services, so they are sustainable in the future**. The scale of transformation required will only be possible with the involvement and support of our workforce and the citizens we serve.

- Managing variations in customer expectations for service delivery at a time of increased demand for our services is likely to be an ongoing issue. In response to this pandemic many of our services have had to adapt and change quickly which has resulted in many of our services not being delivered in a face to face manner. As we **move towards utilising more digital technology, there is the danger it could exacerbate the issue of digital exclusion**. Although, for many, utilising digital means has been a more convenient and positive experience, we need to be mindful that it **potentially disadvantages our most vulnerable and deprived citizens who do not have access to online services**. Therefore, it is essential that we engage with our citizens so that there is equality of access to all our services.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted education and learning at all levels. It has seen our schools repurposed for a period of time to care for the children of key workers and the most vulnerable. It has also seen a departure from classroom teaching to home-based learning, where schools have enabled children to continue with their learning remotely. Although this has been positive, the new approach will not replace the learning time lost from school and **there is the real danger that in the longer-term educational inequalities will emerge amongst our most vulnerable learners**. The hurdle going forward is how we **re-engage with our most vulnerable learners and best support those who have fallen behind academically as well as those with complex and additional learning needs**. Another issue over the coming months will be how we can best **support the mental health and wellbeing of our learners, whilst they continue to adjust to new ways of learning**.
- Our ability to successfully navigate our way through this crisis is hinged on an effective track and trace programme. As we forge stronger collaborative bonds with our health partners, it will require us to **share more information and personal data in order to track and trace localised outbreaks**. With this comes **the need to carefully consider data protection and privacy issues**.
- The financial support packages announced by both Westminster and the Welsh Government have been welcomed in terms of providing immediate financial relief to local businesses. However, this level of financial support will not be available indefinitely and a slow economic recovery is likely to put many businesses and people's livelihoods in jeopardy. The output of Service Industries in the UK fell by 19% in April 2020, the largest monthly fall since records began in January 1997. 33,250 (83.2%) of people in the Vale of Glamorgan are employed in Service Industries. Our challenge will be how we can help **stimulate our local economies and secure jobs into the longer term at a time when our resources are likely to diminish**. For example, the retail sector had been in decline prior to COVID-19, and despite the positive progress we have made to enhance our local town spaces, the rapid decline in footfall has been damaging to our shops. Despite the lifting of restrictions, more people have turned towards online shopping, so **shoppers will need some encouragement to return back to their local town centres to give our shops, cafes and restaurants a chance of survival**.
- The economy has taken a significant blow, and as at 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020, around 9.2 million workers were signed up to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The sectors with the highest numbers of furloughed staff have included the travel, hospitality and retail businesses. The precarious economic situation is likely to put continue to put more jobs at great risk, if the recovery from this is slow. **Despite the Government's furlough scheme, we forecast that in the medium to longer term there will be considerable job losses that will increase unemployment rates**. In May 2020, 4,345 people in the Vale of Glamorgan (representing 5.4% of the Vale's population) were not in employment and in search of work, the highest number to be recently recorded. There is the concern that **the financial impact of the pandemic will be felt by those living in low income households who tend to work in hospitality and retail sectors**. The challenge facing the Council is how we **plan for increased demand for our support services such as benefits advice and support, access to new courses/training to develop new skills and employability for those who become unemployed and find themselves in financial difficulties**. There is also concern that the **economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be disproportionately felt by young people (18-24 year olds)**. Young people aged 18-24 years tend to be at the start of their working lives and are commonly employed in the hospitality/service sector that

has been largely shut down. Young people are likely to face the most difficult jobs market in a generation as, many will be entering the employment market at a time when jobs are scarce, and competition is high. Young people may find themselves in a position where they are competing for a small pool of jobs with individuals who have a wealth of employment experience. In the Vale of Glamorgan, 10% of those aged 18-24 are now recorded as not in employment and in search of work. The challenge is how do we work effectively with our key partners to **support the creation of sufficient entry point employment/apprenticeship opportunities to meet the growing demand for jobs**. These challenges will ultimately **impact on how we plan and deliver targeted programmes of support and interventions to our most vulnerable groups/cohorts in need**.

- Those on lower incomes with higher job insecurity are most likely to feel the financial effects of the economic down turn, as these are some of our most vulnerable citizens that tend to live a hand to mouth existence. Around two fifths of Welsh households lack the savings and liquid assets necessary to replace their regular income for three months. And more than a quarter of Welsh households don't have enough savings to cover their regular income for just one month. From March to May there has been a **growth in the numbers of people on Universal Credit in all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan. 8,842 people, 6.6% of the population are now on Universal Credit**. The largest proportion increase in people on Universal Credit in the Vale of Glamorgan is in our more deprived areas as measured by WIMD 2019. Although government measures have been put in place to protect private renters from eviction, this arrangement will not be indefinite. The issue facing our housing services is how we proactively work together in partnership to **respond to this crisis to support tenants to maintain their tenancies and prevent homelessness**.
- During the lockdown period, in May the Vale of Glamorgan Council saw a 378% rise in antisocial incidents when compared to the same period last year. The rise has been attributed to the increased numbers of young people who have gathered in large numbers in hotspot areas such as Cosmeston Lake, Rhoose Point, Ogmore and the Knap. As part of the Safer Vale partnership we have worked closely with our partners (including the Police) and the local community to put in place effective mitigating actions to prevent mass gatherings and anti-social behaviour. The challenge going forward is how the Council can put in place **longer term solutions that will be an effective deterrent to anti-social behaviour without it damaging the safe and respectful enjoyment of our managed resorts by the public and working in partnership with the Police to enforce the measures put in place**.
- During June there was only a 13% increase in Public Protection Notices issued to victims of domestic abuse/violence when compared to the same period in the previous year. Although the Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordination Service has consistently received PPN referrals, the figures are not significantly higher than previous years. Also, out of the 36 high risk domestic abuse PPN incidents that went onto a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, 18% (6 cases) were identified as COVID-related. Domestic Abuse is already an under reported crime and the concern is that the pandemic has further fueled this. Whilst people have been confined to their homes it has meant individuals have had less access to support services and networks. As a consequence, adults and children at risk from domestic and child abuse have been left feeling isolated in precarious situations. Without early intervention and support these individuals are likely to hit a crisis point. The challenge for the Council is to **engage with this often 'hard to reach' group of individuals and encourage them to access help and support at an early stage to co-produce outcomes that will help keep them safe and enhance their wellbeing**.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed demand for energy globally and in particular the demand across different economic sectors such as transport, aviation industries. A recent article in the Nature Climate Change Journal has indicated that there has been a temporary reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during COVID-19 as result of global 'lockdown' policies<sup>1</sup>. The article estimates that there has been a -17% decrease in daily global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by early April 2020, compared with the mean 2019 levels, and just below half of these changes relate to surface transport<sup>1</sup>. The article also notes that during the peak of the crisis, emissions in countries decreased by approximately -26% on average<sup>1</sup>. The

<sup>1</sup> Le Quéré, C., Jackson, R.B., Jones, M.W. *et al.* Temporary reduction in daily global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* **10**, 647–653 (2020). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-020-0797-x>

article goes onto say that the duration of this impact will depend on the length of these lockdown measures are in place globally<sup>1</sup>. However, there is the concern is that the positive impact of reduced CO<sub>2</sub> could be short lived if the political emphasis going forward is on promoting economic recovery. The challenge for the Council as well as the nation as a whole is how do we create **a local economy that has a conscience, to take forward 'sustainable economic solutions' that will both stimulate the local economy but also contribute to reducing our carbon footprint.**

- The Pandemic struck at a time when the UK was still in talks with the European Union on a potential Brexit trade deal. At present, the UK Government has not requested an extension to the talks with Europe. As work progresses, the greatest difficulty we will face locally is in overcoming the immense challenges posed by Brexit and COVID-19 across two fronts. There is **a risk that whilst our attention and resources are drawn to immediately address the priorities arising from COVID-19, that our capacity to prepare and adapt to forthcoming policy and legislative changes as a result of Brexit could be compromised.**

Our recovery presents us with a unique opportunity to fundamentally think about the way in which we operate. To inform our recovery, the Council's Corporate Management Team undertook a situation analysis where it considered key issues around how services have continued, what had to stop, what could be done differently, what we had learnt from our response, the emerging areas of demand as well as an understanding of staff morale and well-being. The next stage involved taking immediate action in some critical areas and undertaking scenario modelling to better understand how demand for our services is changing. This has enabled us to identify and mitigate risks, consider opportunities on how to operate our services in the future, as well as analyse the implications for our finance, assets, workforce, ICT and governance. This high-level scenario analysis has been invaluable in shaping our key priorities going forward and will be used to inform the development of an overarching Recovery Strategy over the coming months.

## 2.1 CASE STUDY

### SPOTLIGHT ON: VALE HEROES

We have used Vale Heroes as a vehicle to further enhance our **collaboration** with partners to enable our most vulnerable residents to access food, medication and other essential support and services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This work reflects a more **integrated approach** by partners to meeting needs within the community and to **preventing** people experiencing greater disadvantage or distress. In the **long term** it will be important to build on this approach, working with the Third Sector and community groups and **involving** our communities to help reach those who need support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a very real need to quickly integrate our approach to supporting some of our most vulnerable residents. Some residents were advised to shield and not leave their homes for shopping or to collect medication and risk being socially isolated. Others have found themselves impacted by changes in their financial situation. There has been a huge interest from the community in supporting others and this upsurge in the desire to volunteer has been supported by the Glamorgan Voluntary Scheme (GVS) and the Council who have looked to harness this community action and support residents.

#### What have we done?

- Vale of Glamorgan Council and GVS have worked together to establish Vale Heroes as a searchable database for residents in need of support with vital helps such as food delivery, prescription collection and befriending.
- Established a Crisis Support Team bringing together Social Services, Customer Relations and repurposed colleagues from across the Council to provide advice and access to services for the most vulnerable residents.

Vale Heroes web pages brought together information on volunteering, shopping services, local community groups, shielding and online services in one single place.

Sought donations from businesses and charitable foundations to support the work of Heroes.

- Worked across Council departments, the third sector and with our registered social landlord partners to design a process for contacting shielding residents who may need additional support and assistance.
- Made links with the FoodVale partnership, to focus the partnership's new website on the availability of food from a variety of producers and suppliers across the county.
- Celebrated National Volunteering Week by thanking volunteers publicly through a letter from the Leader and prominent road signs.

#### **What have we achieved?**

- Contacted over 4000 people who've received a shielding letter from Welsh Government or who have contacted the Council in crisis seeking support.
- Arranged nearly 500 food parcels to be delivered each week by Welsh Government to people who are shielding.
- Signposted people to support for befriending, shopping or prescription collection by GVS via community groups such as Age Connects and the Vale Food Bank.
- Established the Vale Heroes Crisis Support Grant to offer grants of up to £3,000 to Community Groups, the Voluntary Sector, Town and Community Councils and eligible businesses towards the cost of initiatives within the Vale that help members of the community severely affected by the pandemic.
- Secured significant donations from Admiral to support the Food Bank who have seen a 94% increase in demand year on year.
- Secured a significant donation from the Waterloo Foundation to expand the food parcel scheme in three hub schools to reach more vulnerable children and their families for longer.

The Vale Heroes work has shown the power of partnership working and the benefits of bringing together, resources, knowledge and networks of organisations like the Council and GVS. Going forward this presents us with opportunities to expand on this in the future with voluntary groups being linked with people in need of support.





VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

## Inclusive and Safe Vale Performance Report

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE  
(APRIL 2019- MARCH 2020)



**Our overall RAG status for 'An inclusive and safe Vale' is GREEN**

### 3.0 POSITION STATEMENT

Evidence highlights that across the Vale of Glamorgan there are pockets of deprivation and that quality of life and opportunities can vary significantly. In delivering this Outcome we have worked with our partners to address social, financial and digital exclusion, rural poverty, ensuring that residents have a good quality of life and feel part of their local community.

One key factor that contributes towards people's sense of well-being is having a decent home and feeling safe within their community. This was agreed as one of the Council's Well-being Objectives under this Outcome and over the last four years of the Corporate Plan 2016-2020, the Council has worked to improve access to and the quality of housing available as well as promoting community safety despite exceptional challenges and continuing year on year reductions in funding.

Overall, we have made good progress in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities for the fourth and final year of the Corporate Plan in relation to Well-being Outcome 1 and its associated Objectives of, 'Reducing poverty and social exclusion' and 'Providing decent homes and safe communities'. This has contributed to an overall Green status for the Outcome at end of year.

For the period 2019-20, 86% (44 out of 51) of planned activities aligned to 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale' have been successfully delivered. In relation to the objective, 'Reducing poverty and social exclusion', 73.3% of planned activities were successfully completed and 91.7% in relation to the objective, 'Providing decent homes and safe communities'. Across the Outcome, 7% actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for 14% of all planned activities for 2019/20. There is a need to continue working with partners to improve opportunities for customer to access our services digitally, establish a tenant scrutiny panel to enable continued service improvements and develop a pilot programme of renewable technologies to reduce carbon footprint in the council's housing stock. These long term priorities have been carried forward into 2020/21.

It is important to note that our annual review of progress for the 2019/20 period has been written at a time of unprecedented challenge, which has required the Council to respond to a global pandemic (COVID-19). We have assessed progress in relation to our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. However, certain aspects of performance, most notably end of year national performance indicator information and benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance as our statutory statistical obligations from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government's Public Accountability Measures have been suspended indefinitely.

We have been able to celebrate considerable successes this year building upon the hard work of the previous three years of the Corporate Plan 2016-2020. For example, the implementation of the Community

Investment Strategy (approved in 2016) has represented an innovative approach to improving tenants' quality of life and in building sustainable communities. The Strategy recognised that there are significant benefits to be derived for individuals and communities as a result of community investment activities and priority themes have included increasing confidence, building self-esteem and skills of individuals and communities, promoting better community spirit and creating resilient communities. The Community Investment work has also been supported by grant funding from the Council's own Stronger Communities Grant for example, the Community Investment Officer was able to secure £16,800 for the 'Gibby Green Fingers' allotment project enhancing and adding value to the investment by working as one joined up Council.

We recognise how access to digital services can have a positive impact on those citizens experiencing both social and financial exclusion and one of the themes of the Community Investment strategy has been to ensure tenants are financially and digitally included. With this in mind, the Community Investment team has secured £32k of Welsh Government EDRF funding to install computer suites within all the Vale Council Sheltered Housing Schemes ensuring that our older residents are not left behind and are supported to become digitally included. To support Digital Inclusion, amongst older residents within the Sheltered Schemes, 360 trainings sessions have been provided to older residents over the life of the Strategy. Our next Strategy will build upon enabling residents to understand new ways of communicating and engaging digitally and this work will be enhanced by our Community Digital champions capacity.

We have continued to work with Get the Vale Online (GTVO) partnership to address issues of digital inclusion by identifying opportunities for training, developing digital champions and promoting opportunities for citizens to improve their skills and access. Activities undertaken under the auspices of GTVO and by other Council departments have a preventative impact in that by ensuring citizens have access to digital services, best rates for utilities, lending and other services, they are better able to access employment and other opportunities, help address social exclusion and reduce poverty.

Following the launch of the Vale Tablet Loan Scheme, the first tablet lending service in Wales, we have offered the opportunity for around 45,000 library members to loan tablets from rural libraries across the Vale. The lending program is a collaboration between Newydd Housing Association and Digital Communities Wales and is supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Council amongst others. The scheme is intended to help combat social isolation and improve digital literacy by allowing library members to borrow the 4G enabled iPads and tablets are pre-loaded with helpful services such as online library services, health and wellbeing apps, as well as information about community services.

In line with our commitment to reduce poverty and social exclusion, work has progressed to build upon the successful Timebanking scheme which has been run by the Council's Housing Department since 2018 but which is only available at present to Vale Council tenants. The current Timebanking volunteering scheme helps bring members of the community together through volunteering to improve their local areas, learn new skills, improve well-being and in reward, earn a time credit voucher to promote spend in the local area and further afield. Latest figures for April 2020 show the Timebanking scheme has 527 members and generated over 5,387 hours of volunteering time. Since the scheme began, volunteers have reported marked improvements in their self-esteem, increased levels of confidence, new skills and feelings of well-being.

The focus on increasing volunteering has been highlighted and expanded upon in recent months in the response to the current pandemic. Long standing volunteering organisations and newly established local community groups have come together with local business and partners to provide services to those most vulnerable in the community. Partners are working together with the local community in an integrated way to help promote and provide volunteer services available throughout the Vale as shown on the Vale Heroes website.

Since the Strong Communities Grant fund was launched in August 2017, grants totalling £565,391 have been allocated to 44 projects across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Council and its partners: The Waterloo Foundation, Natural Resources Wales and representatives of the Town and Community Councils have joined forces to support projects which are making a real difference to the quality of life and range of services available to people and communities in the Vale. Through the fund, successful groups have evidenced and fulfilled eligibility criteria to deliver projects which have demonstrated engagement with their communities and meaningful sustainability. Working together, we can achieve the Council's vision for the Vale of 'Strong Communities with a bright future'.

The Strong Communities grants approved to date will contribute towards the delivery of projects with an overall value in excess of £2 million, all of which offer far reaching benefits to communities across the Vale. The scale of completed projects ranges from purchase of a single item of musical equipment for a village of less than 100 dwellings to refurbishment of a community hall serving a population of more than 2,000 residents. A common theme is support for projects which bring people together close to where they live. Through support for training, leisure or social activities and for the many organisations and volunteers who provide these, our grants are helping more people across the Vale to access services that they have identified as much needed.

Throughout the year we have worked through the Creative Rural Communities partnership to include the local community in the delivery of services with the aim of reducing social poverty and isolation. One clear example of this is the support provided to the Glamorgan Smallholders Network. The support and funding provided to the group by the Creative Rural Communities Team has provided a real difference for those involved and for many in our rural communities who may otherwise feel isolated. The network continues to grow to bring more local smallholders together in the Vale of Glamorgan through its social media posts, meetings and events.

We have continued to work with our partners to provide support to residents affected by Welfare Reform changes and have closely monitored the impact of the implementation of managed migration to Universal Credit through formalised multi-agency working groups and regular updates to Members. The number of tenants migrating onto Universal Credit continues to increase and rent arrears continue to rise. A number of improvements have now been incorporated into the arrear's recovery process including the use of automated payment reminders and targeted advice and support. This year our Money Advisors have completed over 955 appointments and helped secure tenants over £397,503 of additional income via benefit backdates, additional welfare benefits, lower utility tariffs and grants.

The Council has continued to successfully implement a range of projects to prevent and tackle poverty through schemes such as Communities for Work, Families First and Flying Start. During 2019/20 we facilitated the Flying Start Christmas Event that welcomed families into the "North Pole". The Flying Start team designed and constructed their own Winter Wonderland, at the Family Centre, complete with an elf workshop and Santa's grotto. The event was attended by more than 200 children and was open to all Flying Start families. Events such as are aimed at engaging families from socially deprived areas and including them in positive activities within the local community.

To further maximise the available opportunities of these schemes, we have continued to work with our partners to align relevant activities associated with Families First, Childcare and Play, Communities for Work and Supporting People programmes throughout the year. For example, Communities for Work, Childcare and Play and Families First schemes now sit under the remit of the Families First project lead creating closer alignment of the grants. In addition, a Youth Offending Service mentor has been recruited and this officer sits within the Families First team bringing closer alignment of activities.

We have also successfully reviewed the impact of the guidance arising from the new Flexible Funding arrangements and the Children and Communities Grant Delivery Group (CCG) and continue to meet and

share information and ideas. A similar group exists for the Housing Support Grant and grant co-ordinators are members on both groups to maximise opportunities for integration and the identification of new opportunities. The 2020/21 Children and Communities Grant Delivery Plan has been approved along with the end of year report and progress remains on target and in line with Welsh Government expectations.

In line with the Council's commitment to improve the quality of private sector rented accommodation and reduce the number of long term empty properties in the Vale, the Council produced and consulted upon The Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 (which follows on from the previous 2012-2017 Strategy). This was later approved and adopted in March 2020. The 2019-2024 Strategy sets out the Council's continued commitment to bring empty homes back into use over the next five years and aims to assemble, maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data; provide advice, assistance and financial incentives to reduce the number of long term empty properties; promote the whole Council approach to tackling empty homes; prioritise empty homes for enforcement action; and raise awareness of the empty homes issue.

Homeowners across the Vale of Glamorgan can apply for interest free loans to make improvements, essential repairs and bring properties back into use. During 2019/2020, the Council's Regeneration Team helped bring 115 empty homes back into use (4 more than last year), this represents 13.9% of empty homes identified for the period. The majority of this was done by establishing a dialogue with property owners and offering various assistance and advice such as interest free housing loans and reduced rates of VAT on empty property renovations. In addition, property owners are informed of letting options and the Empty Homes and Loans Officer makes relevant referrals to the Council's Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme and Registered Social Landlords. The Vale of Glamorgan Council achieved top ranking performance across Wales during 2018/19 and it is hoped that it will maintain its position for 2019/20.

During 2019/20, 3 new homes were created. New homes are generally created when an empty property is subdivided to create additional dwellings. Although we had hoped for a few more to be completed during the year, loan recipients of multi-unit developments have suffered delays and works were not completed by year end. Works are expected to be completed during 2020/21 and we currently have a number of developments in the pipeline that are being supported by Housing Loan and Regeneration grant funding. These combined initiatives contribute towards the Council fulfilling its housing need obligations, improving housing standards, reducing anti-social behaviour, vandalism and fly-tipping further supporting our Well-being Outcome 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale'.

Our Corporate Plan identified that a key factor in contributing to people's sense of well-being is having a decent home and feeling safe and secure within a community. This was agreed as one of the Council's well-being objectives and work to improve access to good quality housing has been a major priority and the key driver for bringing our housing stock up to Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS). The Council achieved WHQS compliance in March 2018 to all of its 3,900 social housing homes investing £91,518,000 to deliver the improvements. The Council continues to improve homes and neighbourhoods delivering schemes which continue to maintain WHQS such as kitchens, bathrooms and rewires but is also delivering schemes to improve thermal efficiency. Work to address the deteriorating local environment include fencing and landscaping work as well as improvements to communal areas on flats; reducing some of the opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

Examples of environmental improvements undertaken during the year include flat upgrades including a major refurbishment of the Buttrill's Estate where external repairs and improvements have been completed to 128 properties including flats, houses and bungalows. The project now focuses on external fencing, communal access areas and improvements to fire fighting in the Council's largest block of flats.

A number of new housing development schemes have progressed over the last year with 11 new homes built at Holm View, Barry and another 28 new purpose-built homes on the former sheltered accommodation site at Brecon Court, Barry scheduled for completion by summer 2020. These developments will be a real

benefit to the community, providing good quality homes to those that need it most. Welsh Government are keen for Local Authorities to develop new homes and we have worked hard to develop several other projects including; Maes Y Ffynnon, Bonvilston, St Cyres Road, Penarth, Colcot Clinic, Hayes Road and the development of 53 social housing units at Hayes Wood Road. Additionally, work is progressing on packages for developing land with developer partners.

Whilst the Council remains committed to ensuring residents have access to quality homes in the Vale, recent evidence suggests there is a nationwide housing shortage; consequentially, house building now appears as a major agenda item across Britain as well as Wales. The Council's most recent Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) conducted in 2017 identified a chronic shortage of affordable housing in the Vale and a need for an additional 576 units per annum between the years 2017 to 2022. In response to this, our Development and Investment Team continue to develop and build new, good quality Council housing.

Going forward into year 1 of our new Corporate Plan (2020-2025), we are committed to responding proactively to the increasing pressure to do more with less and this will no doubt challenge our ambitions, especially given the unprecedented costs of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside the learning to date from our experience of this crisis, we will revisit the priorities in our Corporate Plan and use this as a platform to inform our development of locally-tailored solutions that will help to build resilience in the short, medium and long term. We will continue to collaborate with our partners to seek out and maximise our opportunities to help us achieve the best for Vale citizens.

### 3.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED

#### 3.1.1 OBJECTIVE 1: ACHIEVEMENTS



In 2016 as part of our **Community Investment Strategy** we said we would help residents of the Vale increase their employment prospects to help them get jobs or move closer towards the labour market. In 2018, as part of the Strategy we launched the Vale Homes Timebanking Project and signed up **527 volunteers**; Banked **5,387 hours** of volunteering time; Awarded **5,387 of time credits**; Signed **41 organisations** to take part in the scheme; Launched the **Bike Club** for children between 4 to 16 year olds and engaged with **493 young people**.

We have worked closely with schools and health partners to develop support and provision for **children and young people with complex social and emotional difficulties** and challenging behaviours. During the year, the Educational Psychology Service provided strategic support for the new resource base at Gladstone Primary School and an Educational Psychologist received training in relation to the **“trauma informed schools approach”**. Liaison with a wider range of independent special schools for behaviour has also taken place.



As part of promoting Digital and Financial Inclusion, since 2016 we have secured **£30k** of Welsh Government EDRF funding to install computer suites within all the Vale Council Sheltered Housing Schemes; Offered **360 Digital Inclusion training sessions** to older residents in the Sheltered Schemes; Offered **270 Digital Inclusion training sessions at the Aberaeron Hub** to residents of the Vale; Held **3,870** Financial Inclusion & Money Advice appointments and helped tenants **claim £1,141,492** in Welfare Benefits.



During the coronavirus pandemic, **Vale Heroes** was established, bringing together **118 support organisations**. Over **4,000** people were contacted by the Crisis Support Team who arranged over **500 weekly food parcels** to people who were shielding, preventing people experiencing greater disadvantage or distress.



We installed a brand-new **community pod at St Luke's Avenue**, Penarth for use by members of a Penarth residents' group. The previous pod had no electricity or running water and had become dilapidated, so a new facility was needed for **community events** and meetings. The new pod contains kitchen facilities and a toilet and has allowed a wider range of activities and information to be provided such as **digital inclusion, employment, training, health, wellbeing, money and budgeting advice**.



We have worked with our partners regionally and lead on the **development of the Housing with Care and Support for Older People Strategy** to promote independent living. A working group is now in place which includes both internal and external partners to inform the development of the Vale of Glamorgan Older Persons Housing with Support and Care Strategy. This will assist the Council going forward to **meet the needs of the aging population in the County**.



We continue to provide access and make use of **social media to extensively involve and engage with our citizens** and to enable further feedback and learning from them. In Quarter 3, a Twitter poll was trialled to gauge feedback on proposals to consider licensing Beach Huts for ceremonies. The poll received a significant number of responses that will **inform the development of future proposals**. Social media was also effectively used to consult on the Council's new Corporate Plan and budget/council tax proposals.



More than **250 enquiries** have been received from community groups dedicated to making positive changes in the areas where they live and Strong Communities grants totalling **£565,391** have been allocated to **44 projects**. The scale of completed projects ranges from the purchase of a single item of musical equipment for a village of less than 100 dwellings, to refurbishment of a community hall serving a population of more than 2000 members.



During 2016 to 2020, our Creative Rural Communities Team has supported **3,370** participants, engaged **420** stakeholders and supported **46 pilot activities** aimed at involving the community in the delivery of services whilst reducing rural poverty.



**85%** of Flying Start children achieved at least the expected outcomes (Outcome 5+) for the **Foundation Phase**, compared to 83% last year.



Since 2016, as part of our focus to strengthening communities and reduce poverty we have conducted **453** housing support needs assessments and provided **427** residents with housing related support. We also provided pre-tenancy support to **534** tenants by offering the "Tenancy Ready" project to new tenants signing up to properties.



Over **98% of the 1,394** users accessing the Families First service during the year reported that they were happy with the service they received and nearly **96%** felt more confident in themselves and their abilities following support.



Over **160 people** have been enrolled onto the **Vale's Communities for Work Plus programme** and **89** people have been helped to find good sustainable employment as a direct result of the provision offered by the team. The conversion ratio for 2019/20 is **55% which is excellent** compared to the national ratio of 42%.



This year our Money Advisors have completed over **955 Money Advice** appointments with tenants and helped secure over **£397,503 of additional income** via benefit backdates, additional welfare benefits, lower utility tariffs and grants.



We delivered the **6th annual Barry Jobs Fair** run in partnership with Barry Jobcentre Plus, held in October 2019 it attracted over **400 people** looking for work. These events improve opportunities for citizens trying to gain employment and access to training or education thereby improving skills and future employment opportunities. Over **30 employers were in attendance** with a large number of partners providing advice and services, such as the Vale's Adult and Community Learning Team, the Vale's Human Resources team and Cardiff and the Vale College.

The Families First Youth Well-being team have undertaken over **1900 mentoring support sessions with over 200 young people**, helping to improve young people's resilience and mental well-being and importantly their school attendance. In addition, the team **trained 83 workers** mainly school staff in Mental Health First Aid.



## 3.1.2 OBJECTIVE 2: ACHIEVEMENTS

Work continues on a **£3.5million project at the former Brecon Court** (Sheltered Accommodation site) to construct **28 'care ready'** social housing homes with assistive technology to enable people with low to moderate needs to **live more independently**. The project is due to complete in Summer 2020.



During 2019/20, the Council secured a **further £444,096.90** off-site affordable housing contributions. This money will be used to **support the Council's House Building Programme** to increase the level, range and choice of affordable housing available to families within the Vale. Of Glamorgan.

In **partnership with Safer Vale and the Police Community Safety Officers**

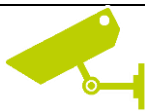
we launched the Garden Project in Llantwit Major to enhance gardens and community connections. We targeted **10** Council properties and recruited **11** volunteers to support the project.



The Council attracted and **committed**

**£3.9 million of Welsh Government Affordable Housing Grant (AHG) to its Council House Building Programme**, specifically to subsidise our new developments at Holm View and Brecon Court. These developments will be a real benefit to the community, providing **good quality homes** to those that need it most.

The Safer Vale Partnership completed a **full review of**



**CCTV systems** in the Vale and successfully secured a **£350,000 grant to upgrade equipment**. The upgrade will ensure that the system is running efficiently and effectively and is appropriate for helping to **catch and prevent crime and disorder in the County**. The Safer Vale Partnership were among the first to complete a full review of their system and will continue to work with partners next year to establish the best outcome for partners and the Vale.

To support victims to remain in their own home, **82 victims** received target hardening (home security measures) on their homes in order for them to feel safe. Of the **76%** of victims who received target hardening on their properties, **90%** felt safer, **68%** felt it stopped them going into refuge and **94%** were happy with the service.



We have continued to raise awareness of scams, doorstep crime and other safeguarding issues. During the 2019 National Safeguarding Week for Wales, in November, SRS staged a safeguarding conference with the purpose of raising awareness around the importance of **safeguarding children and vulnerable adults** to ensure that they are protected from neglect, harm and other forms of abuse. **Over 100 delegates attended** the half day event to hear speakers from the Police, National Trading Standard Economic Crime Team, The Office of the Public Guardian, Royal Mail and the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit.



The average number of working **days taken to repair and re-let an empty property during 2019/20 was 19.44 days** against a target of **20 days**. This performance shows that the Council are restoring homes and making them available to new tenants within a quick turnaround time. This also means there is less rent- lost for the Council.

**115 homes (13.9% of empty private sector properties) were brought back into use** during the year through direct action by the Council. This is an increase on the 111 homes than were brought back into use last year. The Vale of Glamorgan Council **achieved top ranking performance across Wales during 2018/19** and it is hoped that it will maintain its position for 2019/20.



In the past year, the Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Coordination Service has received and **processed 1776 Public Protection Notification (PPN) referrals**. The service made **2986 onward referrals** for the victim to receive the right service at the right time, contributing to victims feeling safer and improved outcomes for victims and their families.

During the year, the **Flying Start Dads Group** has worked well with Fathers helping them to gain an **Agored Cymru qualification in restorative approaches**.

For some Fathers, this was the first qualification any of them had received. Fathers are now working differently with their own children's schools and helping other parents have difficult conversations. The Fathers that engaged in the training also spoke at a Trauma conference this year. This success demonstrates how we have worked in a holistic way to **implement restorative justice approaches for young people** and engaged a wider family audience.

We continue to work extremely hard on identifying solutions that prevent homelessness. The ability to continue to sustain this success remains largely reliant on the support we are now able to offer our private rented landlords since the recent introduction of the **Private Rented Sector Support Officers** and the positive relationships and confidence this is creating. In addition, we have also developed a mediation process with Llamau.





During 2019/20 (quarter 4 data) the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was **182.78 days**. This performance **exceeds a target** of 190 days and last year's performance of 194.73 days. The **improvement in performance can** be attributed to enhancements in the process including a new framework contract.

The Shared Regulatory Service has continued to undertake programmed inspections in relation to hygiene and cleanliness of food establishments and environmental pollution. During the year, **100%** of businesses felt inspection helped them **improve standards of compliance** in their business. **81.25%** of training delegates felt the training received will help them improve standards of compliance in their business, an **improvement** on 74.47% last year.

During 2019/20 we granted planning permission for **306 affordable, sustainable** homes in the Vale. Therefore **35%** of affordable housing units were granted as a proportion of all housing, which **exceeds our Local Development Plan target of 30%**.



**97%** of food establishments were assessed as **'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards**



during 2019/20, a further improvement on last year's performance. Premises are deemed to be broadly compliant if specified risk scores are achieved for cleanliness, structural issues, and confidence in the management of the business.

## 3.2 OUR CHALLENGES

### 3.2.1 OBJECTIVE 1: CHALLENGES

The global coronavirus pandemic has and will continue to have a **huge impact on unemployment across the United Kingdom**. Around 9.2 million workers were signed up to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in June 2020 and the sectors worst hit have included the travel, hospitality and retail business. Despite the Government's furlough scheme, we forecast that in the medium to longer term there will be **considerable job losses that will increase unemployment rates especially if recovery is slow**. The challenges facing the Council are planning for increased demand for our support services such as benefits advice and support, access to training to develop new skills and employability for those who become unemployed and find themselves in financial difficulties. There is also concern that the economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be disproportionately felt by young people (18-24 year olds). The challenge around this will be how we work effectively with our partners to support the creation of sufficient entry point employment opportunities to meet the growing demand for jobs. The Council will work together with its partners to **actively monitor changes in unemployment rates and the impact on vulnerable groups** as we continue to move out of the lockdown and consider what actions we and our partners need to take in the short, medium and long-term.

Increased demands upon local support services resulting from the reductions in welfare benefits have continued to grow this year and this is **placing services under serious threat**. The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) continues to gather pace in the Vale and there are now over 717 tenants in receipt of the benefit. These tenants continue to have higher arrears (than Housing Benefit tenants) and this could have an impact on the Council's Housing Business Account and restrict the number of new Council homes delivered each year.

Of the **717 Council tenants that have transferred onto the benefit, 69% are in arrears**, with average arrears for those on UC being £618 compared to £218 for tenants those not on UC in arrears. The Council continues to monitor these cases very closely and offers money advice and ongoing bespoke housing related support as well as liaising very closely with the Department of Works and Pensions when appropriate, as any decrease in rental income could have a **detrimental effect on the Council's Housing Business Account and restrict the number of new Council homes delivered each year**. This has been particularly challenging during the pandemic lockdown period, as not only have more tenants gone onto UC because of losing their jobs, but others who are socially isolating and do not have bank cards have been unable to get out to access cash to pay their rent. Both have had a detrimental impact on the arrears. Evidence shows that from March to May 2020 there has been a growth in the numbers of people on Universal Credit in all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan with 8,842 people, 6.6% of the population now claiming Universal Credit. The issue facing our



housing services is how we **proactively work together in partnership to respond to this crisis to support tenants to maintain their tenancies and prevent homelessness.**

To mitigate the increase of arrears, **we continue to provide tenants with money advice, assisting them to set up direct debits to pay their rent** and, liaising with the DWP to facilitate the prompt processing of claims. The Universal Credit Partnership Group and Overarching Housing Forum continues to meet regularly to review the impact of the changes.

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Achieving digital inclusion is an incremental process which also requires the necessary training and skills development of staff to support customers. The issue of digital inclusion underpins the Council's Digital Strategy and influences how it designs and delivers services and equips customers with the skills and infrastructure to access those services. Also, a cohesive channel shift approach is key in helping to realise efficiencies while providing targeted assistance through the most appropriate methods. Whilst positive progress has been made, we acknowledge **there is still a way to go to improve online self-sufficiency for a proportion of Vale residents** and key to this will be in ensuring we work effectively with our partners to share information and resources to maximise our opportunities to improve efficiency and accessibility of services for all Vale citizens.

We recognise that many of our services have had to adapt and change quickly as a response to the pandemic which has resulted in many of our services being delivered online and as we continue to move towards utilising more digital technology there is a **risk of digital exclusion and inequality**. For many citizens, utilising digital services is a more convenient however, we are mindful of the potential disadvantages to our most vulnerable and deprived citizens who do not have the access or ability to navigate online services. We will continue to engage with our citizens to ensure equality of access to all our services.

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**Reducing budgets will impact on our ability to effectively plan into the medium to longer term** which could potentially jeopardise the viability and potential success of any future community schemes particularly in areas of regeneration with high unemployment. The uncertainty and inability to manage this change could have a **detrimental impact on establishing more sustainable employment opportunities** into the longer term and ultimately limit our ability to reduce poverty.

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The Council continues to operate several EU funded projects even though the UK has left the European Union. All projects will be completed in 2021. **There is still uncertainty around the UK Government's Shared Prosperity fund, which is supposed to replace the EU funding lost as a result of the departure.** The WLGA and Welsh Government continue to lobby for more information. The Council submitted a response to a Welsh Government consultation on the future of regional investment, stressing that local determination and delivery should be an element of any overall programme. A Community Led Local Development approach has been proven to work in the rural Vale of Glamorgan and this is also considered by WG and WLGA to be an important factor of any new fund. A lack of EU Capital funding will mean **that the Vale will see less investment in projects such as play areas, public realm and heritage schemes.**

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We continue to focus our attention on enhancing our approach to **family support and preventative service** provision. The challenge becomes our **capacity and capability to meet the increasing and growing demand for these services** whilst ensuring any services delivered across the spectrum of our partners do not duplicate or conflict with our goals.

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Whilst significant improvements to services have been achieved through the amalgamation of three parenting provisions in the Vale, the Partnership for Young Parents, Flying Start and Putting Families First, the remit of the service now operates across the whole of the Vale. As a result, there continues to be a **significant number of calls requiring further action** and we are working to become more resilient to service demand.

## 3.2.2 OBJECTIVE 2: CHALLENGES

Homelessness is a growing national challenge and a severe issue for the Vale of Glamorgan which also has a significant amount of **hidden homelessness**, however many of these people have presented to the Service following the publication of the Welsh Government's Guidance to local authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because a new duty was placed on the Authority to provide everyone with temporary accommodation to avoid the spread of the virus. During the pandemic, the Housing Solutions Team were granted emergency powers to block book 66 hotel and bed and breakfast rooms to increase the provision of emergency and temporary accommodation, most of which are in use. This is going to pose a major challenge going forward as permanent homes in the social and private rented sector, already under pressure, will have to be found for them.

The Council will have to **find innovative rehousing solutions**, as there are **currently over 200 people in temporary accommodation waiting to be rehoused** in the Vale. As at June 2020 there are nearly **5,000 housing applicants** on the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Register.

Currently, the impact of Universal Credit and the pandemic has not impacted fully on homelessness, as new Welsh Government legislation has also included the curtailment of all evictions, irrespective of tenure until 23rd August 2020, after which this may be extended. However, as rent arrears have increased for UC applicants transferring onto this benefit in both the social and private rented sectors it is expected to lead to **increased evictions and subsequently more homelessness presentations** when legal action and evictions recommence. A **severe lack of one-bedroom accommodation is a concern** for the Vale and a priority factor in long term planning.

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Data for April and May 2020 shows that the number of **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and high risk domestic abuse incidents have increased considerably through the Covid-19 lock-down period**. In April we saw a **170% increase** in the number of ASB incidents reported (608 incidents compared to 225 in April 2019). In May we saw a further **increase of 378%** when compared to the same period last year (750 incidents in May 2020 compared to 157 in May 2019). Although these will not have resulted in referrals, they still **require significant input and resource**. The rise has been attributed to the increased numbers of young people who have gathered in large numbers in hotspot areas such as Cosmeston Lake, Rhoose Point, Ogmere and the Knap. As part of the Safer Vale partnership we have worked closely with our partners (including the Police) and the local community to prevent mass gatherings and anti-social behaviour. The challenge going forward is how the Council can put in place **longer term solutions that will be an effective deterrent to anti-social behaviour** without damaging the enjoyment of our resorts by the public.

We have also seen an increase in neighbours reporting their neighbours for lockdown breaches and there is a concern that this will lead to **long term neighbour disputes and cohesion issues in the future**. This will continue to be monitored by the Safer Vale Partnership.

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The Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral (DAARC) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) service also experienced **increases in referrals during the lockdown period** and it has become apparent that **more cases are affected by COVID-19 than originally identified**. The complexity of domestic abuse situations means that it is often only after having worked with victims for a period of time that the true extent to which the pandemic is affecting a situation can be understood. We are closely monitoring access of victims to services and there is a clear **difficulty being experienced** by victims as a result of being 'locked in' with sometimes very controlling and coercive perpetrators. We therefore anticipate another rise in the figures as lockdown continues to loosen and access to services is more easily attained.

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There is a shortage of housing in the Vale and a need for an additional 576 affordable homes per annum between the years 2017 to 2022. We are working with our partners to address this, however, the **impact of COVID-19, a possible recession and Britain exiting the European Union continues to add layers of**

**uncertainty over the Council's house building programme** and could contribute to labour shortages as well as difficulties in material supply. The Council will continue to monitor the market and take appropriate action to mitigate the impact through engagement of local contractors and sourcing alternative materials where necessary.

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Weaknesses regarding the arrangements for the management of compliance and specifically the 'compliance data' of the Council's Corporate Building Stock has significantly improved and work continues to control identified gaps in compliance. Systems, processes and data for managing building compliance are now held centrally within a fully established team, and work continues to ensure we have complied with our statutory responsibilities and are actively safeguarding the well-being of our service users, citizens and employees. However, the ongoing **potential financial costs and resource associated with addressing any non-compliance issues** remains a challenge for the Council given the year on year reductions in budgets.

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Whilst improvements have been made to processes surrounding the turnaround of our empty homes, there remains several long-term cases where properties are receiving structural works. **This has resulted in an increase in the number of working days taken to re-let a Council home to those in need.** Whilst a property is receiving repair work there is also a rent loss incurred however, benchmarking has indicated that 'rent loss' performance in the Vale is better than the median for all social landlords across the UK. To mitigate this challenge, we have created a management sub group to oversee performance on all aspects of Council empty property management. The group meet quarterly and will continue to monitor and drive further improvements in performance.

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Now we have met the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard**, it is important to ensure the standard is maintained and investment is planned accordingly. The Council have been working with Welsh Government to develop the next release of WHQS which is likely to focus on reducing the number of acceptable fails and begin to address climate change. The level of investment required will vary year on year and consequently detailed programmes of work will require adjustment on a yearly basis.

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### 3.3 CASE STUDY

#### SPOTLIGHT ON: GIBBY GREEN FINGERS

**Gibby Green Fingers** is an innovative community led environmental, social and health wellbeing initiative managed by a group of committed trustees who came together with a common conviction that they can make a difference by investing in their local community. The constituted group now has 270 volunteers and uses an asset-based community development and Timebanking approach to capitalise on skills and assets within the community.

At the outset, the Community Investment Team's main aim was to **collaborate** with tenants and community members to develop an initiative and take charge of a piece of waste land previously leased by another Housing provider and at risk of becoming derelict. The Team supported the local community to take full ownership of the land to achieve **long-term** benefits for the community and **prevent** anti-social behavior and fly-tipping at the site. Although Community Investment initiatives sit within the Housing service area, the team works **cross organisationally** with the Councils education and skills department to offer a seamless training service ensuring an **integrated service** for all service users. Evidence of this can be seen by looking at how the initiative has already helped the community.

Gibby Green Fingers' involvement in taking over the site has helped with:

- Enhancing and rejuvenating an area of land and **improving the local environment**;
- Enabling local people to participate in **health and wellbeing** activities to make best use of open **green space**;

- **Improving people’s mental health and wellbeing** and giving local people an opportunity to be outdoors and experience the sensory impacts that this brings;
- Enabling people to socialise with each other and get involved in training opportunities to **enhance their employment prospects**;
- Engaging families and **inspiring children to educate parents** to the benefits of allotments and locally grown fruit and vegetables;
- Giving local people access to **new skills and resources**, building capacity and enhancing **independence and self-esteem**;
- Providing opportunities for community planting and growing that **promote healthy living** and enhances people’s **mental health**;
- Promoting **intergenerational activities, multi-cultural events and activities**;
- Attracting new members of the local and wider community who have no or minimal access to a garden space to grow their own vegetables thereby **reducing food costs and improve healthy eating**;
- Promoting environmental projects to children via nursery and school visits so they can learn first-hand about being **environmentally friendly and eating well**;
- Creating **collaborative** opportunities with community agencies such as youth justice, probation services, schools, support providers, local groups and home education groups;
- Promoting the “Grow it, cook it, make it, and sell it” ethos that allows **further engagement** with the wider community;
- **Improving the environment and biodiversity** by encouraging the use of green materials and increasing **recycling** through composting and providing a natural habitat for wildlife to thrive whilst preserving rare varieties of plant life.

*“For individuals suffering with mental health issues, the project offers volunteering experiences along with training and employment opportunities through the Vale Councils’ Employability and Skills programme offered in conjunction with its partners “Opportunity Knocks”. This gives local tenants and residents the chance to train and gain relevant qualifications for their journey into employment and training”*

**Mark Ellis, Community Investment and Involvement Officer**

Last year at the National Primary Care Conference in Newport, Gibby Green Fingers showcased the benefits of being in the outdoors and how that positively affects mental health and linked this to the benefits of social prescribing, stressing how this can alleviate medical issues such as anxiety and depression. The Council will continue to work with Gibby Green Fingers by taking an **integrated** approach to commence work on a Social Prescribing Timebanking project to assist with health and wellbeing. This activity links back to our sustainable development goals by looking at innovative ways to improve health and well-being while saving the public purse in the **long term**.

ENVIRONMENTALLY  
RESPONSIBLE  
& PROSPEROUS



VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Environmentally Responsible &  
Prosperous Vale

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE  
(APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020)



**Our overall RAG status for 'An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale' is GREEN**

#### 4.0 POSITION STATEMENT

This Outcome focuses on our goal to become an environmentally responsible and prosperous Vale. We recognise and value the unique environment in which we live, and our aim is to protect our environment for future generations whilst enjoying its beauty and diversity.

There is a strong track record of successful regeneration projects in the Vale of Glamorgan and over the last four years the Council has continued to work with partners to implement a programme of regeneration across the Vale. One of our Objectives has been to promote regeneration, economic growth and employment and support the Welsh Government and local partnership priority to help people into work. The activities around this Objective have included working with a wide range of partners to identify what skills are needed and how we can maximise opportunities for job creation. It has also allowed us to work across the region as part of the Cardiff Capital Region.

Overall, we have made good progress in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities for the fourth and final year of the Corporate Plan in relation to Well-being Outcome 2 and its associated objectives of 'promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment' and 'promoting sustainable development and protecting our environment'. This has contributed to an overall **Green** status for the Outcome at end of year.

For the period 2019/20, 94% (79/84) of planned activities aligned to this Outcome 'An environmentally responsible and prosperous Vale' have been successfully delivered. In relation to the objective 'promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment', 93.3% of planned activities were successfully completed and 94.4% in relation to the objective 'promoting sustainable development and protecting our environment'. Across the Outcome, 5 out of 84 actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for 6% of all planned activities for 2019/20. Moving forward into 2020/21 we will be working towards introducing new Public Space Protection Orders, completing open space and structural improvements at Dingle Road, Penarth and Murch Field, Dinas Powys and implementing the revised car parking policy.

It is important to note that our annual review of progress for the 2019/20 period has been written at a time of unprecedented challenge, which has required the Council to respond to a global pandemic (Covid-19). We have assessed progress in relation to our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. However, certain aspects of performance, most notably end of year national performance indicator information and benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance as our statutory statistical obligations from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government's Public Accountability Measures have been suspended indefinitely.

During 2019/20, we have continued to work in partnership regionally to develop transport, infrastructure, business support, regeneration, planning and housing via the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal. Beyond delivering a funding programme, developments such as Brexit and the loss of EU funding have meant the City Deal will be key to ensuring regional sustainability and resilience. Of particular relevance to the Vale under the City Deal, is the need to promote the Airport and St. Athan as centres for economic growth and job creation, improving strategic access to the Vale and the ongoing regeneration of Barry. Key developments such as the Airport Business Park have moved forward with the production of an Airport Masterplan and the ongoing development by the Council of supplementary planning guidance around the developments of the Airport and associated business park. Work has also progressed on securing strong regional support in the form of a thematic grant programme to support the commercial centre of Barry (nearly £1 million over 2 years) and the development of a transport interchange for Barry, ensuring the seamless movement of passengers from rail to bus.

We are keen to attract new investment into the Vale and support existing businesses to grow. During the year we have worked closely with partners including Welsh and UK Governments to offer the practical support businesses may need. Identifying investment sites, accessing business support and signposting to grant funding are just some of the services we have offered throughout the year. For example, to maximise the benefit for local businesses of the investment in the Cardiff Airport and St. Athan Enterprise Zone, we have worked with partners such as Business Wales and Welsh Government to run themed events relating to the Enterprise Zone: In February 2020, the Council took part in “Wales in London” week with several partners such as Associated British Ports and the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The Council has also hosted regular “Take the Plunge” workshops in its buildings targeting new and local businesses.

Building upon the opportunities presented by the City Deal, we have delivered sustainable travel schemes and continue to encourage healthy and active travel by promoting walking and cycling for workers, residents and visitors to the Vale. During 2019/20, approximately £1,797,800 was spent on schemes using Section 106 contributions in supporting enhancements to active travel and sustainable transport. Examples of improvements made include enhancements to footways including dropped kerbs and uncontrolled crossings, pedestrian and footway improvements, subsidising Greenlinks services and safety improvements at bus stops. Eleven bus stops have been upgraded within the Vale, and new bus stop flags installed along the A48 corridor. We will continue our programme of upgrading bus stops around the Vale with future funding as well as installing Electronic Information Boards to communicate with our citizens in 2020/21.

The Council has been an active member of the Vale Healthy Staff Charter, signed in October 2019, and has been working closely with partners via the Public Services Board. As part of its commitment to encourage staff to travel actively we have brought back into service 9 pool bikes and purchased 2 E-bikes and will re-introduce the Cycle2Work scheme in July 2020. We have also been working with our partner, Nextbike, on preliminary work to introduce a bike hire scheme into Penarth which will launch in the latter half of 2020.

As part of the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme, we continue to deliver successful regeneration of the 19-acres of land alongside Barry Dock into an exciting mixed-use urban quarter. A diversity of developments has been facilitated so far with various developers, including the award winning Barry Pumphouse with its mix of live-work residential units, Academy Coffee, Hangfire Restaurant and Gym, an 80-bed Premier Inn and Brewers Fayre Restaurant, West Quay Medical Centre and two Business Services Centres operated by the Council offering a modern range of office and workshop space.

Despite the pandemic, new developments continue at the Innovation Quarter with developers presently on site converting a former railway Goods Shed building into an exciting mix of commercial, business and residential units along with constructing a Ship Container Village for commercial, business and leisure uses. In addition, a new block of 42 affordable and private market apartments is being constructed as part of the scheme for Newydd Housing Association. The ambitious Goods Shed Conversion and Shipping Container Village is due to be completed during the Summer and the apartments by the end of the Summer/Autumn. In view of the current pandemic, the developer is presently adapting the Goods Shed development to make it a safe place to live, work and visit.

Looking ahead, a major new state of the art educational campus is in the pipeline proposed by Cardiff and Vale College, subject to funding and statutory consents. The campus will sit alongside a new Waterfront Primary School in Barry that is also proposed to be constructed and opened over the next few years.

In line with our commitment to promote sustainable development, the Local Development Plan (LDP) was formally adopted in June 2017. The LDP constitutes the development plan for the authority and provides the strategic and detailed policy framework for the Vale of Glamorgan. The Plan provides certainty for investors and therefore makes investment in the area more likely whilst development of the allocated employment land is estimated to generate potential 7,610 - 10,610 jobs during the Plan period. The first LDP Annual Monitoring Report submitted to Welsh Government in October 2019 demonstrated the LDP is meeting its goals and objectives.

During the year, the Council received financial contributions to the value of £10,471,766.77 to provide community infrastructure and affordable housing. In the 12 months between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, a total of 24 legal agreements have been signed associated with planning permissions. The value of the financial contributions in these legal agreements totals £3,713,242.73. The financial contributions secured through these legal agreements will be used to provide or enhance facilities off site, such as sustainable transport services and infrastructure, public open space, community facilities, public art and educational facilities.

The planning obligation requirements secured this year have also included 'in-kind' obligations such as the provision of on-site affordable housing, on-site public open space and public art. For example, during 2019/20, we granted planning permission for 306 affordable, sustainable homes in the Vale and worked with our partners to deliver 280 new build affordable housing units as a result of Section 106 Agreements.

£6,529,159.89 was spent on schemes during 2019/20, with Section 106 contributions fully (or partially) supporting enhancements to public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public art and open space enhancements. Schemes have included upgrades to play areas at Twyn Yr Odyn, The Murch at Dinas Powys and Colwinston; a new skate park at Cogan Playing Fields; improvements to footpaths and footways at Ystradowen, Old Port Road, Wenvoe and Ogmore by Sea. New educational facilities including a new nursery at St. Joseph's RC Primary School and Wick Primary School have also received funding.

Tourism is vital to the Council and we are committed to supporting and developing our visitor economy. The Vale of Glamorgan continues to flourish as a successful visitor destination year on year as evidenced in the most recent STEAM survey (2019) which showed that visitor numbers to the Vale increased from 4.26 million in 2018 to 4.33 million in 2019 a 1.3% increase. The total economic impact of tourism in the Vale increased by 4.0% from £250.07m during 2018 to £275.05 in 2019. This encouraging performance is enabling us to realise our corporate goals as well as the vision as set out in our Destination Management Plan.

Increased growth in tourism supports economic growth and employment opportunities. It has been recognised in our Destination Management Plan that an extension of the tourism season beyond the traditional summer holidays is key and will promote a more stable and sustainable economic environment. With this in mind, the Vale of Glamorgan has continued to offer exciting and diverse events all year round, from the ever-popular Barry Island Weekenders which comprise of open air cinemas, street food and live music festivals, to Transport Shows and Triathlons.

The recent challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic will have a devastating impact locally not only upon the direct businesses associated with Tourism, but also the wider community that rely on the industry through work and supply of goods by local providers. Nearly 3,000 people are employed in roles that support the tourism industry and evidence suggests that many businesses will not survive lockdown if the current situation remains long-term, resulting in huge job losses. The Tourism Barometer (Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact survey produced by Welsh Government in June 2020 showed that around a quarter (23%) of businesses do not expect to survive the next three months if lockdown continues, while three in ten (30%) do not know how long they can survive.

We recognise that an efficient and effective transport system helps increase the number of people wanting to live, work and spend leisure time in the Vale of Glamorgan which in turn builds strong and vibrant local communities. We also understand that our highways are one of our biggest assets and with this in mind we have worked to deliver a number of transport system schemes most notably the improvements made to the Five Mile Lane. Whilst this scheme is nearing completion, work will continue during 2020 to ensure road safety and surface drainage issues are resolved. Since work began in February 2018, we have installed 2.4km of new cycle path and 6.6km of new and improved road, introduced a 60mph speed limit zone, planted 24,500 trees and more than 2,400 hedgerows and installed bat and mammal crossings. We also uncovered 450 bronze age, iron age and Roman remains as part of an archaeological dig.

We have continued to implement our Local Transport Plan (LTP) to improve accessibility, road safety, air quality and reduce congestion. One need that has been identified by the LTP is to enhance sustainable transport infrastructure and services which can contribute to reducing negative impacts that cars have on the environment, reducing congestion, improving health and well-being, and improving access to employment, health and education whilst reducing the risk of road accidents. This has been done by having studies undertaken on the Penarth to Cardiff barrage sustainable transport corridor, the junction 34 of the M4 to the A48 transport corridor and putting a host of active travel measures in place throughout the Vale.

In July 2019, the Vale of Glamorgan Council joined with Welsh Government and other councils across the UK to declare a Climate Emergency. In doing so we pledged to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero before the Welsh Government target of 2030 and support the implementation of the Welsh Government's new Low Carbon Delivery Plan, to help achieve the ambition for the public sector in Wales to be carbon neutral. Including the emission implications of land use and procurement within our carbon accounting could transform our Carbon Management Plan in the coming years and this work will be informed by the Welsh Government's recent pilot of a measurement methodology, which will be available in due course. In the meantime, we continue with our efforts to reduce emissions from our buildings, street lighting, and vehicles.

During the year we continued to work with partners across the region to develop and implement best practice methods that can deliver carbon reductions and help limit global warming. Some of our key achievements include; a reduction in office space being occupied due to the roll out of remote working technology which has allowed staff to work from home and reduce travel; the conversion of 67% of street lighting to LED lamps; adopting a fabric first approach to new social housing units ensuring homes are highly insulated and thermally efficient; 216m<sup>2</sup> of parks, open spaces and highways land sown with wildflowers or maintained as a naturalised area; introduction of new recycling services and reducing the use of plastic bags; improving sustainable transport and the purchase of hybrid vehicles and 100% renewable energy from the grid.

In the first phase of the Carbon Management Plan we reduced emissions by 21.3% against a target of 20%. In terms of financial savings for 2019/20, versus 2018/19 we saved approximately £50,000 in energy costs. These savings were made through reductions in street lighting costs as well as capital investment in more efficient equipment and use of the Council's Salix loan (effectively an interest free loan from the Welsh Government). Since 2016, our electricity use has reduced from 19 million kWh per year to 15.5 million kWh, a reduction of 18.4%. In addition, for both gas and electricity our carbon emissions have reduced from 12,158 Tonnes to 7,161 Tonnes, a reduction of 41.1%. A target of 12% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the plan period has been identified for the next phase.

Bringing together the work undertaken through the Insight Board, staff engagement, the climate change working group and discussions as part of the development of the new Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan, we are now working with partners to finalise and agree a Climate Emergency Charter for change. The Charter will detail the positive actions we can take, for example, planting more trees and increasing the number of electric/hybrid vehicles in our fleet and will emphasise the need to reduce our waste, use of single use plastics and the amount of energy we use. It will highlight the need for partners to work together



and provide leadership in terms of raising awareness about climate change, procurement policies and valuing the environment.

During 2019/20 we have continued to make progress towards developing a Waste Reduction Strategy and remodelling our waste management infrastructure. The introduction of black bag restrictions in September 2018 continues to have a positive effect enabling us to achieve our goal to further increase participation in recycling, reduce the growth of municipal waste and meet national statutory targets.

The black bag restriction project has contributed to the Council achieving a recycling rate of 70.37% which exceeds the statutory target of 64% for 2019/20 (this figure is awaiting verification). In addition, we continue to work in partnership with Cardiff City Council delivering improvements in organic waste treatment to ensure a sustainable waste management service in response to the environmental and carbon reduction challenges facing Wales. This arrangement will further contribute to improving our waste recycling and composting performance.

Wales has a robust collection regime and with the support from Welsh Government, we have introduced the Collections Blueprint within one third of the Vale and will continue to roll this out throughout the remaining areas of the Vale during 2020/21. The Blueprint sets out the recommended method of waste collections to ensure affordable and sustainable collection services for recyclable, compostable and residual waste.

In the Summer of 2019, 7 of our beaches achieved awards guaranteeing visitors a clean, safe, attractive and well managed environment. Whitmore Bay, Southerndown and Penarth Marina were awarded internationally recognised Blue Flags by the Foundation for Environmental Education, with the first two also landing Seaside Awards, along with Jacksons Bay and Cold Knap. The Seaside Award is the nationwide standard for the best beaches and is a symbol of quality which ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, attractive and well managed coastal stretch. We are also working more closely with our communities to deliver environmental improvements to parks, play areas, allotments and outdoor leisure sites. As part of this work, 10 of our parks have retained the coveted Green Flag by Wales' leading environmental charity, Keep Wales Tidy while 13 sites received a Community Award.

During the year we published our Biodiversity Forward Plan outlining how the Council will "seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the proper exercise of their functions and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems". The Plan details the mechanisms and actions by which our aims will be delivered in the Vale of Glamorgan to halt the decline of biodiversity, reduce the effects of climate change and promote sustainable development whilst also helping to deliver the Council's commitments under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Implementation of the Plan will ensure all elements of well-being are considered together and will facilitate collaborative working. Progress will be reviewed and reported every three years and the Plan will be reviewed and updated at the end of each 3-year reporting period to ensure it remains relevant.

We continue to minimise the risk and impact of flooding and coastal erosion through implementation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, contributing to the delivery of the Welsh National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management. Inspections of critical assets has continued with examples such as weekly monitoring and inspections of the Dyfan Road flood storage area, constructed as part of the Coldbrook Catchment Flood Risk Management Scheme, throughout the year to satisfy the requirements of the appointed reservoir engineer.

In 2019/20, a small flood scheme was completed on Pencoedtre Playing Fields, incorporating a bund and swale to manage surface water flood risk to several properties. The scheme also included planting with a wildflower meadow mix to deliver wider environmental and ecological benefits. Delivery of a flood risk management scheme for the village of Llanmaes is ongoing, with consultants working on the detailed design as negotiations commenced with affected landowners. This work will continue into 2020/21.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to many changes in how we work, how we provide services and how we live our lives. These changes will act as a catalyst to focus our efforts on tackling the climate emergency as we look to achieve a sustainable climate and nature friendly recovery. We have an opportunity and are keen to build on the gains made during the pandemic and recognise the huge impact that nature and the environment have and will continue to play in improving our physical and mental well-being in the long-term.


As we develop our proposals for work in 2020/21, we will review where we can have the greatest positive impact. Working with our partners we face the challenge of ensuring that the road to recovery is green and that we ensure that the changes in behaviour that we want to keep are supported. For example, retaining elements of increased home working, online services and a reduction in car journeys alongside development of alternative sustainable travel and changes to how we manage our buildings, waste and energy use. In addition, we will need to rethink how we involve people in a community conversation to ensure it is safe, meaningful and reflects changes as a result of the pandemic.

Going forward into year 1 of our new Corporate Plan (2020-2025), we are committed to responding proactively to the increasing pressure to do more with less and this will no doubt challenge our ambitions, especially given the unprecedented costs of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside the learning to date from our experience of this crisis, we will revisit the priorities in our Corporate Plan and use this as a platform to inform our development of locally-tailored solutions that will help to build resilience in the short, medium and long term. We will continue to collaborate with our partners to seek out and maximise our opportunities to help us achieve the best for Vale citizens.

## 4.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED

### 4.1.1 OBJECTIVE 3: ACHIEVEMENTS

During 2019/20 we have **regenerated public spaces** by upgrading play areas at Twyn Yr Odyn and Colwinston; We have also upgraded and expanded the play area at the Murch, Dinas Powys. We have commenced work on a new multi-use games area at King George V Playing Fields (also known as Lewis Playing Fields), Llandough and installed new railings and **biodiversity enhancements** at The Dingle Open Space, Penarth alongside the Public Art entranceway project.




We have worked with partners such as Business Wales and Welsh Government to run **6 themed events relating to the Enterprise Zone**. These events were **attended by 340 people** and headlined Automotive, Qatar Briefing and export, Sell2Wales, Transport for Wales, Brexit, St. Athan and Innovation and start-up businesses. These events will contribute towards maximising the benefit for local businesses of the investment in the Cardiff Airport and St. Athan Enterprise Zone,

The £9m project to convert the old railway Goods Shed building and adjoining land at Hood Road, Barry Waterfront, has progressed well during 2019/20. A **mixed-use urban scheme will include a unique shipping container village and apartment complex** opening in late summer 2020. The Council has also reached agreement for developers to transform the structure into office space, retail units and restaurants. Sitting alongside the Barry Tourist Railway, there will also be a new five-story residential block on the site operated by Newydd Housing, **offering 42 new homes, 23 of which will be affordable housing units.**

**Tourism continued to increase** in 2019/20 with the Barry Island Weekenders programme attracting high visitor numbers. **56,000** visitors were attracted to the destination during the year which is a further increase when compared to **55,000** visitors last year.





To support new and local businesses and promote economic growth we have been delivering events and workshops across the Val. Since 2017 we have delivered **4** free **business start-up events** which attracted **373** attendees, a **funding Theatre** at the Vale Show which attracted **91** attendees and hosted **65** Business Wales workshops. Supporting 580 people.



In the latest Public Opinion Survey, 2018/19, residents were asked how satisfied they were with the heritage coast. Almost everyone (**99%**) was either very or fairly satisfied with the **heritage coast** overall and the coastal paths in the Vale (**99%**). Over 9 in 10 were also satisfied with the **facilities at Barry Island (94%)** and Barry Island overall (**93%**). Satisfaction levels have increased since the last survey.



The Council has secured **£1,797,800** Section 106 funding for **transport schemes** in the County which will be used for projects such as road safety improvements. Grants have also been secured for junction improvements, sustainable transport opportunities and improvements to active travel routes to promote walking and cycling.

The 2019 STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model) recorded visitor numbers to the Vale increased from **4.26** million in 2018 to **4.33** million in 2019. The total economic impact of tourism in the Vale increased by **4.0%** to **£275m** during 2019. Total tourism employment in the Vale also saw an increase of **5.5%** during 2019.



The Council offers National Standard Cycle Training to all its primary schools to **encourage safe and active travel**. During 2019/20, **1,473** pupils passed the National Standard training at Level 1 and 2. Kerbcraft and Child Pedestrian Training was also delivered to **895** primary aged pupils during the year.

The Economic impact of Tourism has continued to increase year on year. In 2017, **415,000** people visited Barry Island staying for **420,000** days with an economic impact of **£15.2M**. In 2018, **425,000** people visited Barry Island staying for **431,000** days with an economic impact of **£16.2M**. In 2019, The 2019 Barry Island estimate is **424,000** visitors staying for **434,000** days, with an economic impact of **£17.1M**



During 2019/20 we used developer contributions to make improvements to **sustainable transport** including; Implementation of a new bus stop and shelter in Ystradowen; Enhancements to footways in Ystradowen, including dropped kerbs and uncontrolled crossings; A **footpath enhancement** scheme in Fferm Goch; **Pedestrian improvements** on Old Port Road outside of Gwenfo Primary School; **Improvements to footways** throughout Ogmore by Sea; **Safety improvements** at bus stop outside of St. Bride's Major Primary School and improvements at Windsor Road/Plassey Street roundabout junction for **walking and cycling**.

Each Primary School in the Vale received **4** **balance bikes** for use in schools to encourage early positive cycle behaviour. We also improved active travel facilities by **installing 5 cycle shelters in Primary Schools as well as 1 scooter pod**.



## 4.1.2 OBJECTIVE 4: ACHIEVEMENTS

**70.37%** of household waste that was collected in 2019/20 was either prepared for reuse and/or recycled. This **performance exceeds the current statutory target and the target for 2019/20 (64%)**. The increase in performance from last year (**67%**) comes as a result of the recycling and waste service changes we have recently delivered; in particular the restrictions on residual waste at the kerbside and at Household Waste Recycling Centres introduced in September 2019.



Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, a total of **24** legal agreements have been signed associated with planning permissions. The value of the financial contributions from these agreements (**known as Section 106**) totals **£3,713,242.73**.

The financial contributions secured through these legal agreements will be used to provide or enhance facilities off site, such as sustainable transport services and infrastructure, public open space, community facilities, public art and educational facilities to **ensure that sustainable communities are developed** in the Vale.



We received **7** awards for our coastal spaces in recognition of their high quality; **Whitmore Bay, Southerndown and Penarth Marina were awarded Blue Flags** by the Foundation for Environmental Education, with the first two also landing Seaside Awards, along with **Jacksons Bay and Cold Knap**. This gold standard award ensures that visitors are guaranteed a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal stretch.

In 2019/20, Members granted approval for Section 106 contributions to support numerous applications for funding. One example of the award of **£1,900 to Wild About Nature**, Dinas Powys for equipment and apparatus. The community group's aim is to make Dinas Powys as **wildlife-friendly** as possible. From attracting bees into gardens to planting out community sites as havens for wildlife helping **nature to thrive**.



The performance of local authorities in deciding applications for planning permission is crucial to enabling development to deliver home ownership, building homes people can afford to buy and supporting economic growth. We are pleased to report that, during 2019/20, **95% of householder planning applications were determined within the prescribed 8 weeks** (or subject to Planning Performance Agreement or Extension of Time).



Residents were asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of **recycling and waste management** services as part of the Public Opinion Survey 2018/19.



Over 9 in 10 residents were satisfied with food waste recycling facilities (**95% very or fairly satisfied**), garden waste recycling facilities (**95%**), recycling facilities (**94%**) and recycling centres (**94%**).

In 2019/20, a small **flood scheme was completed on Pencoedtre Playing Fields**, incorporating a bund and swale to manage surface water flood risk to several properties. This type of scheme not **only minimises the risk and impact of flooding** but also contributes towards **habitat creation and restoration, encouraging wildlife and biodiversity**.



When asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of **public transport and highways**, residents responded that satisfaction was highest with access to public transport (**87% very or fairly satisfied**), public transport information (**83%**), bus services (**79%**) and rail services (**76%**).



We continue to achieve **high satisfaction levels from visitors to our Country Parks** with **100%** that their visit was either "good" or "very good". This performance is a further improvement on last year (99.6%). Visitor satisfaction combined with **the awards presented by Keep Wales Tidy** shows recognition of our high standards at the County's many parks, green areas and open spaces.

In terms of performance, **88%** of "major" applications were determined within time periods required, compared to last year's All Wales average of 68%.

In terms of quality of decisions, **90%** of planning appeals against the Council's refusal of permission were dismissed which is **significantly better than last year's** performance.



As part of our commitment to **enhance and protect habitats and important species** we have made biodiversity enhancements at The Dingle Open Space, Penarth alongside the Public Art entranceway project including planting of native bulbs and wildflower areas.

Consultation, feasibility and design work has also been undertaken for the following open spaces: Central Park, Barry; Sports Fields, Wick; Caerleon Road, Dinas Powys and The Knap Canal with regard to **biodiversity enhancements**.

During 2019/20 the Council's Planning department received **1297** planning applications, **76 more** than last year. Of these, **93% (1210)** were determined within the required timescales compared to 88% across Wales.



Dumping foreign objects in places they don't belong can have a huge impact on the natural, social and economic environment. Therefore, we are pleased to report that during 2019/20, **355 incidents of fly tipping** were removed by the Council over a period of **511 days** meaning that the average number of days taken to clear a fly tipping incident was **1.44 days**. This performance **exceeds our target of 3 days**.

The recent merging of our Parks and Cleansing departments has brought **greater and more effective utilisation of resources** which can be seen in the street cleanliness figures. The percentage of highways at an acceptable level of cleanliness also **exceeded target** with **99%** of highways inspected being of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness.



Of the **1297** planning applications determined during the year, **36** were Listed Building Consents; **144** were tree applications; **77** were work to trees in a conservation area and **67** applications were work to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order. This activity contributes towards our objectives aimed at protecting and enhancing the built, natural and cultural heritage of the Vale.

We continue to promote active travel and reduce emissions from street lighting, council vehicles and buildings. During 2019/20, **9 pool bikes** have been refurbished for use by Council staff on shorter journeys instead of pool cars and **2 electric bikes** have been purchased for use by Council staff. Lockers were installed at The Alps Depot to provide storage for staff that choose to cycle to work.

## 4.2 OUR CHALLENGES

### 4.2.1 OBJECTIVE 3: CHALLENGES

Whilst progress in relation to the Cardiff Capital Region (City Deal) is positive, we need to ensure that the interests of the Vale of Glamorgan continue to be effectively promoted. Of particular relevance is the need to **promote the Airport and St. Athan as centres for economic growth and job creation, improving strategic access to the Vale, increasing the supply of affordable housing and the continued regeneration of Barry.**

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There is a need to **mitigate the ongoing uncertainty in relation to external funding arrangements** (exacerbated by Britain exiting the European Union) and secure Pipeline funding from the UK and or Welsh Governments to develop and deliver key regeneration projects that reflect local needs and opportunities. In addition, **Rural Communities Capital funding for all sectors is likely to end in 2020, resulting in cost pressures on the Council in subsequent years.** This funding has been used to invest in Council assets since 2004. Also established in 2004, Creative Rural Communities, the Council's European funded rural regeneration initiative will see its funding end in 2021 leaving a gap in both support for rural communities and funding available to those businesses and groups.

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The development industry in the Vale of Glamorgan is as busy as it has ever been, and this is **placing pressure on our resources in Development Management and on the local infrastructure overall.** On average over 600 homes are being built yearly, and major infrastructure projects have been undertaken such as 5 Mile Lane, Darren Farm link road, Cowbridge, and Northern Access Road, St. Athan. In addition, further pressures result from delays in technical input from statutory consultees on planning applications who are facing their own resource challenges. **In 2019/20 the Council's planning enforcement team have faced significant challenges in monitoring and ensuring compliance with conditions on major developments;** following on from action in 2018/19, further Enforcement Notices were served on the Development Consortium at Barry Waterfront to prevent construction and occupation of their houses until mixed uses are provided in the planned District Centre. The department has been working hard to deal with these work pressures whilst maintaining customer service and delivering services in accordance with the Welsh Government framework. The department is also maximising reshaping opportunities through efficiency savings and income generation through Planning Performance Agreements and planning consultancy services for internal departments.

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The majority of services in the Council have had to **adapt the way they work due to COVID-19** and this is the case for all planning staff who are working from home and meeting remotely to discuss and negotiate planning applications while working with customers to ensure site assessments can be carried out safely. **The Planning Committee is being set up remotely and emergency powers have been needed to make urgent decisions** on some planning matters. We will continue to deliver planning and building control services and work proactively with communities and other stakeholders, amending timescales and reviewing consultation processes as necessary.

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High streets and town centres throughout the UK are facing enormous challenges, with major retail closures. **Barry town centre is no exception having suffered several recent losses, Cowbridge also has high vacancy rates.** The WLGA Brexit exposure dashboard also highlights town centres as being one of the most vulnerable areas of the Vale's economy when it comes to being negatively impacted by Brexit. The Council is working closely with Welsh Government who have adopted a town centre first approach and Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) funding is being used to support several projects in the town centre. Several other initiatives have also made good progress in 2019, including the Barry Making Waves project and investment in empty properties along Holton Road using TRI funding.

Our challenge going forward will be how we can help **stimulate our local economies and secure jobs into the longer term at a time when our resources are likely to diminish.** The retail sector had been in decline prior to Covid-19, and despite the positive progress we have made to enhance our local town spaces, the rapid

decline in footfall has been damaging to our shops. Despite the lifting of restrictions, more people have turned towards online shopping, so **shoppers will need some encouragement to return to their local town centres to give our shops, cafes and restaurants a chance of survival.**

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Both Section 106 and Welsh Government funding have been used to improve Active Travel routes throughout the Vale but the **lack of consistent capital funding for Active Travel schemes**, including competing with other areas for Section 106 contributions and other local authorities for Welsh Government funding, means Active Travel is very much a piece meal process and the **uncertainty of the funding makes it difficult to deliver improvements as planned.**

Welsh Government funding was not given until June 2019, so this factored with bad weather throughout the Winter and the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has meant much shorter timescales to complete works as planned.

The Coronavirus restrictions also **provide a significant challenge in developing and progressing the need for additional quality active travel routes both temporary and permanent so that individuals can safely access services and workplaces.** This places a greater challenge on the tendering and award of essential contracts and services as contractors and consultants return to work and make necessary adjustments to their working arrangements to comply with the Welsh Government's legislation 'The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020', which impose restrictions on individuals, businesses and others to protect public health in Wales. The Council is therefore under **significant challenge to consider necessary mitigating arrangements wherever possible and practicable to reduce or control the potential for delay to programmed works and services as well as managing additional contract costs** which are liable to impact on available budgets, affect future finances of the Council and its ability to provide effective services to its citizens in the future.

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Tourism accounts for over £250 Million on the Vale of Glamorgan, and the recent challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic will have a **devastating impact locally not only upon the direct businesses associated with Tourism, but also the wider community that rely on the industry through work and supply of goods by local providers.** Nearly 3,000 people are employed in roles that support the Tourism industry, and recent research conducted by Welsh Government suggests that **many businesses do not expect to survive if the current situation remains long term resulting in huge job losses.** Whilst we continue to work closely in marketing the Vale in line with Visit Wales and Welsh Government guidelines, our work is now concentrated upon supporting the industry through this difficult period. The role we play in supporting businesses will hopefully result in business **resilience allowing for a faster recovery** once restrictions are lifted and the Vale returns to a "new-normal".

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The Coronavirus restrictions and recovery arrangements have provided a **significant challenge in managing and balancing the safe use of our highway network in key locations between various user groups comprising residents, businesses and visitors and shoppers.** The key areas impacted are **town centres** as the retail and hospitality trade are given permission to reopen by Welsh Government and the need to reallocate road space in order to achieve **safe social distancing requirements as well as coastal attractions and resorts with increasing visitor numbers to coastal car parks and extraneous parking impacting and causing nuisance to nearby residential areas.** To deal with these issues emergency arrangements are required in the short-term with the need to quickly develop appropriate policies and strategies to deal with the permanent situation and new normal in the medium to longer term. This includes effective management arrangements within coastal car parks and resident parking controls in neighbouring residential areas affected.

## 4.2.2 OBJECTIVE 4: CHALLENGES

Government policies during the COVID-19 pandemic have drastically altered patterns of energy demand around the world. Many international borders were closed, and populations were confined to their homes consequently reducing transport and changing consumption patterns across the globe. This reduction in consumption may only be temporary but we recognise the need to take bold action to reduce carbon emissions and have set out ambitious goals in our Carbon Management Plan. Reaching **net zero carbon emissions before 2030 will be a challenge on a very different scale and** will have to be one of the main focuses of every part of the Council for success to be achieved.

We continue to work with partners across the region to develop and implement best practice methods that can **deliver carbon reductions and help limit global warming however, we require the necessary powers, resources and technical support to help us work towards reducing carbon emissions and meet our targets.** As we move towards recovery, there may be an opportunity for more innovative approaches to reducing CO2 emissions around Wales and in the Vale of Glamorgan to be explored. The Council and its partners are keen that recent changes to how we work that have benefitted the environment are not lost as we start to return to a more business as usual approach.

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**Climate change** is predicted to lead to increased storminess, sea-level rise and changes in rainfall patterns. All of these factors could have a **detrimental impact on the risk of flooding and coastal erosion** in the Vale. In addition, less obvious impacts may occur with, for example, changes in temperature, groundwater and vegetation coverage also potentially impacting on coastal erosion due to impacts on the weathering of cliffs or flooding as land-use and vegetation changes affect run-off responses. New guidance and climate change allowances will be incorporated into strategic and scheme level assessments to **build in resilience against future changes.** The implementation of good quality **sustainable drainage systems** on new developments will also help mitigate some of these impacts on flood risk, whilst also helping manage other impacts such as increased temperatures and urban heat island effects. In addition, continued monitoring of critical coastal frontages and watercourses will facilitate a better understanding of the actual changes occurring over time. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted on delivery of flood and coastal risk management activities delaying investigations into recent flooding incidents and affecting delivery of works. As new working practices have been implemented, these impacts have reduced and investigations, inspections and delivery of new schemes are now continuing.

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A key area that has required considerable attention during COVID-19 and the subsequent easing of lockdown has been the **management of our parks and resorts.** With the easing of lockdown, there has been an increase in visitor numbers to the Vale of Glamorgan coast and Country Parks despite social-distancing measures and the early restrictions placed on travel. There have also been instances of **anti-social behaviour** leading to the closure of the car parks at Ogmore. Going forward, we will continue to manage our public open spaces, particularly our coastal areas and parks to **ensure that our residents and visitors are safe and that our natural environment is protected.**

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Whilst works to complete the Highway Maintenance 3-year plan within the budget allocation and priorities identified for 2019/20 were generally completed prior to the Coronavirus pandemic; **the Vale's road network is a continuing deteriorating asset which requires ongoing significant investment in excess of £2m year a year to maintain a steady state condition.** The budget allocation in 2018/19 and 2019/20 has provided significant investment of circa £2.5m each year which has assisted in improving the overall condition of the asset, however the current budget allocation for 2020/21 is below the investment in excess of £2m a year required to maintain a steady state condition of the council local highway infrastructure. It therefore remains an ongoing and key challenge for the Council in future years to **identify a necessary consistent level of funding year on year to at least maintain the steady state of our highway network and more importantly to improve its condition in order to provide a robust and resilient network** which is capable of dealing with

future traffic growth and which is required to sustain the necessary economic growth for the Vale and its citizens to prosper.

Through careful prioritisation and allocation of capital expenditure through the Council's Highway Maintenance 3-year Plan, we are **working to maximise our ability to maintain the local highway network**, ensuring that the roads that require the most urgent works are prioritised. In addition, we continue to consider innovative surface treatments to improve and protect the highway asset as well as prolong the previous capital works investment in our road network.

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**Rising energy costs for unmetered electricity supplies in relation to street lighting remains a key challenge given reducing budgets and the need to deliver significant savings** as part of the reshaping agenda, however, this should be mitigated by substantial completion of the Council's street lighting energy reduction strategy.

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Although the Vale has **exceeded the statutory recycling target for 2019/20 of 64%** set by Welsh Government, we **need to reduce the levels of contamination in order to achieve meet the 2025 aspiration of working towards zero waste**. By 2025, we will **need to have significantly reduced our waste** and aim to manage any waste that is produced in a way that makes the most of our valuable resources. Throughout 2020/21 we will continue replacing the co-mingled recycling system with a source separated system. These changes to collection arrangements are being implemented across Wales as part of Welsh Government's move to **reduce levels of contamination in recycling collections** and allow even more of what we discard to be sent to incineration or land fill sites. We will continue to ensure that we engage and support residents to make these changes as easily as possible.

We have **successfully continued to run and complete all our domestic waste and recycling rounds on a daily basis throughout the COVID-19 pandemic** and whilst the move toward a source separated recycling system in the Barry areas has been delayed by the pandemic, we have set a date for this service change to begin during October 2020 followed by roll out to Penarth and Dinas Powys in 2021.

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## 4.3 CASE STUDY

### SPOTLIGHT ON: NEXTBIKE

Following the success of the Nextbike hire scheme in Cardiff, which has recorded more than 548,000 rentals since its launch in 2018, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has received requests for a similar bike rental system. In response to these requests as well as in recognition of the potential **long term benefits to the community and environment**, the Council **consulted** with residents and a pilot scheme will be launched later in 2020.

Using contributions from Section 106 **sustainable transport** funding and working in **collaboration with our partners** at Transport for Wales, Network Rail, Cosmeston Country Park and the University Health Board at Llandough Hospital, the project has progressed well. Nextbike, the UK's leading bike share scheme provider were appointed to implement the project and are working with us towards installing 50 electric bikes at several docking station locations across Penarth:

- Llandough Hospital
- Penarth Train Station
- Cosmeston Country Park
- Esplanade
- Penarth Town Centre
- Cogan Train Station/Cardiff Barrage

As at July 2020, the majority of the civil works have been completed by the Council's in-house design and construction team although there has been a slight delay in rolling out the scheme due to the COVID-19



pandemic. Nextbike is expected to be up and running and linked in with the Cardiff system during late summer 2020 offering **energy efficient and emission-free transportation to residents** in the area.

Not only does this scheme **benefit the environment** by relieving the number of vehicles commuting into Cardiff City Centre **preventing congestion and pollution**; the use of electric bikes also has **physical health and well-being benefits** for cyclists contributing to our objective of **encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles**. Furthermore, by making it easier to commute across the Barrage to Cardiff City Centre we are delivering against our goal to **improve Active Travel and sustainable transport**. In light of the recent pandemic and the social distancing measures that will be in place for the foreseeable future, this method of travel also allows people to socially distance while freeing up public transport.



Local mechanics from the charity Pedal Power who already service the Cardiff rental scheme, will be employed to assist with the repair and maintenance of the fleet going forward. The Vale is also **collaborating** with Cardiff Council to create an **integrated approach** that will link the two schemes. This will improve our links with Cardiff and ensure that members are able to travel between and return bikes to both locations.

*“Having declared a **climate emergency** earlier this year, it is imperative that as a Council we continue to support active and sustainable methods of transport. The bikes are simple to use, and tariffs tend to be cheaper than travelling by car, bus or train”...“The initiative will **benefit the health and well-being** of our commuters and residents, as well as being an asset to tourism in the area. If this proves to be a success, we hope to see the scheme expand further.”*

**Cllr Peter King, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services & Transport**

*“E-bikes are not only great for reducing journey times and taking on steep hills, they’re also a great way of getting people of all abilities and fitness levels into cycling. It’s an exciting time for Penarth.”*

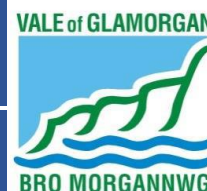
**Krysia Solheim, Nextbike UK Managing Director**

ASPIRATIONAL  
& CULTURALLY  
VIBRANT



VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale



ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE  
(APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020)

**Our overall RAG status for 'An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale' is GREEN**

## 5.0 POSITION STATEMENT

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's vision of working together to build strong communities with a bright future underpins all our activities under this Well-being Outcome. It is widely acknowledged that providing people with education and the opportunity to develop the right set of skills for their future is a significant determinant of life outcomes including health, socio-economic position and life expectancy. Consequently, ensuring that all Vale citizens, children, young people and adults have access to lifelong learning opportunities to develop their skills is fundamental to achieving our Corporate Plan priorities and ensuring the Vale of Glamorgan's continuing and future prosperity.

Despite the national austerity agenda which continues to be challenging, especially in terms of funding for schools and funding of learning opportunities to enable citizens to achieve their full potential, we have remained ambitious in our plans for the Vale of Glamorgan. We continue to respond positively to the national education agenda (*Fit for the Future, Education in Wales*) and the new education curriculum which continues to shape our approach and we are working collaboratively locally, regionally and nationally to ensure this considers and contributes to the long term economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our communities in line with the WCFG Act.

Overall, we have made good progress in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities for the fourth and final year of the Corporate Plan 2016-20 in relation to Well-being Outcome 3 and its associated objectives of, 'Raising overall standards of achievement' and 'Valuing culture and diversity'. This has contributed to an overall **Green** status for the well-being Outcome at end of year.

For the period 2019-20, 90% (60 out of 67) of planned activities aligned to 'An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale' have been successfully delivered. In relation to the objective, 'raising overall standards of achievement', 92.6% of planned activities were successfully completed and 87.5% in relation to the objective, 'valuing culture and diversity'. Across the Outcome, actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for just under 10% of all planned activities for 2019/20. There is a need to continue working towards achieving the silver award in the Inport Equality Standard, further progress our Stonewall action plan and fully embed Welsh Government's 'Code of Practice for Ethical Employment' across all service areas. Work in relation to these areas remain priorities and have been carried forward within respective Service Plans for 2020/21.

It is important to note that our annual review of progress for the 2019/20 period has been written at a time of unprecedented challenge, which has required the Council to respond to a global pandemic (COVID-19). We have assessed progress in relation to our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. However, certain aspects of performance, most notably end of year national performance indicator information and benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to

compare our performance as our statutory statistical obligations from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association's Public Accountability Measures have been suspended indefinitely.

We have reason to celebrate our performance as much was achieved during 2019/20. We have not done this alone, our partners have been very much on board, helping us to continue to provide those important life chances and opportunities for Vale citizens to learn, grow, prosper and improve their health and well-being. Our inclusive and collaborative approach involving key stakeholders including schools, learners and their families and communities has enabled us to strengthen existing services whilst developing new and innovative opportunities to further enhance and encourage lifelong learning by all. This approach will become ever more important in the coming year as we work to mitigate the unprecedented impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout our reporting of progress during the year, we have emphasised how the achievements we have reported under Well-being Outcome 3, also contribute to a number of our other Well-being Objectives. Consequently, there is some duplication in the annual report which is expected and reflects our integrated approach across objectives to deliver multiple outcomes. This is in line with the WBFG Act which requires us to integrate our work so that no single action creates only one impact. For example, eliminating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is a key priority for the Council, and the work undertaken in the past year in developing an holistic approach to early intervention and prevention has involved partners in Health, the Police, Third Sector, Housing, Education, Community Safety, Social Services and our communities to name a few. Alongside, 'raising overall standards of achievement' and 'valuing culture and diversity', the impact of this work also contributes to other Council objectives to, 'reduce poverty and social exclusion', 'provide decent homes and safe communities', 'promote regeneration, economic growth and employment', 'promote sustainable development and protect our environment', 'encourage active and healthy lifestyles' and 'safeguard those who are vulnerable and promote independent living'. By taking this integrated approach to tackling ACEs, we aim to give our children the best start in life, reduce health and skills inequalities and poverty in the long-term. The case studies at the end of this chapter are examples of this approach in practice and describe how through building strong partnerships and using our assets innovatively, we are supporting the well-being and resilience of our learners, their families and the wider community to ensure they are equipped with the right skills to achieve their potential in a changing world.

There have been a number of notable successes in 2019/20. Standards can only truly be considered high if they are high in every part of the County and for all pupils regardless of their background or ability. It is pleasing to report that Cowbridge and Cogan Nursery were judged excellent by Estyn in all five inspection areas with no recommended areas for improvement. Along with Barry Island Primary school, all three schools were recognised for outstanding performance by Estyn and were invited to submit case studies to be used by Estyn as best practice. In addition, there are currently no schools in a statutory follow up category (Significant Improvement or Special Measures). Our proactive approach in ensuring children and young people feel safe in schools has been recognised by Estyn who have judged nearly all Vale schools since 2016/17 as either good or excellent. This trend has continued in 2019/20, with all schools inspected achieving either excellent or good ratings in relation to pupil well-being, care support and guidance. Despite this strong performance, we recognise that there is still a way to go to fulfil our ambition of every child in the Vale attending a good or excellent school as judged by Estyn in all inspection areas.

In the 2018/19 academic year, pupil outcomes at the Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 for all areas of learning, are above the national averages. Although performance has fallen slightly, overall attendance in schools is in the top 10 in Wales, better in secondary schools (3<sup>rd</sup>) than in primary schools (8<sup>th</sup>). Despite our strong performance, we recognise that overall outcomes for children who are eligible for free school meals still remain behind those of their peers. We also recognise that the overall level of exclusions of children and young people from schools needs to reduce and there is a need to improve attendance levels especially in our primary schools.

Our capital investment in schools via the School Reorganisation and Investment Programme and the Welsh Government's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, is one of the highest and most ambitious in the country. Our collaboration with contractors, the third and public sector organisations on the initiative has helped deliver a range of community benefits which are contributing to improving outcomes for residents, the environment and the local economy. For example, in relation to the Barry Secondary Learning Communities project, during 2019/20: 39 local jobs and 14 apprenticeships have been created; 2075.1 hours of training has been provided to graduates and young people on work and pupil placements (including a women into construction initiative); 50% of labour used on site is local; 7 community projects have been supported (e.g. a social enterprise initiative with Ysgol Y Deri to provide onsite catering for the three projects); 94% of building waste has been diverted from landfill; and 100% of materials used (i.e. concrete, stone and steel) is produced in Wales, contributing in excess of £1.38m to the economy. A further 261 hours has also been spent visiting schools to promote career opportunities in construction. These modern facilities will increase opportunities for residents to participate in lifelong learning, sports, leisure and cultural activities, active travel and increase access to green spaces and a clean environment to highlight a few.

We are on track to complete the Barry Secondary Learning Communities project by July 2022, which has seen the investment of £88.6 million in three secondary schools to create modern learning centres with low carbon footprint to meet future demand and enable our children and young people to fulfil their full potential whilst also providing improved and accessible local facilities for the wider community to enjoy. Alongside this investment, work has also started on the expansion and refurbishment of our Special School, Ysgol y Deri (£11 million) to meet the fast growing demand for complex pupil placements; Ysgol Sant Baruc (£7.4 million), St David's Church in Wales Primary (£4.2 million) and St. Nicholas Church in Wales Primary (£4.2 million) to meet projected increase in pupil numbers. A new Centre for Learning and Well-being (£4.4 million) is also being developed to meet the needs of some of the Vale's most vulnerable pupils. These improvements in infrastructure will not only contribute towards lowering our carbon footprint and increasing access to modern community facilities, indeed, they will enhance our work towards building community focused learning centres, effectively harnessing the power of schools, families and communities working together towards 'strong communities with a bright future'.

The Vale's favourable position in terms of the diversity and accessibility of post 16 provision continues to ensure that participation in further education remains above the national average overall, and good progress has been made via a collaborative approach with schools, local employers, local further education providers and the Council's own apprenticeship scheme to increase the variety and take up of learning opportunities available. This continues to contribute towards positive destination outcomes for our learners at the end of their learning thus reducing the number of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET). Whilst our performance for 16-18 year olds remaining in education, training or employment is in the top 5 in Wales, we also recognise that more needs to be done to future proof our workforce and we are working via the Cardiff City Region Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that we focus our investment on addressing identified skills gaps and shortages to meet the needs of the local and national economy in the long term.

Alongside our focus on developing the skills of young people, we have continued to increase the number and range of learning opportunities available to adults in the Vale through community learning and take up has been high, as has our success rate which stands at 95% for the 2018/19 academic year (success rate refers to the number of learning aims achieved by individuals at the end of a course divided by the number of learners enrolled on the course. A high success rate indicates that more learners complete their course and gain a recognised qualification). Going forward however, there is a real danger that these opportunities may not be sustainable for the long term given ongoing reduced funding and the lack of clarity on future European Social Fund grant funding post Brexit. We are working collaboratively at local, regional and national levels to enable us to sustain and increase the opportunities available for young people and adults in the Vale to gain meaningful skills and qualifications that will help them into or return to the world of work, and also opportunities to keep on learning for pleasure, enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

We have made good progress in delivering the commitments in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) with a focus on supporting Welsh medium childcare provision, adult community learning provision and meeting the demand for Welsh medium education during 2019/20. Alongside this, we have also continued to work collaboratively locally and across the region to improve and enhance services for Welsh speakers through our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, ensuring increased opportunities for residents including children and young people, to participate in activities through learning and social interaction. Over 10,000 people participated in various organised activities throughout the year and eleven schools were presented with the Welsh Language Charter Award demonstrating their commitment to supporting the Welsh language and culture, all of which is supporting the Welsh Government's vision to see one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Our 'Arts and Culture Strategy: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale' recognises the important role that the arts play in improving the health and well-being of residents and its contribution to the local economy. During the year, we directly supported over 5,000 organisations and individuals (compared to just over 1,100 last year) through the provision of advice, resource sharing, mentoring and direction which is contributing towards building a sustainable and thriving local arts sector. Nearly 134,000 people living in the Vale were creatively active in 2019/20 (compared to nearly 113,000 in 2018/19), engaging with a complimentary programme of arts activities (available through the mediums of English and Welsh) delivered by the Vale of Glamorgan Arts Development Service, partner groups and local organisations and individuals in the Vale of Glamorgan. In line with our commitment to increase accessibility to the arts, we also supported 17 public art projects across the Vale, working with communities to invigorate our civic spaces and introduce uniqueness to our communities.

We continue to work in partnership to ensure that all Vale citizens, including groups protected under the Equalities Act, have fair and equal access to services that will enable them to have a good start in life, are healthy, enjoy living in safe and clean communities, achieve their aspirations and are prosperous. At the end of 2019/20, the Council published its draft Strategic Equalities Objectives for the period 2020-2024, which have been set within the context of our new Corporate Plan 2020-2025. The Plan outlines the key steps we intend to take over the coming years to make our work place and communities more equal. During the year we have continued to work with colleagues across the Council, our partners, residents and representatives of protected groups to improve equality monitoring data so that we can make more informed decisions about the services we deliver.

We remain committed to ensuring our workplace is more inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and during the year we re-energised our LGBTQ+ network further raising their profile with colleagues across the Council. Evidence submitted to Stonewall of our progress in making our workplace inclusive for all lesbian, gay, bi, and trans staff improved our ranking further to 196 from 215 last year, placing us in the top half of the performance table when benchmarked against 502 organisations in the UK. The Council remains committed to reducing the gender pay gap in its workforce, which is now 4.57% compared to 8.88% in 2016. Throughout the year, visible and proactive leadership by the Council's Equalities and LGBT Champions and role models, continue to raise the profile and demonstrate the Council's commitment to progressing its equalities agenda. Apprenticeships form part of our overall approach to recruit and retain a skilled and diverse workforce for the future. Our Apprenticeship Framework provided opportunities to 26 young people including graduates, with 8 out of the 26 new apprentices recruited during the year going on to secure jobs in the Council.

Initial evidence suggests there will be deep and wide-ranging equalities implications associated with the coronavirus pandemic. The Council's Strategic Equality Plan will need to focus on these issues to ensure the negative impacts on our community are mitigated wherever possible.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption across the education sector at all levels, the impact of which will be felt long into the next academic year and beyond. The Council has risen to this

challenge by developing and implementing local strategies to mitigate the educational impact of the pandemic. For example, we have accelerated the integration of digital technology within our education establishments (e.g. through the national Hwb platform in the case of schools) to enable all learners, including children, young people and adults to continue learning remotely in the short to medium term. To ensure that no child is left behind, we have ensured all learners are able to access curriculum based learning resources by providing 600 items of IT equipment along with 250 mi-fi devices to support children without IT equipment or connectivity. Teachers have been staying in touch with their pupils and learners to support their well-being and motivate them through what is a potentially distressing time. Our schools have also been re-purposed to provide support for critical workers and vulnerable children and young people to ensure continuity in their learning and we have provided food vouchers for over 3000 children as well as food parcels for the families of pupils hit hardest by the crisis. We have taken steps to ensure that as far as possible, no learner is disadvantaged because of access to technology, where they live, their age, their additional learning needs, or their demographic profile and have targeted our support with this in mind. In line with this approach, our community libraries have also continued to promote their digital resources such as e-books, e-magazines and numerous activities such as story-times, book clubs and all adult learning courses (over 900) which are being delivered online for free. A click and collect service has also been introduced in our libraries to further improve access for customers. In response to the impact on our arts programme of events, where possible we have moved these to digital platforms as, more than ever, the importance of culture and creativity to our health and well-being is clear. In the meantime, we continue to work with key stakeholders to develop strategies a part our recovery plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and help build a sustainable model for arts in the Vale.

Whilst the Council has responded proactively to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, it is unlikely that current arrangements will wholly replace the learning lost from school and there is a real danger that this may have long-term consequences for some cohorts of learners, thereby increasing education inequalities and potentially triggering disengagement amongst some learners. A further challenge over the coming year will be to ensure that the mental health and well-being of our learners remain supported, particularly in the context of the new school attendance arrangements and ongoing pressure on social care and health services.

The achievements outlined above are testament to the dedication and hard work of staff, schools, parents and other key partners who despite challenging times, continue to provide a supportive environment and the right encouragement to enable our children, young people and Vale residents generally to aspire and to achieve their full potential.

We also face other risks and challenges that have impacted on our services and delivery of this Well-being Outcome. The financial pressures on the Council are likely to continue and, while we will continue to try to protect services to the most vulnerable in our community, it is increasingly difficult to cushion the impact to early intervention and prevention services and support for those in need through our targeted work. It is a known fact that, children from poorer households still have worse educational outcomes and worse life chances than their peers. These challenges are likely to be further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, tackling this inequality head-on is a key area of focus for the Council to ensure that our most vulnerable children and young people and their families are supported in school, in their communities and in the workplace to achieve the very best.

The Vale is the lowest funded authority per pupil in Wales. Whilst the relatively low level of funding received demonstrates that good value for money is being achieved in providing our services, the need to continue to raise attainment levels against a backdrop of an ongoing national reduction in education funding and an increase in pupils attending Vale schools presents significant challenges for the future.

We are seeing increasing demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision and increasing customer expectations which continue to place additional pressure on both central education resources and on

individual schools' budgets. Meeting the needs of all young people with additional learning needs is an absolute priority for the Council and we continue to make good progress with key stakeholders in reshaping provision in the Vale in response to the ALN Act to facilitate the delivery of a responsive, high quality and cost-effective service that meets the needs of learners and which supports them, their families, our learning establishments and the Council to maximise achievement and well-being.

We are working in partnership to develop a trauma informed approach to preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), a key priority for the Council. However, there is a need to address the needs of a growing group of complex young people who have already had adverse childhood experiences and require support through targeted provision to build their resilience and help them to achieve their full potential.


Going forward into year 1 of our new Corporate Plan (2020-2025), we are committed to responding proactively to the increasing pressure to do more with less and this will no doubt challenge our ambitions, especially given the unprecedented socio-economic and health costs of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside the learning to date from our response to this crisis, we will revisit the priorities in our Corporate Plan and use this as a platform to inform our development of locally-tailored solutions that will help to build local resilience and focus on preventing and reducing socio-economic inequalities in the short, medium and long term. We will continue to collaborate with partners, including local businesses and employers, learning establishments and our communities to seek out and maximise opportunities which both support our economy and enable Vale citizens to become prosperous.

## 5.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED


### 5.1.1 OBJECTIVE 5: ACHIEVEMENTS

Our approach to developing self-improving schools has contributed to ensuring that **there are no schools in an Estyn statutory follow up category (Significant Improvement or Special Measures)** for the period. During the year, 2 schools, **Cowbridge Comprehensive and Cogan Nursery were recognised for outstanding performance by Estyn.** Both schools achieved exceptional inspection reports and submitted case studies to be used by Estyn as best practice. **Barry Island Primary** was also invited to share best practice case study based on the excellence identified in their inspection.

**Top performing local authority in Wales in relation to GCSE results.** Over a quarter (27.65%) of year 11 pupils achieved 5 or more GCSE A\* to A grades compared to 24.79% in the previous year. Nearly 73% got A\* to C grades.



**9 of our schools were identified as Welsh Government Pioneer Schools**




(Albert Primary School, Barry Island Primary School, Cadoxton Primary School, Cowbridge Comprehensive School, Rhws Primary School, Romilly Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary School, Stanwell School and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg) to share innovative approaches in working towards implementation of the new curriculum framework.

As well as contributing to the framework, **St Joseph's has also introduced their own bespoke curriculum, making it one of only 16 Curriculum Innovation Schools in Wales.**


**85% of Flying Start children** achieved at least the expected outcomes (outcome 5+) for Foundation Phase during the year compared to 83% in the previous year.



We worked closely with the Central South Consortium to monitor the progress of our schools. During 2019/20, of the 56 schools in the Vale of Glamorgan, **no schools required 'red' level of support from the Consortium.**



**Our pupil attendance rate (nearly 95%) in Secondary schools is amongst the top quartile performers in Wales ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>** and compares favourably with similar English LAs. Backed by our collaboration with schools in implementing fixed penalty notices and the Callio strategy, our focus remains on increasing attendance levels in all Vale schools.



**Our Youth Well-being Team provided mentoring support to 280 young people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).** This included 1,244 individual one to one mentoring sessions, 184 drop-in sessions across schools during lunch breaks, numerous opportunities to participate in physical activities. Of the referrals received during the year, 29 related to either children who were educated other than at school (EOTAS) or non-attenders, and 48 of these had multiple needs (that is having 3 or more ACEs).

Since its establishment in 2016, **the Inspire to Achieve project has worked with 449 pupils**, 104 of these pupils have so far gained an additional qualification and 278 have showed a reduced risk of becoming NEET in future. Of the 278, 107 Year 11 leavers, have progressed into positive education, training or employment opportunities. Similarly, **the Inspire to Work project has successfully engaged with 200 NEET young people** (aged 16-25) with 82 gaining an additional qualification, one returning to education and 77 entering employment.



**Our Youth Well-being Team supported 28 young people at risk of homelessness on a one to one basis ensuring that they remained in education, employment and training** and prevented home breakdown, family conflict, and mental distress.



 Not content with being one of the first local authorities in Wales to **achieve the bronze quality mark for its youth services**, the Vale Youth service has continued to make good progress towards achieving the silver quality mark. We are delivering **more relevant accreditation opportunities for young people** resulting in an **increase in accreditations achieved from 75 to 206** (excluding Duke of Edinburgh awards data which is yet to be published) through our Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work initiatives. **24.4%** of young people in contact with the youth service received an accredited outcome in 2019/20.

Improving standards of attainment and well-being of pupils at all key stages remains a key priority for the Council. In the **Foundation phase**, pupil outcomes in all core areas of learning, at both the expected and higher outcomes are above the national averages. **At Key Stages 2 and 3**, the pupils achieving the expected and higher than expected levels in all core subjects remain above the national averages. **At Key Stage 4**, outcomes across all of the new interim performance measures are above regional and national averages. **At Post-16**, overall performance across the main outcome measures remain above the national averages.



**100% of schools inspected in 2019/20 have achieved either excellent or good ratings in relation to pupil well-being, care support and guidance.** This is higher than the Central South Consortium region at 91.7% and 89.2% across Wales.

Our proactive approach in ensuring **children and young people feel safe in schools** has been recognised by Estyn who have rated **almost all Vale schools since 2016/17 as either good or excellent.**



In 2019, **outcomes for learners with English as an additional language continue to improve** with **89%** (67) of a cohort of 75 **achieving the FPO1 at the end of the Foundation Phase**, **89%** (67) of a cohort of (75) learners **achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) at KS2**, and **94%** (98) of a cohort of 104 **achieving the CSI at KS3.**

 Our continued commitment to improving attainment levels through a coordinated approach with key partners has ensured that **over the past few years, no pupils in local authority care have left compulsory education, training or work-based learning without an approved external qualification.** This performance ranks us in the **top quartile** of Welsh local authorities.

Through various targeted initiatives, we have further reduced the number of **Year 11 leavers** known not to be in education training or employment (**NEET**). Our performance of **0.5%** ranked us **1<sup>st</sup> in Wales**. Similarly, the performance of year 13 leavers has improved to **1.55% (ranked 4<sup>th</sup>)** and year 12 to **0.4% (ranked 7<sup>th</sup>)** compared to 2.85% and 0.6% respectively in 2018/19.





In line with our commitment to promote and protect the physical, emotional and social health and well-being

of our children and young people, **all nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units in the Vale of Glamorgan**, as well as Headlands Action for Children School, and Westbourne Private School (60/60 settings) **participate in the Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Schools Scheme**. To date, nearly all have achieved phases 1-5 and the majority are working towards the National Quality Mark (NQA), which is awarded to schools that have achieved the highest standards in all seven healthy school aspects of health and well-being for a minimum of 9 years. **Four schools in the Vale have achieved this prestigious award**, Barry Island Primary, Gladstone School, Cadoxton Primary schools and Llantwit Major School.

In 2019/20, **outcomes for BAME learners at the Foundation Phase was good** with most learners achieving the FPO1, 89% (158) of a cohort of 178 BAME learners. This was an improvement on 86% in the previous year's cohort of learners.

**92%** (167) of a cohort of 182 **achieved the CSI level 4+ at KS2**. At KS3, **94%** of BAME learners (185 of a cohort of 197) **achieved the CSI level 5+**.



We continue to successfully deliver early intervention and prevention through programmes such as the **Families First** and the Children and Community grant funded initiatives thus reducing the need for escalation to statutory services, and contributing to improved outcomes for children, young people and families, particularly those living in poverty. Similar to previous years, service users (**over 98% in 2019**) **were happy with the service they received and its positive impact (96% felt more confident in themselves and their abilities following support)**.

The attainment levels of the 101 young carers identified in the Vale is in line with their abilities and the **majority have achieved expected or above levels of attainment at the Foundation Phase, Key Stages 3, 4 and 5**.



The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service is performing well and provides good value for

money according to the latest National Audit Statistics figures for 2018/19. We were the **2nd highest performing authority for achievement of accredited outcomes by young people** (Universal Services).

Our newly established **Youth Well-being Team provided mentoring support to 280 children and young people referred who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)**. During the year, staff completed 1,244 individual one to one mentoring sessions including 184 drop-in sessions and 197 group sessions across schools and provided numerous opportunities for participating in physical activity. **100% of users were satisfied with the service provided via the Youth Well-being programme**.



For the last four years, all **(100%) Special Education Needs (SEN)** statements have been issued within 26 weeks (including and excluding exceptions), thus ensuring appropriate support for children and young people with additional learning needs.

During the past year, there **were no permanent exclusions** from Vale schools and schools continue to work proactively with the local authority to find alternatives via the EOTAS Panel and the Managed Moves protocol contributing to better outcomes for children and young people.

**221** families accessed FACT services during the year. The service delivers support tailored to the identified needs of individuals and their families as a whole. Of these, **89% of families with financial issues stated that their situation has stabilised/improved; 75% of school children have improved their school attendance; 92% were satisfied with overall service received**.

As part of the **School Reorganisation and Investment Programme and the 21st Century Schools Programme**, we have continued to improve the learning environment for pupils in schools across the Vale which supports the successful implementation of strategies for school improvement and better educational outcomes. We remain **on track to complete the Barry Secondary Learning Communities project by July 2022, investing £88.6m in three secondary schools to create modern learning centres** to meet future demand and enable our children and young people to fulfil their full potential. The new facilities will also provide improved local facilities for the wider community.



We have increased the **childcare offer** to working parents in the Vale through £1.8 million in

funding from Welsh Government. The funding has been used establish **a new childcare setting at Gladstone Primary school and refurbish existing ones at Llanfair and Ysgol Dewi Sant**, thus enabling greater numbers of children to start their learning journey.

**100% of the schools** we cater for (46 primary, 1 special and 5 secondary schools) remain **compliant with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Regulations**. In addition, **100% of the secondary schools** we cater for remain compliant with the food based standards contained within the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Regulations.



Positive progress continues in relation to pupil attainment with **improvements in the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM)** in summer 2019. At Foundation Phase, **over 85% of eFSM pupils made at least the expected level of progress from Reception to the end of year 2 across all areas of learning**. In addition, over half of eFSM pupils made higher than expected progress across the phase. At **Key Stage 2, over 75% of eFSM pupils made at least the expected level of progress** across the key stage. At **Key Stage 3, over 40% of eFSM pupils made at least two levels of progress** across the key stage.

We have further enhanced web based services for schools to support learning resources and in line with the **Welsh Government's digital learning agenda**. We have continued to maximise our investment in ICT in schools via the Welsh Government's Schools ICT Change programme via HWB and we are rolling out servers across all Vale schools to support this work.



**Vale pupils performed solidly in this year's A level examinations with more than a quarter (27.7%) of students achieving the top two grades of A\* to A**, higher than the regional and Welsh averages. **76.9% of pupils achieved A\* to C grades**, higher than the Welsh average. Overall, attainment levels were an improvement on last year's performance.



In line with our commitment to deliver quality catering services, **all existing and new school catering staff have been trained to Level 2 Food Hygiene Standard**. In addition, all environmental health inspections undertaken in schools in 2019/20 have achieved a Level 4 or Level 5 standard.

Through working effectively in partnership, we have ensured **100% Children Looked After left compulsory education with an approved qualification**.



We have improved our average **capped 9 score for pupils in year 11** (382.3, up from 377.1 last year), which is higher than the national average of 354.4. This is the school average of the total points attached to the top nine GCSEs, or equivalent volume of qualifications, for each learner in the cohort, including subject specific requirements in English/Welsh language, Mathematics and Science.

Collaboration with contractors, third and public sector projects across the Vale under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools' initiative has helped deliver **a range of community benefits**. Support via in-kind donations, volunteer time, opportunities for work experience, training, business advice and upskilling opportunities for volunteers provided to projects, organisations or social enterprises have contributed to improving outcomes for residents, the environment and the local economy. In relation to Barry Secondary Learning Communities project, during 2019/20, **39 local jobs and 14 apprenticeships have been created, 2075.1 hours of training has been provided to graduates and young people on work and pupil placements, 50% of labour used on site is local, 7 community projects have been supported, 94% of building waste has been diverted from landfill and 100% of building materials used (concrete, stone and steel) is produced in Wales, contributing in excess of £1.38m to the economy**.

The Council has created an additional **630** Welsh medium primary school places including investing nearly **£6 million in two new Welsh medium primary schools**. This is at a time when the number of Welsh speakers of all ages continues to increase.

We are working with schools to develop a trauma informed approach to preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), a key priority for the Council. During the year, **Gladstone Primary School** was the first Vale school to achieve the **Trauma Informed School Award** in recognition of its nurture programme aimed at supporting pupils to build their resilience and help them to achieve their full potential.



## 5.1.2 OBJECTIVE 6: ACHIEVEMENTS

**All schools in the Vale participated** (1259 pupils) in programmes of work with **Show Racism the Red Card** to promote awareness of race issues amongst children and young people.



The Vale's largest town, **Barry, has been awarded 'Dementia Friendly Town' status** by the Alzheimer's Society and a number of our principle towns are also working towards achieving this status.

In line with our commitment to **reduce the gender pay gap in our workforce**, since 2016, the pay gap has reduced from 8.88% to **4.57%** in 2019.

**Eleven schools in the Vale of Glamorgan were presented with the Welsh Language Charter Award demonstrating their commitment to supporting the Welsh language and culture.** The Cymraeg Campus Language Charter is the first of its kind, designed to develop the Welsh language in English medium schools. Ysgol Dewi Sant, Ysgol Sant Baruc, Ysgol Pen y Garth and Ysgol Bro Morgannwg all succeeded in achieving the silver 'arian' award. St David's Church in Wales, Albert Primary, Cogan Primary, Dinas Powys Primary, Fairfield Primary, Cowbridge Primary and Colcot Primary schools achieved the bronze 'efydd' award.



In partnership with **Menter Bro Morgannwg**, we are providing increased opportunities for residents, including children, young people, families and adult learners to engage daily in activities through the medium of Welsh. Over **9,000** children, young people and adults participated in various initiatives over the year and over **400** new adult learners enrolled in Welsh language courses of varying levels during the year, contributing to the Welsh Government's vision to see one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

In line with our **commitment to improve the environment and air quality around our schools**, we have teamed up with Colcot Primary School, Barry Action for Nature and the Woodland trust to plant 200 saplings and 12 three-foot fruit trees on land near the school. The trees will help filter traffic pollution and noise for school pupils as well as absorbing CO2 emissions and providing a habitat for wildlife to thrive.



The Vale's Country parks are a part of its greenspace heritage and we are committed to conserving this asset for the future and maximising its health and well-being benefits to citizens. These assets remain very popular with visitors and residents alike and during 2019/20, **high satisfaction was reported for visits to our country parks (100%) and the heritage coast (100%).**



**133,891 people living in the Vale have been creatively active**, engaging with a complimentary programme of arts activities with arts venues and events delivered by the Vales Arts Development Service and partner groups and local organisations and individuals in the Vale of Glamorgan. This is an increase on last year's performance of 112,882.



We have continued to **increase the number and range of learning opportunities available to adults in the Vale through community learning** and take up has been high, as has our **success rate which stands at 95%** for the 2018/19 academic year. A high success rate indicates that more learners complete their course and gain a recognised qualification.



As a **Stonewall Diversity Champion** we are committed to ensuring we have an inclusive work place

for all lesbian, gay, bi and trans staff. The Workplace Equality Index for 2019/20 places us in the **top half of all organisations in the UK (196 out of 502)**. This is a further improvement on last year's performance of 215 out of 500 organisations.

The Vale Library service launched its **first tablet loan scheme** in October 2019. Operating from libraries and other community venues across the Vale, the scheme is helping residents to improve their digital literacy and reduce social isolation through the use of 15, 4G enabled iPads loaded with helpful services such as online library services, health and well-being apps, as well as information about community services. So far, take up has been very positive and the tablets are always out on loan.

Work is progressing on establishing the **Council's first Makerspace in Penarth**. By providing communal facilities in an openly accessible space and giving access to resources including tools and digital equipment, it is hoped that this will encourage creativity within the community. These hubs of community, where people come together to work together, learn from each other, or simply socialise are a key part of the Council's Arts Strategy, and will play a key role in supporting community well-being by encouraging participation by all, including excluded groups.



The **Vale Learning Centre (VLC)** continues to provide residents with a first class facility, helping residents of all ages to gain skills and knowledge and broaden their horizons. Over 300 courses were run during the year with a successful outcome rate of **over 94% for learners achieving qualification aims**. Vale courses **generated over £300k in income** through increased take up which have been used to further increase learning opportunities.

Since its establishment 2 years ago, community libraries have continued to increase the range and diversity of activities available to Vale residents. **Nearly 1.4 million visits** were made to our libraries where people participated in a wide variety of activities to improve their health and well-being including: numerous clubs; quiz night for adults; author events; various workshops; book groups; information exchanges; coffee mornings; and creative activities.



During 2019/20, **1297 planning applications** were determined of which **36** were Listed Building Consent; **144 Tree applications** determined; **77 Work to trees in a conservation area** and **67 Work to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order** contributing to protect and enhance the built, natural and cultural heritage of the Vale.

During the year, **circa 5,000 organisations and individuals were directly supported by the Arts** Development service through provision of advice, information, mentoring and direction contributing to a resilient and thriving arts community in the Vale (compared to just over 1,100 last year). This is in line with the Council's Arts and Culture Strategy which aims to increase accessible opportunities and participation in the arts by Vale citizens.

We continue to **support public art projects** to invigorate our civic spaces, introduce uniqueness to our communities and increase accessibility to the arts. **17 projects across the Vale in Barry, Penarth, Dinas Powys, Cowbridge, Wick and Sully**, were progressed during the year via Section 106 funding and supported by the Arts Development service.

We know what a vital role our libraries play in the lives of some of our residents, especially those who are housebound or cut off from family and friends. With libraries being closed during the pandemic, we have **introduced a 'Click and Collect' service to enable residents to continue to borrow books, DVDs etc.** Reservations can be made via telephone, or email with pick up slots allocated between 10am and 4pm from Monday to Friday.

## 5.2. OUR CHALLENGES

### 5.2.1 OBJECTIVE 5: CHALLENGES

The Vale remains the **lowest funded authority per pupil in Wales**. Whilst the low level of funding received demonstrates that good value for money is being achieved in providing our services, the need to continue to **raise attainment levels against a backdrop of an ongoing national reduction in education funding and an increase in pupils attending Vale schools presents significant challenges for the future**. The ongoing low levels of funding are not sustainable in the long term and could threaten services going forward.

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Whilst standards of achievement across the Vale is generally an improving picture, **there remains a need to ensure that the input from the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service in schools continues to deliver the required impact and improvements in terms of continuing to raise attainment levels across the Vale of Glamorgan and improve Estyn inspection outcomes**. Under the new inspection framework, which was introduced in September 2017, only 2 schools have been judged as excellent for the inspection areas of standards and teaching and learning experiences. In addition, there is a need to ensure schools are supported and remain focussed in working towards a system of self-improvement.

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Overall, standards achieved by children eligible for free school meals have continued to improve and outcomes for children looked after by the local authority compare well with the Welsh average. The performance of pupils with 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) in Vale schools is good and in line with pupils' level of language acquisition, with most pupils successfully achieving qualifications in their home language in the academic year 2018/19. However, we recognise that the outcomes for **children looked after do not compare well with those of other children in all key stages** and more work needs to be done to address this. We also recognise that the **overall level of exclusions of children and young people from schools needs to reduce. Improving the progress and attainment of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not remains a priority for the Council** going forward and we are taking decisive action to address this. However, we acknowledge that this challenge may be even greater as result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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We are seeing **increasing demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision and increasing customer expectations** which continue to place additional pressure on both central education resources and on individual schools' budgets. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act places increased duties on the local authority which impacts on the teams to deliver services in line with these expectations. Welsh Government have recently put back the implementation date for the ALN Act by a year to September 2021 in order to provide more time to prepare for the impact of the Act. This is a particularly complex area of change and the additional time provided by the delay in the implementation of the Act will be needed

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The **demand for specialist places for children and young people is increasing**, and meeting this demand is extremely challenging. The need for out of county placements (for pupils with needs that cannot be met within the Vale) also continues to place pressure on the Learning & Skills Directorate's budget savings, this budget is volatile and can be significantly affected by changes to a small number of placements of pupils. Work is ongoing to consider wherever possible, appropriate alternatives within county to meet the educational needs of children whilst minimising costs.

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Despite regular challenge and support to schools, **pupil attendance has declined slightly at both primary and secondary schools**. We continue to work with schools to target and address persistent absence in order to improve attendance.

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With the removal from the Welsh Government of the protection of school budgets, there has been found an **increasing need for support to schools to enable management of their budgets**, focusing in schools where cost of inflation and demographic increases are higher than budget growth. This current trend is placing

**immense pressure on central education services at a time when further service efficiencies and budget savings are needed.**

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**Britain exiting the European Union at the end of January 2020, presents challenges in funding for a number of initiatives** such as Families First, Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work which have traditionally been funded through ESF grant funding. Not knowing where funding will come from, the level of funding and the duration of the funding, if any, creates instability and uncertainty in terms of planning future work which may in turn impact on sustaining the high levels of performance achieved to date in delivering these initiatives. There is a **need to ensure that appropriate exit strategies are in place for ESF all funded projects.**

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Whilst our schools have risen to the COVID-19 challenge by quickly adopting alternative learning pathways such as remote learning to ensure pupils continue to be supported to learn, it is unlikely that these will replace the learning lost from school and there is a real danger that this may have long-term consequences for the affected cohorts and is likely to **increase education inequalities and potentially trigger disengagement amongst children and young people.**

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A key challenge over the coming year will be to ensure that the **mental health and well-being of children and young people remain supported**, particularly in the context of the new school attendance arrangements and ongoing pressure on social care and health services.

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In accommodating the shift in strategy for blended learning as we move forward, **there will be a need for the upskilling of staff in order to develop the specialist skills and expertise required to develop tools and strategies within school settings, the local authority and the Central South Consortium.**

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The Council's Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-24 sets an ambitious programme of work to tackle inequality and promote equality of opportunity. It targets areas where research, information and data indicated there was most disadvantage and where we thought we could have most impact. However, further work is needed. **We will need to keep informed about the introduction of the new social economic duty, respond to the emerging inequalities arising from COVID-19, and reflect on how we can respond to issues arising from the Black Lives Matter movement.** This is likely to have additional resource implications. We will continue to engage with communities where people are disadvantaged to strengthen our understanding of current and emerging issues to inform our decision-making. This comes at a time when the Council faces significant challenges in working towards recovery following the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

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## 5.2.2 OBJECTIVE 6: CHALLENGES

The launch of the **Cymraeg 2050 Strategy** (seeking 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050), and the **Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Strategy Plan (WESP) framework** will have a substantial impact on the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Council's requirements within its local WESP. The forthcoming legislative changes, which will take effect from 2019, will have **significant financial implications and impact on all the services that feed into the WESP including delivering appropriate specialist or transitional support through the medium of Welsh.**

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Good progress has been made to date in increasing the number and range of learning opportunities available to adults in the Vale through community learning and take up has been high, as has our success rates. However, **there is a real danger that these opportunities may not be sustainable for the long term given ongoing reduced funding.** This threatens the future prospects of many Vale citizens, many of whom may need to retrain to work beyond retirement age as well as unemployed people who need support to train for a new role. Increasing opportunities for people to achieve their full potential remains a key priority for the Council and we continue to work in partnership to ensure people who want to use adult education as a springboard for improving their skills continue to have access to those opportunities.

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Whilst overall, we have successfully responded to the COVID19 challenge by moving learning from classrooms to homes at the scale required over a short period of time, **maintaining and improving distance/remote learning for all pupils over the coming year presents enormous challenges both human and technical, especially given the overwhelming demands on existing education portals.**

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Challenges in meeting the needs of our digitally excluded pupils remain as we move forward with the new school attendance arrangements. **At present we have loaned out equipment as schools are closed, however, this will become challenging as we move towards blended learning and those devices will also need to be in the classroom. We have also provided Wi-Fi for some families up to August 2020, however, the needs of these pupils beyond that will have financial and operational challenges. There is also an issue with the supply chain for digital devices and the lead time (currently 4-6 months) given the global demand.**

### 5.3 CASE STUDY: WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

It has long been recognised that adverse childhood experiences occurring in childhood can impact profoundly on children and young people's development and life outcomes. Consequently, the Council recognises that preventing and mitigating the consequences of ACEs is essential to improve health well-being of Vale residents in the long-term and this is reflected in its Corporate Plan. It also recognises the need to work in partnership to achieve those system-wide changes required to prevent ACEs and support people who may suffer long-term from its effect. Via the Public Services Board, the Council continues to work with its partners to design and align strategic and operational practice, processes, procedures and policies with a focus on prevention and delivering timely intervention via trauma informed approaches involving families and their communities to reduce further ACEs, beginning with, 'giving every child a good start in life'.

Many aspects of the work undertaken to date to prevent and reduce ACEs focus on the **long-term** and involve **collaboration** with many stakeholders and services, reflecting the complexity and cross-cutting nature of ACEs. As well as, '**Raising overall standards of achievement**' and '**Valuing culture and diversity**', addressing these issues also contribute to other Council Well-being Objectives, that is, '**Reducing poverty and social exclusion, Providing decent homes and safe communities, Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles, Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living, and Promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment**'.

The examples described below (school based setting) shows how an **integrated** and proactive approach, achieved through effective **collaboration** with key partners (including the local authority and other agencies) with full **involvement** of pupils, their families and their communities, is having a positive impact in **preventing** ACEs or in the case of those already experiencing them, preventing escalation thus reducing the likelihood of further adverse childhood experiences in the **long-term**.

Schools play a significant role in addressing ACEs and building resilience in young people for the future. Evidence suggests that schools that best support pupils with ACEs also build resilience and emotional strength in all their pupils, a good basis upon which they can progress to achieve their potential.

#### SPOTLIGHT ON: NURTURE AT GLADSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gladstone Primary School is an English-medium 3-11 school maintained by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. There are 448 pupils on roll. Around 27% of pupils are eligible for free school meals compared with the Wales average of 19%. The school identifies about 21% as having additional learning needs, which is equal to the Wales average.

The approach at Gladstone Primary school is predicated on the understanding that unless children are emotionally healthy and feel safe, secure and valued they will never achieve their potential and will be unable to develop a love of learning. The school values reflect the importance of this, and values assemblies promote

this understanding. There is a values-based curriculum in place which provides feedback to children. A 'Values Council' enables children to contribute to this and children are involved in monitoring the learning. Central to the work of the school is that no child is left without help to process, talk through and make sense of major painful life events when they want to, with someone trained to provide empathic response and for as long as is needed.

Gladstone Primary School has a 'wrap around' nurture programme for all pupils, especially to support pupils from deprived backgrounds. There is a strong focus within the school on providing a safe and nurturing environment where all pupils and staff feel happy. Consequently, staff know their pupils, families and the local community very well and work openly, positively and productively with them and in a non-judgmental way to support their learning and well-being. All staff have received appropriate training (including PACE, WINE, ACES and Trauma relationship training) and understand the barriers facing pupils who have experienced trauma and harmful experiences and recognise the challenges these pupils need to overcome to become resilient, well and happy.

Through a whole school approach, school staff employ a wide range of very effective strategies to meet pupils needs by adjusting expectations and practices around vulnerable children to correspond with those children's developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress and loss. School leaders analyse a wide range of data regularly (involving relevant professionals as required) to identify pupils in need of additional support, particularly regarding their well-being. Leaders also ensure that they are visible and accessible at the start of school. This allows parents and senior leaders to speak informally as children arrive at school, rather than making a formal appointment to meet. Often, this prompt and timely action is helpful in addressing any concerns quickly, before they escalate.

The school environment has been developed to support social engagement including outdoor spaces, small group spaces, and nurture environments such as breakfast clubs etc. A designated room, called 'The Cwtch', is the centre to the school's nurture provision. The school describes this as 'very much a home from home' with soft furnishings, gentle lighting, a spiced apple scent, ornaments and a collection of teapots. Staff have tried to create 'Granny's house' for pupils. A safe place. The school have been developing this room since 2012 in recognition of pupils that struggle to learn because of their physical or emotional wellbeing.

The nurture leader is well qualified and has completed training with the Nurture Network Group and is also training as a counsellor, which shows the school's commitment to continue with the emphasis of listening to its pupils. There are currently 11 trained TIS practitioners, all trained to deliver evidence based intervention as well as ELSA trained staff. There is a programme of formal monitoring in place, but informal feedback is given on a day to day basis as needed and this is highly valued by staff. This specifically references the way in which staff are supporting the well-being of the children.

The school works closely with families, their communities, the local authority and other agencies to ensure 'wrap around' support for each pupil as required. Motional is used to monitor the impact of the interventions and to plan new strategies and interventions as needed. There is a whole school approach to using PACE (play acceptance curiosity and empathy) in all interactions with distressed/ stressed parents, children and with colleagues so they feel calmed, heard, connected with and valued.

A key strength of the school's approach is that all staff understand the need to adapt the environment to meet the needs of children in the moment, when they are vulnerable or experiencing trauma. Anything that the school can do to minimise the impact of the trauma is done including time in nurture bases with adults, time with the school dog, 1-1 support, bespoke interventions or simply time with an emotionally available adult. Staff have been trained in ways to avoid retraumatising children, in particular the use of voice, tone and body language.

### **Description of Gladstone's nurture approach**

The nurture provision begins at 8.45am when carefully selected 'breakfast' pupils arrive. They start every morning with a different timetabled activity, including colouring and stories. The pupils then wash their hands, lay the breakfast table and prepare a basic breakfast of toast, jam and tea or water. These pupils are selected according to attendance, any teacher concerns or parental request for support if pupils are reluctant to come into school.

Whilst the pupils eat between 9am and 9.30am, Cwtch has a 'check in' system where all pupils can request to 'pop in for a chat'. This is an opportunity to listen to pupils, settle disputes, and provide a calm and comforting period if needed, or to contact parents if necessary. Some pupils may, for example, be worried about a sick family member, others may have argued with a friend. Their voice is heard, or their silence welcomed. All pupils are welcome.

The Cwtch changes its use at playtimes and becomes a place of reflection for pupils who have hurt another child the previous day or that morning. The school refuses to accept any form of physical abuse and any child that hurts another person within the school is required to complete a restorative form, which reminds pupils of the values they hold and why their actions weren't helpful, kind or friendly.

The school runs daily student assistance programme (SAP) circles. These are for pupils selected by teachers, who carefully consider their current circumstances. A SAP circle runs for 12 weeks and includes a series of talking circles covering subjects from anger to getting along with adults. Pupils have a safe, confidential space where they can reflect upon, discuss and review their relationships and behaviours.

At lunchtime, two adults dine with a small group of vulnerable pupils who may find it difficult to cope in a large dining area. Staff lay the table and eat as a family would at home, encouraging table manners, eating etiquette and a natural, relaxed eating atmosphere.

In the afternoons, the Cwtch becomes a nurture unit for pupils carefully selected using a resource for the assessment of children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development. The school has a sound structure for planning for pupils' emotional well-being. This includes facilitating weekly local trips, and opportunities to sing songs, cook, tell stories, paint, create and play.

### **Impact on provision and learners' standards.**

The standards of behaviour across the school have improved, with the school reporting a 4% increase so far this year in the number pupils feeling that other pupils behave well across the school. There has been a 7% increase in the number of pupils feeling that the school deals well with any bullying issues. The most recent Children's World in Wales survey indicated that 91% of children in the school believe their teachers care about them. Similarly, they feel extremely safe, and well supported by adults. This is considerably higher when compared to other schools in Wales. Other analysis notes that the school is significantly better than the average for schools in its local authority. In particular, pupils' self-esteem levels are very high and anger levels are very low. All pupils are very motivated and apply themselves well during lessons.

The school also notes that it has seen a 25% decrease in the number of letters sent home to parents as a consequence of its whole-school behaviour strategy. The rate of exclusions has reduced and the number of 'X strikes' for physical violence has also reduced.

Gladstone Primary school achieved the Trauma Informed School Award in 2019 with the following strengths being noted during assessment:

*'Gladstone is an inspirational school where children are cared for and nurtured by a team of highly trained and supportive adults. It is a school that enables children to develop within an environment that is sensorially rich,*



*and carefully planned to support emotional wellbeing. All school leaders, including governors, fully appreciate the importance of supporting positive mental health and this is prioritised at all times.*

*The school has created an environment that supports all children with safe spaces, quiet areas, a memorial garden as well as outdoor space.*

*Children talked with enthusiasm about the school and clearly enjoy being part of the Gladstone family. Staff also love being part of this team and enjoy their work. The school richly deserves the Trauma Informed School Award.'*

*Key strengths of the school's practice as noted during inspection are:*

- The ethos of the school is predicated upon a genuine care for the children and an understanding that without warm, caring relationships children cannot thrive. These relationships are evident at every level and all adults are able to talk eloquently about the way in which they contribute to them. Even the caretaker works with groups of children working on practical activities.*
- Meet and greet takes place every day. Parents as well as children are made to feel welcome and have an opportunity to share how they are feeling as they come into school.*
- Staff training is a strength of the school, all adults have been given considerable training in a range of modes to support children they have an extensive knowledge of the best ways in which to engage with children in order to support their mental health and wellbeing.*
- School leaders support staff very effectively. They provide feedback in the moment and make time to check in with staff following issues and tricky events.*
- Practitioners model best practice at all times and are available to support staff as needed.*
- Practice has been adapted to meet the needs of the relevant cohorts and to provide the opportunities for children to continue to learn through play-based activities.*
- The availability of emotionally available adults to children who are suffering from stress and anxiety helps to ensure that children do not remain in heightened states and are supported quickly.*
- Staff well-being is important, and staff are well supported.*
- There is an embedded and fully implemented understanding of the importance of positive relationships and the way in which PACE can be used to support children.*
- There is a wide range and quality of interventions available to children.*

*In the latest school inspection report (2018), Estyn noted that, 'Staff in the 'Cwtch' provide outstanding nurture provision, which has a significant positive impact on improving pupils' well-being. For example, a comprehensive pupil support programme allows highly vulnerable pupils to share their concerns and feelings in a very safe, secure and comfortable environment. The school assesses the progress of pupils using the 'Cwtch' regularly and staff continue to monitor pupils who no longer need such intensive support on return to class. The 'Cwtch' is highly effective in reducing instances of inappropriate or aggressive behaviour in mainstream classes and around the school.*

*All school staff share leaders' passion to maintain high standards of pupils' wellbeing, in particular. They provide plentiful opportunities to ensure effective support for any pupils who may be vulnerable to underachievement. For example, the school uses the pupil development grant very effectively to provide the valuable 'cwtch' nurture provision.'*

*In relation to standards Estyn notes that, 'Overall most pupils make good progress as they move through the school and a few more able pupils make excellent progress. Most pupils develop a useful range of literacy and numeracy skills that they apply well in work across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase and upper key stage 2 are inquisitive and enquiring independent learners. Most pupils with additional learning needs, or those who require a boost to their basic skills, make appropriate progress in line with their ability through participation in a wide range of appropriate intervention programmes.'*

## **SPOTLIGHT ON: FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF SCHOOL LIFE - CADOXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Cadoxton Primary School is an English-medium 3-11 school maintained by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. There are 499 pupils on roll including 88 part-time nursery pupils. Over the last three years, the rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 34%. This is above the national average of 18% for primary schools. The school identifies that 33% of pupils have special educational needs. This is also well above the national average of 21% for primary schools.

The school serves an area of economic deprivation in Barry and has the highest youth offending rate in the Vale. In 2011, when the school appointed the current headteacher, leaders realised the need to strengthen the school's parental engagement and community involvement. They established a new school vision and mission that included family and community engagement as a cornerstone. Staff and governors recognised the important role that the school could play in bridging the gap between home and school to ensure that pupils, families and community groups can thrive. Their mission was to provide a safe, exciting and happy haven within the heart of the Cadoxton community. To succeed with their aim, staff have developed a whole school approach to relationships and interventions where family and community involvement is not a bolt on to their work but a key driver for all that they do. Staff pride themselves on listening to ensure that they provide everyone within the school community the support, respect and opportunities that they need to learn, grow, and to be their best. Leaders have appointed a full-time Family Engagement Officer (FEO) and have established a team of staff to support her with this work, including a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, leaders allocate time and resources to support and continually grow the school's family and community work.

### **Description of Cadoxton's approach**

There are numerous ways in which the school supports pupils, their families and members of the wider community successfully.

#### *Community centre / Caradog's Corner*

The school is fortunate to share a site with a local community centre. Leaders realised the potential of this additional resource. They worked with a group of parents to establish 'Caradog's Corner'. This is a charitable group who serve families at the school along with other members of the wider Cadoxton community. Their initial aim was to gain funding to extend the community centre's facilities so that the school could use the centre as a base for many family engagement activities, including establishing a community café. The group are responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and manage bookings for wider community groups who use the facility to provide community activities such as a dance group. During the school day, the centre is a focus for the school's community activities. Staff use the space for a wide range of purposes including their breakfast club for younger pupils, family learning activities, drop in coffee sessions for parents and inter-generational projects.

The school has a strong focus on reducing the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by working proactively with families and the wider community to improve well-being and having a strong focus on nutrition. The school is part of a 'Food for Fuel' pilot project where they recycle out-of-date supermarket produce for use in the school's café and sell food at a market place for families to buy. The school's family engagement team lead a project to help sell the food in both the café and shop on a 'pay as you feel' basis to encourage all parents, particularly those on low incomes to access. Year 6 pupils run the café, using the donated produce, to cook nutritious meals for parents and other members of the local community. Parents have a safe place to come where they know that they can get food and support. Year 6 pupils also make 'grow bags' in which they place recipes and ingredients for healthy meals. They sell these bags to parents. Pupils use the money that they raise to pay for their annual end of year 'prom' party.

#### *School Holiday Enrichment Programme*

During the summer holidays, when the school cannot offer pupils a free breakfast and lunch, families can often struggle to afford and access food to provide children with a healthy diet. In addition, pupils can

experience social isolation and a lack of intellectual stimulation, normally provided by school or family enrichment activities. This can contribute to a widening attainment gap amongst pupils. To help address this issue, the school provides a School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) to ensure that vulnerable families can access support during the six week break. The school uses a Welsh Government grant to cover all costs. Support staff from the school run the programme for the first three weeks of the summer break. These adults already work at the school so know the pupils and their particular needs well. In addition, local catering staff provide each pupil who attends with a nutritious breakfast and lunch. Staff organise a wide of educational, fun activities and promote pupils and their families to be more active and to eat healthily. The school used local organisations to help with activities. These include local cricket clubs and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). During the programme, the school also invited parents to attend. The school used this opportunity to provide them with access to important services such as the local credit union, Families First, family information services and Flying Start. In the summer of 2019, 92 pupils accessed the programme.

### *Families and Schools Together*

One of the school's most successful initiatives has been their Families and Schools Together (FAST) projects. This is a Save the Children project, aimed at improving learning and relationships by bringing parents, children, teachers and the wider community together. It brings families together in a positive, supportive, non-judgemental way. Leaders created a FAST team that included staff, parents and members of the local community and staff received training on the approach. Initially, the school identified a group of vulnerable pupils and families to target. These families then take part in an eight-week after-school programme to build on their family's and the community's strengths. The project aims to empower parents rather than using a prescriptive approach. Activities include giving parents valuable one-to-one time with individual children, eating meals together, discussing family issues, talking about wider problems and taking part in fun family activities. A local church official and the school's PCSO play a major role in this work. This helps strengthen relationships with key members of the community. The team accesses funding for parents to help them develop skills such as driving and counselling. The school has many success stories of improved family relationships, greater self-esteem in parents and pupils and parents accessing employment.

### *Family learning*

A majority of parents at the school are unemployed and unable to find work. They can have low self-esteem and often lack confidence to support their own children with their education. The school recognised the important role that they can play in engaging with parents, families and the wider community to improve their wellbeing and to provide them with opportunities to learn new skills. Staff have designed and sought bespoke courses to meet parental needs. Courses have included English and mathematics courses, computer learning, sewing, cooking, Welsh, food hygiene, first aid and financial planning. The school either holds training at the on-site community centre or signposts parents to other local educational centres.

### *The Garden*

The school, although on a large spacious site, does not include any green spaces. To help address this, leaders have secured ownership of a piece of land adjacent to the school to develop as a school garden and outdoor classroom. The proposed benefits of this project have been not only to provide green space for pupils and their families, but also to involve members of the local community in developing gardening and construction skills. The school worked with a local community group, the Barry Family Foundation, to engage parents and other local community volunteers to make the vision a reality. Many of these volunteers were victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The organisation also provided training for the volunteers in health and safety and also to help them develop the skills needed to create the space and make resources such as benches, an outdoor shelter and a pond. The team turned a piece of unused, overgrown land into a space that promotes the mental and physical wellbeing of pupils, staff and families alike. To finance the initiative, the school secured funding from the National Lottery and local business Dow Silicones Limited.

### **Impact on provision and learners' standards**

- The school noted a reduction in the number of home incidents reported during the summer break following the provision of SHEP.
- Nearly all parents surveyed reported improved engagement with the school and a positive financial impact that helped them meet the costs associated with school holidays.
- Parents who engaged with the FAST programme have been able to communicate more effectively with their children and with increased confidence.
- Aspirations of parents and pupils have improved.
- Relationships between the school and hard to reach parents have improved.
- Strong and trusting relationships have developed between community groups, including the local police, and local families.
- Long term unemployed parents have been successful in gaining employment following engagement with family learning.
- The awareness and skills of parents about issues such as healthy eating and how to support their children at home have increased.
- The well-being, confidence and self-esteem of parents who engaged in family learning have improved.
- Community pride and ownership have developed following the creation of the Garden.
- Volunteers from the community who worked on the Garden have developed key skills and improved their wellbeing and confidence.
- Participants gained valuable work experience to help them return to work after long term unemployment.

In the latest school inspection report (2017), Estyn noted that, *'Through a learning environment and curriculum of high quality, the school delivers exciting learning experiences that engage pupils successfully and enrich their lives. Teaching across the school is consistently good. As a result, nearly all pupils make at least good progress as they move through the school and a minority make exceptional progress.'*

*'The school is an extremely caring and inclusive community. All staff and governors are committed to ensuring that all pupils develop as happy and confident individuals and they understand how their role in the school contributes to this. As a result, nearly all pupils have high levels of self-esteem and very positive, mature attitudes towards learning.'*

In relation to standards Estyn notes that, *'Overall, a majority of pupils start school with skills that are below those expected for their age. As they move through the school, nearly all pupils make at least good progress and a minority of pupils make exceptional progress'*.

ACTIVE &  
HEALTHY



VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Active and Healthy Vale

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE  
(APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020)



Our overall RAG status for 'An Active and Healthy Vale' is **AMBER**

## 6.0 POSITION STATEMENT

Creating an 'Active and Healthy Vale' is fundamental to improving the health and well-being of our citizens and it has helped us to contribute to the well-being goal of a 'Healthier Wales'. Our vision for an 'Active and Healthy Vale' has enabled us to ensure that citizens of all ages can adopt active and healthier lifestyles and are able to access care and support that is aligned to their needs. This vision has also supported us to focus on giving children and young people the 'Best Start' in life so that they can reach their potential whilst enabling our older citizens to live more independently.

Reflecting on this year's progress for delivering the final year of the Corporate Plan 2016-20, we can conclude that strong progress has been made in transforming the Vale of Glamorgan into an active and healthy place for our residents to live. We have based this judgement on our overall **Amber** RAG status for our performance in relation to planned Corporate Plan activities aligned to this outcome and its associated objectives as well as our assessment of other key achievements. This Annual Report provides us with an opportunity to celebrate our achievements, but to also recognise that our progress has not been without its challenges. By acknowledging and taking stock of these challenges it enables us to strive towards overcoming them.

In terms of Corporate Plan actions, the majority 76% (55/72) of Corporate Plan activities aligned to the final year of the Plan have been successfully delivered. In relation to the objective: 'Active and healthy lifestyles', 100% (18) of actions were successfully completed and 68.5% (37) of actions were completed in relation to the objective 'safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living'. Across the Outcome, 17 actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for 24% of all planned activities for 2019/20. This has identified the need to further enhance self-service options for customers, strengthen and extend shared working between C1V and the Health Board, explore the development of an integrated model for the Long Term Care Service and Nurse Assessor Team at Ty Jenner, and maintain the council's safer recruitment policy. Work in relation to these areas have been carried forward within respective Service Plans for 2020/21.

Our desire to deliver the highest quality services to enable citizens to lead healthier and active lifestyles, is what fundamentally underpins and informs the way we work. Throughout 2019/20, we have continued to focus on increasing participation rates in sports and physical activity by working in partnership with 317 partners to support the delivery of the Vale's Sport and Physical Activity Plan. This collaborative approach has enabled us to develop 40 different sports and physical activity opportunities, giving residents of all ages greater accessibility to a range of sports and physical activities at a variety of levels. As a result of this work there were 222,000 participations in sports and physical activities directly associated with this plan.

It is widely acknowledged that the provision of Active Networks plays an important role in encouraging people to become more active. During 2019/20, we have continued to enhance our active travel networks with improvements to our cycleways and foot paths such as Ogmores by Sea; Fferm Goch, Llangan and Ystradowen,

as well as on Old Port Road outside of Gwenfo Primary School. In addition to this, major transport schemes such as the Five Mile Lane improvement scheme and the Northern Access Road, both funded via Welsh Government, have also incorporated Active Travel enhancements such as combined footway/cycleways.

By working in collaboration with more than 40 partners, we have delivered an innovative and exciting programme of play across the Vale of Glamorgan which resulted in over 1,500 participations in play activities during 2019/20. Through our funding of a range of play projects and play equipment we have impacted on over 10,000 children. In addition, we successfully secured Welsh Government funding via the Childcare & Play Grant, to appoint a Community Play Development Worker whose role it is to further expand community-based play in areas of deprivation and areas where there are limited play opportunities. For example, we created a Play Takeaway Menu to support community play provision via a free equipment loan service. Community groups, organisations, schools and partners are able to loan equipment packages including those based around themes such as Fairies & Fantasy, Jurassic World, Construction, Sensory Play, Den Building and Water Play.

Giving citizens voice and control over how they define their care and support needs remains a key feature of our work in terms of safeguarding the most vulnerable and promote independent living. It helps us to empower our citizens to achieve their own health and well-being outcomes. Recent surveys of service users in receipt of care and support<sup>1</sup>, have shown that 94% of people said that they felt involved in decisions made about their care and support needs and 94% said they felt satisfied with the care and support they received. In addition to this, 98% of people said that they were treated with dignity and respect.

Ensuring that our citizens can access information, advice and assistance effectively and in a timely way is a critical element of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. During 2019/20, our service user surveys highlighted that 95% of respondents said they received the right information or advice when they needed it. We have enhanced our ability to provide a rapid response to all adult service enquiries for information, advice and assistance by establishing Wellbeing Officers within the C1V Contact Centre. In addition the appointment of two Well-being Visting Officers has enabled us to establish an outreach function to screen Adult Service referrals, undertake proportionate assessments and conduct home visits. By investing in specialist capacity at the 'front door' through C1V, we have been able to reduce waiting times for service users, improve the timeliness of assessments and enabled appropriate signposting to other services. This has been an effective way of preventing the escalation of issues and reducing pressure on Social Work teams.

Involving citizens in the design and development of our services continues to be a central feature of our work. During 2019/20, we actively engaged with carers to shape and inform the creation of a Regional Carers Strategy and the development of a Carers Gateway. The Carers Gateway was launched during March 2020, as a joint venture between Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to provide information and support to unpaid. The service aims to improve the quality of life of care-givers and care-receivers to enable them to live as independently as possible.

Supporting people's reablement following a hospital stay is pivotal to regaining their confidence and their ability to live as independently as possible. Through our reablement support packages we have seen significant success in supporting our citizens to live more independently. We have achieved this by focusing on providing packages of support that can be stepped down in a timely way to enable greater independence. During 2019/20, 17.51% of adults who received reablement support had a reduced package of care and support after just 6 months. A further 81.11% of adults who previously received reablement support, did not require any package of care and support after 6 months.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A combination of surveys were undertaken within the Social Services Directorate during 2019/20 that asked service users in receipt of care and support about their experiences.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that these figures may be subject to change due to data cleansing and validation processes.

The new Wales Safeguarding procedures were launched in November 2019, led by Cardiff and Vale Safeguarding Board with the Chair of the project being the Director of Social Services from the Vale of Glamorgan. To complement the procedures, a digital app has been developed for use by practitioners to support the agile nature of their role. This is the first time that a consistent set of safeguarding procedures have been adopted for use across the whole of Wales for both adults and children at risk. It has been a remarkable achievement that has been strengthened by adopting a multi-agency approach.

By working in partnership with children, young people and their families, we have been able to co-produce clearly planned journeys through care. It has enabled them to achieve their care plan goals, and in some cases to reunite families and exit the care system positively. We have successfully discharged several care orders in Court, where children have been able to return to parents or reside with their wider family where it is appropriate to do so. For example, during 2019/20, 74.73% of children were supported to remain living with their family and 5.96% of children looked after returned home from care during the year.<sup>3</sup>

The Care Inspectorate Wales have highlighted that on the whole, our workforce are positively engaged with children, young people and families and noted the progress made in relation to partnership and co-production work with individual families. The Care Inspectorate Wales cited that the workforce 'knew their children well'. By focusing on co-production and partnership working with children and families we have managed to significantly reduce the numbers of children who become looked after. As at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, we reduced our numbers of Children Looked After by 14. As a result, the Vale of Glamorgan was one of only seven Local Authorities during the year to have successfully reduced their Children Looked After numbers, and accounting for the second highest reduction in Wales. By following a strengths-based approach to our work we have effectively reduced admissions to care. During 2019, we successfully prevented 36 children becoming looked after through the provision of alternative support packages and an additional 10 children stepped down from pre-proceedings.

Against this back drop of achievements there are a number of challenges that have impacted on our contribution to achieving this Well-being Outcome. In relation to the objective 'active and healthy lifestyles' the key challenges have been in relation to sustaining and improving levels of service delivery whilst managing expectations in a climate of diminishing resources. This continues to be the case in relation to play development, sports development and leisure services. In relation to Objective 8, 'Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living', the financial pressures facing the Social Services will continue to be significant going forward. This has been the result of increased demand for social care services driven by changes in demographics and the presentation of individuals with increasingly complex health and care needs.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has put services under immense pressure and has significantly challenged how we continue to deliver our services that are often a lifeline for our most vulnerable in society. Despite this the Council has risen to the challenge by reprioritising and repurposing our resources and functions to ensure we can continue to fulfil our statutory functions and duties and minimise the impact on service delivery. This has been particularly the case in relation to the provision of care and support to the most vulnerable where we have had to make challenging decisions and rapid adaptations to the way we work particularly in the context of care homes, decisive domiciliary care and statutory social work assessments and visits, whilst ensuring that safeguarding takes the utmost priority. For example, we have worked closely with all residential care homes to ensure timely and sufficient supply of Personal Protective Equipment and access to priority testing. In Children and Young People Services, we have developed a COVID-19 Family Risk Management Plan to help us determine how we support families safely at this time and embraced a range of virtual platforms to creatively deliver interventions. COVID-19 is a significant challenge, that is likely to place enormous strain on how we deliver services for many months, but we are confident that we are a resilient organisation that has put in place robust mechanisms and appropriate resources to manage our response

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that these figures may be subject to change due to data cleansing and validation processes.

effectively at this very difficult time and that we will use the experience to assist our learning in how we may be able to do things differently.

By putting citizens at the heart of service delivery we have been able to innovate and develop services that focus on enabling them to live longer, happier and healthier. We have not achieved this success alone but by working effectively in collaboration with our partners to deliver the priorities outlined within this outcome of the Corporate Plan.

Going forward into year 1 of our new Corporate Plan (2020-2025), we are committed to continuing with our progressive agenda for securing improved health and well-being outcomes for our citizens, but we will be doing this in tandem with our recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic. As we transition from response to recovery, the uncertainty presents opportunities for us to take the time to rethink, innovate and transform how we deliver services so that they are ‘fit for the future’.

## 6.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED


### 6.1.1 OBJECTIVE 7: ACHIEVEMENTS




**Increasing participation rates in sports and physical activity continues to be a key focus.** There were 222,000 participations in sports and physical activities directly associated with delivery of the Sports and Physical Activity plan. Through Sports Wales Community Chest funding, **55 organisations received a total of over £70K of funding that has resulted in 1,710 new participants locally in physical activity.**



**We have effectively used Section 106 contributions to further enhance and develop our infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling.** Footpath enhancements have been undertaken in Ogmore by Sea; Fferm Goch, Llangan and Ystradowen, as well as on Old Port Road outside of Gwenfo Primary School. In addition to this, major transport schemes such as the Five Mile Lane improvement scheme and the Northern Access Road, both funded via Welsh Government, have also incorporated Active Travel enhancements such as combined footway/cycleways. During 2019/20, we also received **an additional £100K of core active travel funding from the Welsh Government to invest in improving existing active travel routes.**



**Successfully secured Welsh Government funding to appoint a Play Development Worker to enhance our play provision across the Vale of Glamorgan. During 2019/20 we continued to deliver a comprehensive play programme across the Vale** that included a range of play schemes, the purchase of play equipment and resources, delivering training, and running homework and after school clubs. **Over 1,549 children and young people participated in play activities during the year and more than 4,200 families attended 10 family fun days.**



**We have commenced preliminary work on recommissioning Substance Misuse Services across the Cardiff and Vale region with the view to developing a more integrated, person-centred model.** During 2019/20, a **Substance Misuse Needs assessment was undertaken to identify the views and needs of service users.** A series of workshops were also held during the summer of 2019 that brought together the views of front-line staff and service users to inform the design of the new model.



**The Coaches of the Future Scheme, an Olympic Legacy Programme, has supported 14 new 16-24 years interested in sports coaching to access a total of over 400 hours of training** enabling them to take the first steps into becoming coaches of the future. Both new and existing sports coaches have also impacted on their local communities by delivering **395 sessions of safe, inclusive and engaging sports sessions that have impacted on 7,860 participations.**



The Vale continues to have high participation levels in physical activity and sport. **During 2019/20, there were 768,201 visits to local authority leisure centres prior to lockdown.** We have also continued to focus on improving the overall condition and the quality of facilities at our Leisure Centres. During 2019/20 **we completed refurbishment works of changing room facilities at both Barry and Penarth Leisure Centre and during**



The Family Information Service continues to successfully promote the **Welsh Government's Childcare Offer to parents/carers and childcare providers. During 2019/20 over 1,000 eligible parents applied for the scheme and 186 providers were registered to participate in providing the Welsh Government's 30 hours of free childcare.**



All primary and the majority of secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan are using the in-house catering service to offer healthy food options on a daily basis. **All primary schools are compliant with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Regulations and all secondary schools are compliant with food-based standards.**







quarter 3 we also launched our new Leisure Strategy that outlines our ambitious plans for the next 10 years.




**135 coaches and 88 volunteers** have supported the delivery of over 28,000 participatory inclusive or specific disability sports opportunities in the Vale of Glamorgan. **17 Sports Clubs** have achieved Insport accreditation highlighting their commitment to providing inclusive sports opportunities and Barry YMCA Gymnastic Club is the first Sports Club in the Vale of Glamorgan to Achieve Insport Gold status.



**We have maximised our investment of \$106 public open space and public arts monies to develop and upgrade outdoor spaces in the Vale of Glamorgan.** Penarth Skate Park was formerly opened in November 2019 following an extensive public consultation. Significant enhancements have also been made in relation to a £75K state of the art play area that was developed in Colwinston (near Cowbridge), and £115k was used to transform the Murch play area in Dinas Powys. Work has also commenced on a £90K investment in 'The Grange' play area in Wenvoe and new Multi Use Games Areas are underway in Llandough and Wick. All projects involved the input from local communities to inform the design.




**The Flying Start Programme delivered a service to 1,176 children and their families from six of the most deprived wards of Barry.** During 2019/20, 289 2-3-year olds attended 33,341 sessions of quality child care across 7 different settings (which includes two Welsh medium settings) with 13 childminders. Of the children eligible for childcare, 87% took up their childcare offer.



**10 Vale Parks have Maintained Green Flag Status** making the Vale one of the best performing areas in Wales (joint top performing next to Cardiff). The Award recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces and sets a benchmark standard for outdoor spaces across the UK and around the world.

## 6.1.2 OBJECTIVE 8: ACHIEVEMENTS



**Well-being Officers (Enhanced Outbound Officers)** have been fully established within the C1V (Contact Centre) for Adult Services processes to provide a consistent and rapid response to all adult service contacts and two Well-being Visiting Officers have been recruited to undertake an outreach function.




We have worked in collaboration with the Cardiff & Vale Health Board to develop a **GP Triage Service** for Vale of Glamorgan residents. The Council's Contact Centre will provide the technical platform for the new GP Triaging Service that will promote General Medical Services (GMS). This service is currently being trialled with pilot GP surgeries and with the view that all GP surgeries will be utilising this model by 2021.

**The Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with a Learning Disability was formerly launched in 2019/20.** By collaborating with our key partners, this strategy creates a shared vision for learning disabilities over the next 5 years.




During 2019/20, **74.73% of children were supported to remain living with their family and 5.96% of children looked after returned home<sup>4</sup>** from care during the year.



<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that these figures may be subject to change due to data cleansing and validation processes.

Maintaining the stability of placements remains a central aspect of our work in supporting the needs and well-being of children in care. During 2019/20, fewer children (6.36%) experienced three or more placements during the year compared to 7.77% in the previous year (2018/19).<sup>5</sup>



Improving the life chances of children looked after remains an ongoing priority. During 2019/20, 52.17% of care leavers were known to be engaged in education, training or employment 24 months after leaving care.




We have worked with the YMCA to expand the remit of the Young Carers Project by piloting a Young Adult Carers, 'Time for Me' project to complement the existing YMCA's Vale Young Carers Youth Club. The Time for Me project provides support and respite activities to young adults aged 18-25 years old across both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan who have caring responsibilities.



We have significantly reduced the numbers of Children Looked After. As at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, we reduced our Children Looked After by 14. As a result, the Vale of Glamorgan was one of only seven Local Authorities to have successfully reduced their Children Looked After numbers, accounting for the second highest reduction in Wales.



During the first nine months of 2019/20, 40 older people received assistance to leave hospital via the Discharge Solutions Team. As a result, 191 bed days were saved through the intervention of the Discharge Solutions during the first nine months of 2019/20, leading to a financial saving of £51,570 for the Health service.



We have continued to enhance inter-generational projects by working with Buds and Blooms, a not for profit community interest organisation, to run sessions with pre-school children and care residents in two local care homes.



Our Shared Regulatory Service continues to focus on protecting children from harmful substances and products and older and vulnerable people from unscrupulous individuals and traders. During 2019/20, 497 cases, enquiries and referrals were received and dealt with by the SRS Safeguarding Team with 5 successful prosecutions. 83 victims of doorstep crime and scams have been supported. This work included 240 visits to consumers.



Worked in partnership with Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to develop a Joint Care Home Contract for all commissioned residential and nursing placements for older people. The new contract will enhance collaboration between providers and commissioners to work towards meeting the care and support needs of service users requiring nursing/residential care.




The new Wales Safeguarding procedures were launched in November 2019, led by Cardiff and Vale Safeguarding Board with the Chair of the project being the Director of Social Services from the Vale of Glamorgan. To complement the procedures a digital app has been developed for use by practitioners to support the agile nature of their role.



We have continued to further strengthen our Corporate Safeguarding role and the 'duty to report' principle. During 2019/20, 88% new employees completed their mandatory safeguarding e-module. Ensuring compliance with Safer Recruitment Policy remains a continued priority.



The Skills for Life Support Group (Facilitated by the Integrated Autism Service) won an award in the 2019 Regional Safeguarding Awards for 'Exceptional Commitment to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults'. As well as providing support to service users on developing and enhancing life skills, the group enables peers to socialise who would otherwise be at risk of social isolation.



We worked in collaboration with key partners across the region to develop a Regional Exploitation Strategy. The strategy was finalised in 2019/20 and incorporates all aspects of exploitation, enabling us to apply a more consistent and coherent approach to how we tackle exploitation over a regional footprint.



<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that these figures may be subject to change due to data cleansing and validation processes.

**Reablement support packages have enabled our citizens to live more independently.**




During 2019/20, 17.51% of adults who received reablement support had a reduced package of care and support after just 6 months. A further 81.11% of adults who previously received reablement support, did not require any package of care and support after 6 months.

**Ty Dewi Sant and Southway have undergone significant transformation with a £430K investment in refurbishments to make its spaces become dementia friendly environments for residents.**




The Council worked closely in collaboration with the University of Worcester Association for Dementia Studies in order to identify and make the appropriate Dementia friendly adaptations to the residential care homes. At the heart of this innovative scheme was the input and involvement of its staff and residents.

**We launched a Carers Gateway during March 2020, as a joint venture between Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to provide information and support to unpaid carers. The service aims to improve the quality of life of care-givers and care-receivers to enable them to live as independently as possible.**



**The Vale, Valley and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) have entered into a contractual arrangement with Adopting Together (a collaborative working arrangement between St David's Adoption Agency, Barnardos and Adoption UK) to provide adoptive placements for hard to place children. This has effectively enhanced placement options whilst providing therapeutic support to children and families. Additional support is provided to adopters through the 'buddying scheme'.**



## 6.2.1 OBJECTIVE 7: CHALLENGES

**Sustaining and improving participation levels in physical activity at a time of diminishing resources** continues to be a challenge. During 2019/20 there has been a reduction in budgets because of a reduction in funding from Sports Wales. This has resulted in the need to focus on priority areas further, with more targeted work taking place. Sport Wales have identified target groups to focus on which include females, disabled people and those affected by deprivation. The projects developed have positively impacted on participation amongst these groups. However, as a result there has been less focus on universal provision which has particularly impacted on provision within afterschool activity. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a particularly challenging time with all direct delivery programmes ceasing and clubs/leisure centres across the county shutting. This led to the need to rethink how we deliver our services during this time, with more focus being placed on promoting family-based activities and utilising online platforms to promote these opportunities. Moving forward, for quite some time to come, sport and physical activity will look very different. The team are working with internal and external partners to plan what the future will look like and how residents can safely return to activity. There will be a need to focus on re-motivating people to participate and to ensure that safety is central to this thinking so that residents have the confidence to return to activities. There will be a focus on assisting community clubs and organisations to reopen and rebuild. Technology will play an important part in this, with plans in place to develop online coach/volunteer education programmes and develop online coaching programmes until it is safe to deliver face to face sessions. Focus will also continue to be on how we bring together all aspects of leisure and physical activity under the umbrella of a Leisure Strategy that will be used as a vehicle to maximise opportunities and our resources to increase physical activity and participation rates across the Vale.

**Ability to continue to deliver a comprehensive play programme across the Vale of Glamorgan against a back drop of rising demand and pressure on our resources.** The annual cycle of securing external funding to deliver play in the Vale makes it difficult to strategically plan for the future. We anticipate that delivering an ambitious and comprehensive play programme that is in line with the requirements of new legislation will continue to present as a challenge when budgets continued to be squeezed. To address this, we will continue to look at new ways of engaging and working with community groups and key stakeholders to develop and deliver more sustainable play opportunities in the future. Challenges also exist around how we can effectively target 'hard to reach' groups to engage with service such as the play programme and early years support services to secure the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.

**COVID-19 has significantly impacted on how our citizens can engage in and enjoy sport and physical activity.** The closure of the Leisure Centres and other facilities has meant our residents cannot access our centres and

undertake their usual physical activity which for many this has meant switching to alternative forms of outdoor exercise. However, for those who have chronic ill health and/or are recovering from illness/injury the postponement of the exercise referral programme as a result of the lockdown restrictions has detrimentally impacted on this group of clients, the majority of whom are over 50, are vulnerable and with an underlying health condition. To encourage our clients to continue to undertake some form of physical activity and support some social contact (as many live alone), the Exercise Referral Team have developed an online programme, so that they are able to deliver 11 sessions a week via Facebook. Although the feedback and participation using this way of working has been very positive, we recognise it is not a replacement for how we would normally interact and deliver a tailored programme of physical activity to our clients to support their health and well-being. As lockdown measures are gradually eased the challenge for the Exercise Referral Team will be how we **effectively re-engage with our 400+ exercise referral clients to give them confidence and feel safe to return to activity once our centres reopen again.**

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Despite working effectively with our partners to deliver a **Substance Misuse Strategy**, the Vale's Area Planning Board has had to contend with two key challenges in relation to extensive waiting times to access substance misuse treatment as well as a reduction in numbers of service users that complete a treatment. At the time, the increased waiting times for treatment services correlated with essential staff vacancies (associated with the commissioned service). In order to address these issues, the Area Planning Board is reviewing workforce planning with a particular focus on forecasting workforce trends and service user flow so that we can provide better access to substance misuse services in a timely way.

## 6.2.2 OBJECTIVE 8: CHALLENGES

Demand for **adult frailty services is likely to increase by 31% in the next 10 years.** Therefore, the challenge going forward will be on how we work in collaboration with our health partners to adapt our adult care pathway models so they can meet the increased demand for services whilst preventing hospital admissions and enabling older people to live as independently as possible.

**COVID-19 is likely to have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future. Therefore, sustaining and improving levels of service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for our services at a time when resources are being stretched is going to be increasingly more challenging.** This is relevant in the context of the growing demand for services that is being experienced across the board (and in particular within Social Services). Demographic changes are having a significant impact on our capacity to meet rising demand for our services. There are increasing numbers of children and young people and their families and adults that are presenting with more complex needs. In common with the position across Wales, there are increasing numbers of Children Looked After in the Vale of Glamorgan and the needs of those children are often complex. Where a child has been assessed as needing to be looked after, the Council is responsible for placing that child in a placement appropriate to their needs. This is challenging in the current environment where placement demand is exceeding availability, and placements in the independent sector are costly. The Council always seeks to place children within their own families wherever possible and this is reflected in our increasing number of kinship arrangements. These arrangements are subject to assessment as foster carers and financial support. Similarly, there is an increasing ageing population in the Vale of Glamorgan where currently 20.9% are over the age of 65 and 2.5% are over the age of 85. It is projected that the over 65s will increase by 15% and the 85s will increase by over 40% in the next 10 years. As a result of our citizens living longer, an increasing number will continue to present with more complex needs that in turn will place further pressure on our budgets and our ability to meet their care and support needs.

**Managing customer expectations for accessing health and social care at a time when there is an increased demand for our services** will continue to be an ongoing challenge as we manoeuvre our way through the COVID-19 crisis. There has already been a significant amount of investment and focus on improving the simplicity and choice of how our citizens access our health and social care services via our Single Point of Access within the Customer Contact Centre (C1V). Although we have further integrated health and social care services through the piloting of the GP Triage Service and the establishment of Wellbeing Officers, COVID-19

has delayed our progress in embedding and integrating our processes with our health partners. This more integrated approach will require us to strengthen the shared brand 'Well-being Matters' so that our citizens know and recognise it is the first port of call for information, advice and assistance.

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Our **capacity to meet the growing demand for children and family in need of support services** will remain an ongoing challenge. As a consequence of COVID-19 we anticipate that there will be an increased need for crisis support for families. We have continued to invest our resources to increase our capacity at the 'front door' in order to improve the timeliness of assessments of need and risk and enable appropriate signposting to other services. This has been an effective way of preventing the escalation of issues by seeking to support families at the lowest tier.

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In light of the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care, there is an increased emphasis on developing and operating arrangements to enable us to undertake regional commissioning. Despite our progressive approach to working with partners, **collaboration in relation to developing alternative models of service delivery is likely to remain an ongoing challenge especially in light of COVID-19 as partner organisations seek to put in place their recovery strategies from the Pandemic.** Linked to this is the volatility of grant funding streams which impacts on our ability to develop, commission and sustain integrated health and social care services that enhance our capacity whilst still meeting our statutory requirements to deliver core services. There are also challenges associated with establishing more streamlined approaches to developing/commissioning preventative services that are more joined up across organisational boundaries in line with requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

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**Addressing the fragility of services to make them viable and sustainable in the future will require us to build greater resilience and capacity within teams.** This issue is particularly relevant in relation to Approved Mental Health Practitioners and other 'hard to recruit' posts.

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There is a lack of **capacity and resilience within local markets to fulfil the requirements of domiciliary care.** Monitoring the quality of our externally commissioned service providers is increasingly more challenging due to insufficient capacity and resources to undertake this work, which is further compounded by the volatility of external markets. As a consequence of COVID-19, this volatility is likely to be exacerbated by any downturn in the economy putting further pressure on the viability of the domiciliary care market.

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**Adhering to the Deprivation of Liberty (DoLS) continues to place significant pressure on Social Services in terms of officer work load/capacity and budgets.** This has continued to be an ongoing challenge during of COVID-19. Unlike other areas within Social Services, there a greater likelihood of us defaulting on our statutory responsibilities in relation to DoLS. This has continued to be a concern during the pandemic as health and social care resources needed to be reprioritised and redirected to the frontline to deal with COVID-related issues. As we transition from response to recovery, we are hopeful that the additional mitigations we have put in place in the form of an additional legal resource will give us added capacity to process applications and agree Deprivations of Liberty via the Courts in a timely way. Further legislative developments in relation to Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act and the associated Liberty Protection Safeguards (LiPS) will in time go some way in providing us with greater resilience around this issue. It is anticipated that the LiPS scheme will help to address the resource /capacity issues once this legislation comes into force. The new legislation will run alongside the existing DoLS requirements from 2020 with the view of full implementation by 2021. In preparation for these legislative changes, our challenge will be to ensure that we adapt our ways of working to ensure we can comply with these new requirements at a time when we are putting in place our recovery plans from the pandemic.

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We have continued to strengthen our responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding across the Council by ensuring that 'Duty to Report ' is everyone's responsibility and raising awareness and understanding of safeguarding policy and practice has been central to this work. However, COVID has put our resources under enormous amount of strain which coupled with rising demand for our services is likely to impact on our

**capacity to ensure that safeguarding procedures remain robust, are regularly reviewed and updated and applied consistently.**

**We will continue to focus our efforts** on minimising the length of stays in hospital through our integrated discharge service. Although we have continued to place a significant emphasis on improving how we integrate our discharge, our performance in this area continues to be challenging. During 2019/20 the rate of Delayed Transfer was 4.79 per 1,000 population against a target of 3.5. Previously, delays in the system have been associated with brokerage and availability of domiciliary care agencies to take on the packages which has continued to be problematic, but it is felt that the COVID-19 pandemic will further compound these issues and impact on our capacity to discharge people back home with the assessed levels of care and support.

Delivering a targeted inspection programme as part of the Shared Regulatory Service against a backdrop of reducing resources will continue to be challenging, particularly following the COVID-19 outbreak which required the re-direction of resources in a number of ways, but particularly with our partnership work on Track, Trace and Protect along with the need to administer the business closure requirements and social distancing in those premises that remained open. As a result, this will mean we will **need to deliver more of our services using a risk-based approach to better manage and prioritise demands** for our services.

Whilst we have responded positively to the **COVID-19** challenges, we recognise it will have a **profound impact on demand for our services** both now and in the future. As a consequence of the pandemic we anticipate there will be the emergence of greater health inequalities and that there will be an increased need for crisis support for families, a greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs. We anticipate that the impact of COVID-19 will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable in society for some time. By considering these factors and the increased demand for our services we can put in place effective recovery plans that can adapt to the changing needs of our citizens.

## 6.3 CASE STUDY

### SPOTLIGHT ON: ADULT SERVICES

Through **integrating** some of our Adult Service functions with the Council's Contact Centre (C1V), we have been able to enhance access to advice, information and support to adults in need care or protection. This **collaborative** effort has enabled us to engage more effectively with our citizens and **involved** our partners in providing access to information, advice and assistance to our citizens in ways that matter most to them. This model is driven by the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary team that can effectively screen calls to identify an individual's care and support needs and where appropriate citizens can be proactively signposted to Third Sector organisations in the community. By investing resources at the front door, we have not only enhanced our ability to rapidly respond to adult service enquiries, we have also been able to **prevent** the escalation of issues in the **longer term** which in turn has helped to reduce pressure on our Social Work teams. An example of this work in practice is shown below.

#### Margaret's case

- Our Information, Advice and Assistance Service based at C1V was in contact with a 91-year-old housebound lady that lives alone called Margaret<sup>6</sup>. She was finding it increasingly more difficult to live independently due to various chronic conditions including heart problems and osteoporosis. She is in constant pain and has in the past had several fractures resulting in hospital admissions. She has previously been admitted to hospital as an emergency that left her dog at home unattended. Through contact, Margaret expressed an interest in a befriending service.
- With the help of our information, advice and assistance service, a referral was made to Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern (DPVC).

<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this case study, the service user's name has been changed to protect privacy and identity.

- The DPVC's Befriending Service Co-ordinator promptly got in contact with the Warden at Margaret's sheltered accommodation and identified a local volunteer who could visit her on a weekly basis.

**What difference did it make?**

- Margaret and her befriender regularly go to cafés and local parks together and the volunteer takes Margaret's dog out for walks and looks after it when she has been admitted to hospital. In addition to her weekly outings, Margaret has also reported that her befriender regularly pops in on other days to check she is alright.
- As a result of this support, Margaret is now able to remain living independently in her own home as she wishes. She is able to get out the house and visit places she enjoys with the good company of her volunteer.
- Thanks to the support of her befriender, Margaret's health and well-being has considerably improved and she has a sense of security, purpose and something to look forward to.
- Margaret now feels well supported and she has indicated that the befriending service has given her great peace of mind.



## VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

### Corporate Health (Integrated Planning)

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE  
(APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020)



**Our overall RAG status for Corporate Health is GREEN**

#### 7.0 POSITION STATEMENT

In relation to Corporate Health we continue to perform well in the context of supporting Council services in the implementation of corporate priorities and delivering our Well-being Objectives. Our approach to integrated planning, via the Insight Board, is enabling robust decision making and corporate planning that complements the work of Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Council. We are striving to deliver real outcomes for Vale of Glamorgan citizens that continue to demonstrate best value for money in an increasingly difficult financial climate and a continued increase in demand for our services.

In the final year of the Corporate Plan 2016-2020, we have made good progress in delivering our integrated planning actions which has contributed to an overall Green status at year end. For the period 2019/20, 95.7% of planned activities aligned to our Corporate Health priorities have been delivered. However, further work is needed to progress the next phase of reshaping projects to deliver the required savings, progress aspects of the Council's Digital strategy to ensure that Vale citizens' needs are met whilst efficiency of service delivery is maximised, and ensure the Council has the right workforce and skills for the future. Work in relation to these areas continue to remain long term priorities for the Council and will be key in enabling our recovery from the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to note that our annual review of progress for the 2019/20 period has been written at a time of unprecedented challenge, which has required the Council to respond to a global pandemic (COVID-19). We have assessed progress in relation to our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. However, certain aspects of performance, most notably end of year national performance indicator information and benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance as our statutory statistical obligations from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government's Public Accountability Measures have been suspended indefinitely.

Throughout the year, we have continued to strengthen our approach to integrated planning aligned to the WCFG Act and much emphasis has been placed on further embedding the Act's Sustainable Development Principles and associated five ways of working (long term, integrated, involving, collaboration and prevention) in how we think, plan and work as an organisation. We have brought together our corporate business planning arrangements under the Insight Board which considers asset management, risk, performance, financial planning and many other corporate issues in an integrated way, and this is helping to further embed our approach within the culture of the organisation and act as catalysts for change – working towards strong communities with a bright future. Clear senior management commitment continues to be demonstrated and reinforced through the provision of WCFG Act focused training and resources throughout the year, aimed at engaging with staff at all levels to embed this integrated way of working throughout the Council. Our senior managers continue to participate in 'walk throughs' to help understand what changes are needed to improve



services and this also informs corporate staff engagement initiatives. However, we recognise that there is still a way to go to ensure our workforce, policies and practice are working in harmony to fully embed the Act.

An example of our integrated approach can be seen in the development of our new Corporate Plan 2020-2025 which was published in February 2020. During the year, we engaged with our partners from the public, private and third sector, residents and communities in the Vale in planning for the future – specifically to identify ways of improving the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our citizens over the medium to long-term. As part of this work, we have collaborated and involved a diverse group of people representing social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being to further to strengthen our understanding of local issues and opportunities and to provide challenge to help develop and clarify our Well-being Objectives. Informed by our key responsibilities under the WCFG Act and the resources we have available to enable us, our new Corporate Plan, identifies what steps the Council will take over the medium term to improve well-being for our citizens. The Plan's four new Well-being Objectives reflect the progress made by the Council in recent years, align to the Public Services Board's Well-being Objectives and provide a framework for improving well-being in the Vale over the next five years.

Alongside developing our Corporate Plan, we have also reviewed aspects of corporate planning via the Insight Board to further enhance our approach to enable us to meet our Well-being Objectives and maximise the contribution to the seven national well-being goals. For example, a new performance framework has been developed and aligned to our Corporate Plan to enable us to track our progress on well-being objectives and demonstrate how the steps we intend to take will contribute to achieving multiple well-being objectives. Similarly, we have reviewed our corporate risks through the lens of the well-being goals and five ways of working to identify appropriate mitigating actions to ensure they are well managed. A similar approach was also taken in developing our Medium Term Financial Plan 2020-2023 and reviewing our corporate procurement and asset management arrangements. This approach reflects the progress we have made as an organisation in taking a much more integrated approach to how we plan and work together to deliver our services and maximise our contribution to not only our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives but also the national goals. This is in line with the direction from the Future Generations Commissioner.

Our journey to become a more efficient and enterprising organisation centres on a programme of organisational and cultural change. The Reshaping Services programme aims to make the best use of resources within the Council and strengthen our leverage, influence and partnerships across the county, region, and nationally. To date, we have responded to the financial challenges facing local government and have been able to balance the budget each year, protect valued front-line services and avoid large-scale compulsory redundancies. In total, approximately £59 million of efficiencies has been delivered in the last 10 years. This has been achieved by working collaboratively to stimulate economic growth, creatively managing demand for services, increasing trading and commercial income, growing council tax from new properties and a significant range of organisational efficiencies. These efforts will continue and take advantage of transformational opportunities brought about by our response and recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

During the year, we maintained our focus on looking hard at what we do and how we do it as part of our ongoing journey to become more efficient, carrying out a wide range of activities to support services in delivering our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, whilst maintaining a high level of day to day services. We introduced a therapeutic Fostering Service in partnership with the UHB for children and young people looked after and their carers, building on the Council's previously piloted project. In partnership, we are implementing a phased approach to co-locating older people's services in one location. 8 bowls clubs have been transferred to the community giving the clubs more control over how they are run and delivered significant savings for the Council at a time of significant financial pressures. As part of the Digital Vale workstream, we have promoted a "paper-lite" culture through initiatives such as the print strategy, e-pay, e-recruitment to highlight a few, resulting in a significant reduction in document storage costs, mail costs, recruitment and advertising costs. The roll-out of Microsoft 365 has continued to make more collaborative software available to staff to increase productivity and replace legacy systems. The Big Fresh, the Council's commercial services for catering which

launched at the start of 2020, is starting to grow its customer base and is looking to expand its offer to include conference and events facilities at its new location. Whilst we did not fully achieve all the savings associated with the Reshaping programme of £3.020 million for 2019/20, overall progress was positive with 79% of savings made, and our performance is reflective of the complex nature of Reshaping projects as the achievability of savings can potentially be impacted by a range of issues and risks, consequently achievement may take longer.

Austerity is set to continue, exacerbated by the impact of the recent global (COVID-19) pandemic and uncertainty surrounding Britain Exiting the European Union. Consequently, it is now more important than ever that we procure sustainably. We are making more use of standard specifications for appropriate goods and services, using partnering and collaboration as a means of achieving economies of scale and securing sustainability of some of our services for the future, achieving £1m in savings during 2019/20. In addition, we have also reviewed our procurement arrangements and are emphasising a more holistic approach supported by improved procedures and processes that reflect the WBFGA's sustainable development principles. Procurement is also contributing to our efforts to mitigate the negative effects of climate change, including references to reductions in the use of single-use plastic for example. Procurement is one of key corporate planning aspects considered by our Insight Board, ensuring we take an integrated approach in planning to meet our Well-being Objectives and maximise contribution to the seven national well-being goals. Whilst still early days, our approach will help to ensure that we are procuring in ways that will support the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the Vale of Glamorgan and our residents for the long-term.

ICT continues to play a pivotal role in enabling us to implement our ambitious Reshaping Services Programme, supporting us to utilise digital technology to deliver services in a transformational way whilst continuing to make financial savings for the Council, increasing access to our services and providing a better customer experience. We have introduced new digital technology to provide staff with more efficient ways of working and building their skillsets which is enabling us to deliver flexible modern services that are more focused on the needs of Vale citizens. By adopting flexible digital learning opportunities and joining up key services with our partners digitally, we have been able to maximise opportunities from digital technology. We want to deliver more services online to make it quicker and easier for all our citizens to report problems and request and purchase services and this remains a focus of the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-2022. This approach is also contributing to improving customer experience, staff morale and service delivery and has increased resilience within the teams.

The importance of maintaining good ICT infrastructure and maximising digital technologies has been emphasised during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. With enforced national lockdowns and social distancing measures in place, the Council rapidly expanded and upgraded its ICT infrastructure to enable remote working of staff, ensure continuity of services and connect with people online where it was appropriate to do so. There is a need to maintain and further enhance these developments post-pandemic to further strengthen and ensure sustainability of key services, however, this must be balanced with opportunities to enhance inclusion.

Despite remaining one of the lowest funded councils in Wales, we continue to demonstrate good value for money by working cost-effectively while also delivering services that residents indicate they are satisfied with. We set a prudent budget for 2019/20 under difficult external funding conditions, which has sought to limit the impact on front-line services whilst providing important investment in key areas to progress our Corporate Plan priorities. However, the financial challenges facing the Council remain significant and it is becoming increasingly challenging to deliver a balanced budget given the need to continue to make efficiencies and budget savings at a time when service demand across most Council services is increasing. Our financial position is set to become even more challenging given the emerging impacts of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Like all local authorities across the country, the Vale has been at the forefront of the response to the coronavirus pandemic which has put immense pressure on its finances. Supporting communities and keeping vital services running has never been more critical but this has led to high increases in demand and necessary unforeseen expenditure for the Council. At the very same time, however, we are facing significant and immediate reductions in income which is likely to impact on our ability to meet the agreed 2020/21 budget. The financial

emergency support packages provided by both Westminster and the Welsh Government to help local authorities respond have been welcomed. However, this support is likely to only be available in the short term, potentially exacerbating an already challenging financial position and impacting on the financial resilience of the Council. Therefore, like every other local authority, we will need to reevaluate our Medium Term Financial Plan in the light of the pandemic. This will be especially crucial if the local economy falls into recession, spending is not easily reduced back to pre-crisis levels and income streams do not bounce back quickly. The effects of the COVID-19 crisis will be long-lasting and far reaching, affecting more than one financial year.

We are responsible for a wide range of physical assets and property across the Vale of Glamorgan and want to make the best use of them for the benefit of our citizens. Our Corporate Asset Management Plan is a key driver in ensuring that we implement a sustainable approach to how we manage our assets to support delivery of our Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes, especially in this challenging financial climate. Much of the work to look after and improve our assets is delivered through our Capital Programme, which includes community regeneration projects, a schools' investment programme, a housing improvement programme, a highway improvement programme and projects that invest in the Vale of Glamorgan's infrastructure e.g. Cardiff Capital City Region (City Deal). During the year, the Council spent £53.1 million of its £70.3m capital budget (76%) and we regularly review capital projects to ensure that they are completed on time and within budgets and are of benefit to Vale citizens. Despite reducing budgets, overall investment in the Vale of Glamorgan through the capital programme continues to increase and we are committed to increasing spending up to £113.875m in 2020/21. In line with our Capital Strategy and the Corporate Asset Management Plan, we continue to invest and creatively use of our property assets, working in partnership to achieve this where possible (e.g. via Ystadau Cymru and the Cardiff and Vale Assets Board). Through this approach, are seeking to create economic growth, ensure more integrated services, social and environmental sustainability, reduce estate running costs, achieve value for money and generate income, whilst maximising our contributions to the national goals.

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and has since continued to consistently reduce the carbon emissions associated with delivering its services with the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions before the Welsh Government target date of 2030. Through initiatives such as Re:fit Cymru, renewable energy such as solar panels, the Space project, environmentally friendly fleet purchases such as hybrid and bio fuel vehicles and the conversion of street lamps to LED lanterns we have achieved a 21.3% reduction in carbon emissions against a target of 20%. Approximately £50k was saved during the year in energy costs through reductions in street lighting costs as well as capital investment in more efficient equipment and use of the Welsh Government's Salix scheme. Since 2016, our electricity use has reduced from 19 million kWh per year to 15.5 million kWh, a reduction of 18.4%. In addition, for both gas and electricity our carbon emissions have reduced from 12,158 Tonnes to 7,161 Tonnes, a reduction of 41.1%. This work remains priority as seen in the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2018-2021 which has set a challenging target of a further 12% reduction in CO2 emissions over the plan period. During the year, the Council joined its public sector partners in the Public Services Board in committing to a staff Healthy Travel Charter. Through 14 ambitious actions, the charter promotes walking, cycling, public transport and ultra-low emission vehicle use amongst approximately 15,000 workers which will have a significant positive impact on the environment as well as associated health benefits.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, the Vale of Glamorgan Council directly employed 4,763 (5064 in 2018/19) people. We remain committed to investing in our colleagues' health, well-being and development, and over the last year have invested in a number of initiatives. For example, throughout the year, there has been substantial work on culture change, including increased staff engagement, improvements to communication and more shared leadership activity. Staff mental well-being is regularly promoted by senior management and currently, 35 Mental Health Champions have been trained across the Council. Via a variety of events held throughout the year we have focused on raising awareness, signposting colleagues to relevant services and encouraged the take up of corporate well-being initiatives. These support mechanisms will become more important than ever as colleagues adjust to new ways of working, e.g. remote working, and contend with anxiety and stress triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. The positive changes made to improve staff well-being are widely recognised by colleagues and reflected in our most recent employee survey findings, giving a staff engagement

score of 71% which is positive when benchmarked against other public sector organisations such as the Civil Service and the Welsh Government which both reported engagement scores of 62% respectively for the period. This is encouraging considering the volume of change across the Council during the year and the ongoing response to budgetary and service demands. During the year, we also launched a new approach to engagement in response to the survey. This has included establishment of a Corporate Engagement and Innovation Forum and service area led Engagement and Innovation Groups, with identified local champions to take forward local engagement activity. These groups are currently working on the next iteration of the Council's Staff Charter and contributing to developing the new Human Resources, Well-being and Talent Attraction Strategies.

We successfully piloted a Succession Planning Toolkit in six service areas that have persistently reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The learning from the pilot is informing a corporate approach aimed at building service resilience and key skillsets for the future. Apprenticeships form part of our overall approach to recruit and retain a skilled and diverse workforce for the future. Our Apprenticeship Framework provided opportunities to 26 young people including graduates, with 8 out of the 26 new apprentices recruited during the year going on to secure jobs in the Council. We re-energised our LGBTQ+ network further raising their profile with colleagues across the Council. Evidence submitted to Stonewall of our progress in making our workplace inclusive for all lesbian, gay, bi, and trans staff improved our ranking further to 196 from 215 last year, placing us in the top half of the performance table when benchmarked against 502 organisations in the UK. The Council remains committed to reducing the gender pay gap in its workforce, which is now 4.57% compared to 8.88% in 2016.

Despite our proactive approach, staff absence remains a challenge. The average number of days lost to sickness annually per full time equivalent rose to 10.15 from 9.12 in 2018/19. The increase in absence is mainly attributed with long-term sickness cases. We have continued to deliver well-being initiatives such as free flu vaccinations, health fairs, free health checks, a free counselling service (Employee Assistance Programme which operates 24/7), risk assessment approaches to stress management and training for managers and all staff. These initiatives have been in response to issues highlighted by staff, particularly in relation to stress and anxiety. With employee well-being firmly in mind, we are currently engaging with colleagues across the Council on developing a number of key strategies including an Human Resources Strategy, Well-being Strategy and an Attraction Strategy. This will help create the right cultural conditions and build resilience in our employees to ensure they are better placed to adapt to the challenges facing the public sector going forward. Going forward, a key area of focus and challenge will be to retain the same level of engagement with our employees and trade unions to continue the positive momentum we have achieved to date as the Council's transformation agenda continues to respond to ongoing significant external challenges, particularly those associated with the recent COVID-19 pandemic and Britain exiting the European Union.

We value our residents' opinion about how we shape our services and spend the money we have, and our annual budget survey is undertaken alongside a comprehensive engagement programme which helps focus our priorities and ensure expenditure on the areas that matter most to Vale citizens, and which impacts most positively on their well-being. During the year we have involved residents and communities in shaping our priorities for the future and our new Corporate Plan 2020-2025 was published in February 2020. We are working hard to be more open and inclusive through our engagement approaches and have a wide range of accessible engagement tools and processes in place to ensure that our strategic and management decisions and priorities reflect the needs of our diverse communities; however, we recognise that this remains an area for improvement. With this in mind, we have further enhanced our communications hub and proactively promote the Council via a wide variety of media. In addition, we have widely publicised the opportunities available for residents to express their views in respect of any aspect of the Council's business including budget and reshaping services priorities. Over the coming year, we will continue to engage with communities to support their involvement in a wider range of strategic planning processes, to deliver the agreed improvements for our communities, businesses and the economy. This will be especially important if we are to maximise our

resources to enable us to successfully transition from our crisis response to recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Looking forward to 2020/21 and beyond, the financial and economic challenges facing the Council remain, which is, a continuation of public sector funding reduction at the same time as demographic changes are increasing the demand for core council services. Alongside key service pressures, the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) and the global COVID-19 pandemic at the end of March 2020 will have significant implications which bring uncertain times ahead. What is clear is that going forward, the scale and breadth of disruption from COVID-19, affecting the Council and all aspects of life within our communities, in addition to our existing challenges pre-COVID-19, will make post-crisis turnaround and recovery uniquely challenging. In response, the Council is using the lessons learned from its response to the crisis to inform its recovery strategy in a number of ways; firstly, with regard to pandemic preparedness and crisis management and secondly, involving key stakeholders and our communities in maximising opportunities to mainstream the good practice adopted during the crisis. Together we will transform the way in which the Council operates to achieve sustainable communities with a bright future in the Vale of Glamorgan.

## 7.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED: CORPORATE HEALTH

### 7.1.1 PEOPLE



Launched a new approach to engagement in response to the 2018 Employee survey. This includes a **Corporate Engagement and Innovation Forum**, local Engagement and Innovation Groups in each service area, **with identified local Champions** who supporting local engagement activity.

Through our **Apprenticeship Framework**, we are providing opportunities to young people. We **recruited a further 17 people on our youth pathways** taking the total actively in employment in the Council to **26** during the year, compared to 20 in the previous year. **8 apprentices completed qualifications within the year**, with **5 securing further employment opportunities within the Council**. We also kicked off a wider Recruitment Project which focuses around youth employment over the next few years.



Good progress has been made in creating an **inclusive workplace for all lesbian, gay, bi, and trans staff**. During 2019/20, our ranking of **196** (from 215 in 2018/19) **places us in the top half of the performance table** when benchmarked against over 502 organisations in the UK.



The Council's **iDev Learning and Development**

**tool**, which is integrated with the staff appraisal scheme (**#itsaboutme**), is enabling employees to identify learning needs and skills gaps aligned to the Council's new Competency Frameworks. During the year, we introduced an online induction pathway for all new starters to the Council, providing them with an iDev account that will give them access to a pre-boarding pathway introducing the council. After starting, individuals will move to an onboarding pathway, providing their mandatory learning and any key information they need to be aware of in the first few weeks of starting.

By maximising our opportunities, we **successfully secured fully funded courses for 11 members of staff** during the year, **saving the Council approximately £8000**.

We successfully **piloted a Succession Planning Toolkit** in six service areas that have persistently reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The learning from the pilot is informing a corporate approach aimed at building service resilience and skillsets for the future.

**91%** of Council employees completed a staff appraisal during 2019/20.



We introduced a **staff healthy travel charter** to encourage active travel habits amongst our staff and to reduce our carbon footprint by making less journeys to and from work by car.

In line with our commitment to **promote good staff mental well-being**, our **35 Mental Health Champions** across the Council, supported colleagues through a variety of events held during the year to raise awareness, signpost to services and encourage the take up of corporate well-being initiatives.

### 7.1.2 CUSTOMER



**78%** of customer enquiries to C1V were **resolved at first point of contact**. This relates to 104,593 out of 134,243 queries received during the year, mirroring last year's performance.

We engaged with key stakeholders including residents, partners and council colleagues in developing a **new Corporate Plan for 2020-2025** which was published in February 2020.



**87%** of customers were satisfied with the **services provided by the Council**. This is positive when seen within the context of significantly reduced funding and rising demand for Council services.




We continue to learn from our complaints and compliments procedures in order to improve our services overall. **93.5%** of corporate complaints were **resolved at Stage 1** compared to 93% last year, maintaining our positive performance.




Over **98%** of residents were very or fairly satisfied with the **Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live** mirroring previous years satisfaction levels.


Successfully launched a **Customer Portal for our tenants** and we are looking at extending the range of services available via the portal.




During 2019/20, most Vale residents reported that they feel very or fairly **safe at home (98%), walking in their local area (96%) and travelling by public transport (97%)**. This performance mirrored previous survey results in 2016/17. Safety when walking in local area improved from 94%.

**84%** of residents were very or fairly satisfied with **overall communication** from the Council during 2018/19. This performance reflects our proactive approach in ensuring residents are informed about the Council and remains a priority.




Our **employee engagement score of 71%** in 2018/19. This positive score reflects the significant work undertaken in engaging with staff to deliver on our staff charter commitments including shaping Council priorities.



We value our residents' opinion about how we shape our services and spend the money we have. We consulted on Council Tax levels for the year and how the budget should be spent. This **informed our budget and reconfirmed that our Corporate Plan priorities for the year remain relevant.**

In the latest staff survey (2018/19), **74%** of staff reported that they were proud to work for the Council; **70%** would recommend the council as a good place to work; **70%** were very satisfied with Council as a place to work; and 69% were not actively looking for another job with another organisation.



VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL  
STAFF CHARTER  
2016-2020


## 7.1.3 FINANCIAL

At end of 2019/20, the Council provisionally reported a **breakeven position for its revenue budget**, after **transferring £2.555m into reserves**, subject to the audit of accounts in September 2020. We **spent £223.543m on delivering public services** for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. With a population of 132,165, this equates to **£1,691 per person** (£1699 in 2018/19). In line with our priorities, Learning and Skills and Social Care accounted for **78.1%** of the Council's budgeted expenditure in 2019/20, delivering our key priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan (75.4% in 2017/18).



Work is ongoing to maximise our potential to **generate income** via various opportunities including sponsorship and advertising, via the Council's assets, from commercial waste/recycling activities, a charging for information policy and through traded activity. During 2019/20, **£92k** of additional income was generated through various activities.

Despite the current level of cost pressures, **the Vale has the 6th (out of 22) lowest Band D council tax in Wales** which is 3.8% below the Welsh average.




Our net budget for the period 2019/20 of £226.098m, comprises **49% contributions from Welsh Government** in the form of a revenue support grant (RSG), **32% council tax contributions** from citizens, and **19% share of the National Non Domestic Rates Pool (NNDR)**. These were allocated to deliver our Well-being priorities for the Vale of Glamorgan (including our statutory duties) as outlined in our Corporate Plan 2016-20.

**Our Reshaping Services Programme** continues to make positive progress with programme management, communications and engagement and organisational development all attributed a green status at end of year to reflect the



The Council has a track record of bringing in total expenditure on or below budget which has enabled us to use the flexibility of balances to help maintain low Council Tax

**92% of council contracts** engaged in during the year, were via the National Procurement Service framework compared to 90% last year. By partnering and making more use of standard specifications for appropriate goods and services, we are achieving economies of scale and



During 2019/20, the Council spent **£53.1m on capital infrastructure across the Vale**. This included enhancements to our schools, the resurfacing of our roads, and the development of new projects

good progress made to date. In addition, **we met 79% of our £3.02 million target for reshaping services, that is, £2.383 for the period 2019/20** which is positive given the complexity of some of services.



rises compared to the rest of Wales (4.9%) in 2019/20. In our last Annual Improvement Report, the Auditor General for Wales concluded that **the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources**. Full details on our budget can be seen in the [Council's full Statement of Accounts for 2019/20](#).

securing the sustainability of some of our services for the future.



such as the Five Mile Lane scheme. Improving our local infrastructure will contribute towards economic growth and a more prosperous Vale.

## 7.1.4 ASSETS

We have **completed desk occupancy studies for 2 of our major office accommodation buildings**. The data will be used to inform our asset management strategy in future years and should lead to further efficiency savings during the next few years.



In line with adopting a more commercial approach to asset management, an **asset review team** has been established to consider our property assets on an area by area basis. During 2019/20, the group considered assets within the ward of **St Brides** and the towns of **Llantwit Major and Cowbridge** with potential opportunities identified. We **completed the disposal of the former Goods Shed at the Waterfront Barry** and the **former Youth Centre building in Llantwit Major** and have also acquired land as part of a programme of **new Council house development** in line with our Strategy.



As an environmentally responsible council, we have continued to implement a **range of energy efficiency measures across the estate** and will continue to work with schools on a decarbonisation programme which will help to make our building assets more energy efficient and achieve cost savings as well as an improved environment. The decarbonisation projects delivered in 2019/20 have delivered **annual savings of £36K**.



Via the **Cardiff and Vale Assets Board** we are working collaboratively with Cardiff Council, South Wales Police, the Cardiff & Vale UHB and Welsh Government to maximise opportunities to work together on common **public sector asset initiatives**. We have also set up a new Cardiff & Vale Asset Management Group, which is hosted by the Vale and attended by all key public sector property holding partners. This will help optimise use of our property assets and ensure their sustainability for the long term, whilst maximising our contribution to the national well-being goals.



We are reducing our carbon outputs and energy costs by converting street lights in residential areas and main roads to LED through a SALIX funded project. So far 68% (**10,752 lanterns**) have been converted and it is anticipated that this will reduce the Council's CO2 emissions by roughly **493 tonnes** per year. In 2019/20, over £100k of savings was achieved through reduced energy costs.



**8 bowls clubs have been transferred to the community** giving the clubs more control over how they are run. This has delivered significant savings for the Council at a time of significant financial pressures. The clubs have been supported over the past year to prepare for the change and have been provided with a five-year indemnity, protecting them from the cost of significant works during that period while club reserves are built up.

**Achieved Green Flag status for 10 of our parks** in recognition of the good quality green spaces available to residents to enjoy all year round. 13 sites also received community awards. We also **maximised our investment of £106 monies by developing and upgrading 7 outdoor spaces** in Twyn Yr Odyn, Colwinston, Cogan, Dinas Powys, Wenvoe, Llandough, and Penarth. Enhancements are also progressing on a further 4 in Barry, Wick and Dinas Powys.



Work has almost concluded on a **£3.5million project at the former Brecon Court. Part of an ambitious programme to increase social housing**, the 28 'care ready' homes with assistive technology will enable people with low to moderate needs to live more independently. The development has also been recognised by the Considerate Constructors Scheme for excellent standards maintained during construction. A further **500 affordable social housing** units are planned over the next few years.





Collaborated with Welsh Government, private sector and Newydd Housing Association to breathe new life into the **Goods Shed**, an important local historic asset to **create much needed jobs, homes and leisure facilities for the benefit of the wider community**. The scheme has been designed and built with the community in mind and offers a permanent farmers' market, cinema screen, outdoor gym, theatre/ comedy club etc.

The Council has **invested circa £2.5m** to carry out works under its **highway resurfacing 3 year plan** each year over the last two financial years which is in excess of the £2.1m required to keep the highways steady state condition. **74 roads** through the Vale's local highway network received surface improvements in the form of corrective resurfacing works or a preventative works such as microasphalt or surface dressing which has contributed to improving the overall standard and condition of the the local highway network throughout the Vale.

We continue to achieve **high satisfaction levels from visitors to our Country Parks with 100% stating that their visit was either "good" or "very good"**. This performance is a further improvement on last year (99.6%). Visitor satisfaction combined with the awards presented by Keep Wales Tidy shows recognition of our high standards at the County's many parks, green areas and open spaces.

In line with our commitment to sustainable transport, during 2019/20 we used developer contributions to make **improvements to our highway asset** including; a **new bus stop and shelter in Ystradowen** and **several footway enhancements**; a **footpath enhancement scheme in Fferm Goch**; **pedestrian improvements on Old Port Road**; improvements to **footways throughout Ogmore by Sea**; **road safety improvements in St. Bride's Major** and improvements at **Windsor Road/Plassey Street roundabout junction for walking and cycling**.

## 7.1.5 DIGITAL VALE

During the year over **99%** of the Council's **top 20 ICT systems** were available during core business hours, contributing to increased access to services, improved prioritising and reliability for staff and customers.



**100%** of participants attending digital drop-in sessions reported feeling more confident in using a digital device.



Introduced and enhanced **digital technology to improve digital working across the Council** including e-recruitment, e-payslip, Office 365, i-Dev resources, a cloud-ready hybrid storage system which will reduce costs and contribute to increased staff mobility and opportunities for colleagues and partners to develop their skills and collaborate more freely in the future.



**68%** of residents are accessing the Council's website and undertaking transactions, an increase from 40% in the previous survey. Improving functionality and promoting transactions on our website is ultimately **enhancing access to services digitally** and will contribute towards efficiency savings through reduced call handling.



**Vale Connect continues to be a popular source of information about council services** with individual subscribers to email bulletins increasing from 53,345 to 62,723 during the year, **an increase of 17.5%**. Subscriptions to individual topic bulletins increased to 167,909, or **2.7 subscriptions per individual subscriber**.



During the period the Council has led on the **Connecting Wales / Cysylltu Cymru cloud digital platform**. Launched in January 2020, the platform provides flexible access to customer facing contact centre and digital technologies through a procurement framework available to all public sector organisations in Wales. In the coming year we will be using the platform to implement 'webchat' and trial 'chatbot' technology to further enhance customers experience when accessing our services online. The platform also provides opportunities for collaboration between councils sharing the platform to improve operational efficiency, service resilience.

We continue to increase opportunities across the Vale for digital inclusion through various initiatives. Installed computer suites in all council sheltered housing schemes and provided 360 digital inclusion training sessions to older residents in the sheltered housing. Also provided **270** digital inclusion training sessions at the Aberaeron Hub to residents of the Vale. **434** adult learners successfully completed accredited digital skills courses during the year (Agored Cymru). A further **136** learners also successfully passed **European Computer Driving Licence** exams with an average **95% pass rate**. The 'Get the Vale Online' group continue to deliver digital training across Vale of Glamorgan in a variety of settings including libraries, community centres and in supported housing.

Good progress has been made in further **integrating** the work of the **Customer Contact Centre with Social Services and Health**, thus ensuring customers are provided with a service at first point of contact and effectively signposted where appropriate. This approach also reflects the Council's policy of early intervention and prevention in relation to social care and health services.



## 7.1.6 WORKING IN COLLABORATION

We continue to work in partnership with a range of public, private and third sector organisations on a local, regional and national basis to tackle some of the complex issues facing our citizens and communities. These allow us to operate in a more effective and efficient way resulting in improved services for our citizens and financial savings. This is in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act which identifies collaboration as one of the key ways of working to support sustainable development and meet the Council's duty under the Act. Highlighted below are some of our main achievements through collaboration. You can find out about other strategic projects the Council is involved in by viewing the [Compendium of Strategic Collaboration](#).



Since its establishment in 2012, there has been year on year improvement in learner outcomes at every level and in every local authority in the CSC region. The **Central South Consortium** continues to be the highest performing region in Wales. There has been significant progress in improving outcomes for the most vulnerable, narrowing of the performance gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers, and attainment levels across all standards. Progress in relation to standards for the 2018/19 academic year continue to remain positive with **most being above the national average**.

The work of the **Strategic Housing Group** has contributed to increasing the supply, range and choice of housing available to families in the Vale. During the year, **111** private properties classed as empty were brought back into use and **306** affordable housing units were delivered. This represents 35% of all housing granted planning permission, exceeding the LDP target of 30%. The Council secured a further £444.1k in off-site affordable housing contributions which will be used to support the Council's House Building programme to increase the level, range and choice of affordable housing available to families.



In line with our Business Plan priorities for 2019/20, work has progressed on numerous work streams as part of the **£1.3bn Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCR)**, to ensure essential foundations in terms of a credible evidence base; developing an industry-led growth plan; establishing an investment framework and mobilising the wider resources, assets and local and global partners, to create the conditions for sustainable delivery and success. Key successes include: **launched a business led Regional Economic and Industrial Growth Plan; developed an Investment and Intervention Framework; progressed work on the Regional Skills Partnership** (e.g. Graduate Scheme with 50 placements made to date) and Regional Transport Authority (metro project); **contributed to a WG International Strategy** and more recently, **joined forces with Global Welsh to promote the region on a global level to drive economic growth**. A key focus here will be to support CCR entrepreneurs and SME's to build successful businesses that can face the future with confidence.



The **Domestic Violence Strategic Partnership** is a multi-agency partnership responsible for developing a robust strategic response to preventing and tackling domestic violence in the Vale of Glamorgan. In the past year, the Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Coordination Service has received and processed **1776 PPN referrals**. The service made **2986 onward referrals** for the victim to receive the right service at the right time, **contributing to victims feeling safer and improved outcomes for victims and their families**. **418** cases were referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for high risk victims during the same period. These cases involved **794 children**, of which only 4% were open to children's services. This means that prior to MARAC 96% of children would not have been in receipt of any other statutory support. To support victims to remain in their own home, **82 victims received target hardening on their homes in order for them to feel safe**. Of the 76% of victims who received target hardening on their properties, **90% felt safer, 68% felt it stopped them going into refuge and 94% were happy with the service**.

Across the year the partnership have successfully rolled out training to help professionals better identify and respond to domestic abuse to help create a **more joined up system across multiple partners**. The partnership have also successfully improved all data recording and monitoring that has resulted in greater and better information sharing with partners where domestic abuse is one issue alongside other needs. This has resulted in **more coherent partnership working to improve outcomes for victims and their families**.

As part of integrating Health and Social care services, the **Customer Relations / NHS Comms Hub development of a customer contact centre at C1V** will simplify access to Health and Social Care services, improve first contact resolution and the overall customer experience. In addition, operational costs will be minimised through sharing of technology and staff resources to deliver services. This work will also build capacity to undertake more services and encourage yet closer integrated working between Health and Social Care services.



The **Regional Leadership Group** comprises key stakeholders involved in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Funded by Central Government, the Group work in partnership to ensure resources are in place e.g. provision of accommodation, integration of support services, health and education to support the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff. To date **14 families have been supported to settle in communities in the Vale of Glamorgan**.



key Council priority. Their

Support Needs which is a joint response to the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment. Through joint initiatives such as the Single Point of Access Project via the Customer Contact Centre in the Vale, the Preventative Interventions project, Accommodation Solutions Discharge project, Integrated Discharge project, Integrated Autism Service, Welsh Community Care Information System, the Discharge to Assess Project, place based integrated community teams, and GP triaging service, a range of preventative and enhanced services are being delivered in partnership across Cardiff and the Vale which is impacting positively on Vale residents wellbeing.



The main aims of **Ystadau Cymru** are to create economic growth, ensure more integrated services, social and environmental sustainability, reduce estate running costs, value for money and generate income, whilst maximising contributions to the national goals. The national assets groups overseas the work of the Cardiff & Vale regional subgroup to ensure the delivery of a range of key projects under the Assets Collaboration Programme Wales (Phase 2). To date, key areas of focus have related to **developing a detailed regional understanding of the public asset base through asset mapping exercises, considering potential for collaboration opportunities across the portfolios and developing pathfinder projects**.

**regional understanding of the public asset base through asset mapping exercises, considering potential for collaboration opportunities across the portfolios and developing pathfinder projects.**



In line with working towards the Government's overarching waste strategy 'towards zero waste', Prosiect Gwyrdd, a regional partnership securing a Residual Waste Treatment Facility that serves 5 partnering local authorities has enabled us to significantly reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. **Over 70% of our waste**

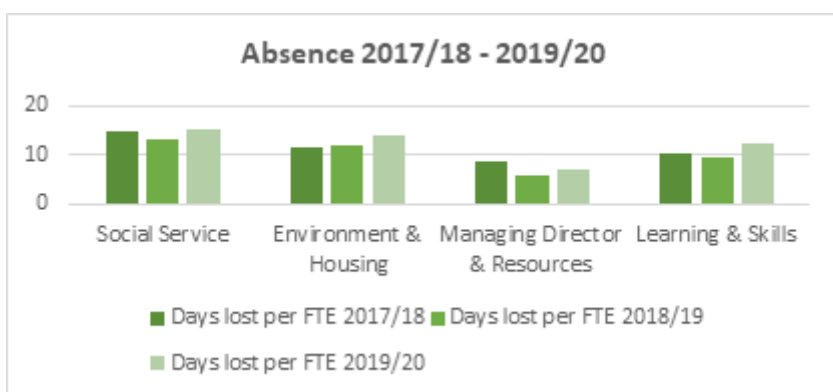
was recycled in the past year and more than 16,200 tonnes of our residual waste contributed towards generating power for over 64,000 homes. In addition to recovery, less than 0.75% of our waste is sent to landfill from non-incinerable elements, and some of the ash from the treatment of the waste.

## 7.2 OUR CHALLENGES

### 7.2.1 PEOPLE

Despite our proactive approach to improving employee health and well-being, 10.51 days per full time equivalent were lost to sickness absence during 2019/20 compared to 9.12 days in 2018/19. This equates to 37,330 days lost to sickness overall during 2018/19 (33,707 in 2018/19).

Attendance remains a priority and we continue to closely monitor progress to help improve performance corporately. The latest CIPD survey on absence management, “Health and Well-being at Work” April 2020, reported that the average number of days lost in the public sector is 8 sickness days per full time employee. Whilst on the whole, the data demonstrates an improving picture across all sectors, absence levels continue to remain considerably higher in the public sector, as well as in larger organisations across all sectors. The graph below shows the Council’s sickness absence data at Directorate level at end of year for the past 3 years:



Overall, there has been an increase in absence levels across all corporate Directorates compared with the performance in the same period in 2018/2019. The majority of absence is attributed to long term sickness (7.31 days per FTE including schools and 9.19 days per FTE excluding schools. In comparison, 6.11 and 7.45 days per FTE respectively were lost due to long term sickness absence during 2018/19. During 2019/20, 69% of all absence was categorised as long term (over 4 weeks in duration) compared to 67% in the previous year.

In response, service areas continue to be proactive in implementing positive measures such as risk assessment approaches, providing stress awareness training for staff, signposting to the Employee Assistance programme, automatic referral of stress cases to Occupational Health and encouraging staff to take up free health screenings to help improve their health and well-being at work. Overall, employee take up of these initiatives continue to be positive and more is being done to promote these initiatives throughout the Council. Proactive monitoring of attendance continues to be undertaken in line with corporate arrangements with priority cases being reviewed monthly to ensure performance is brought back on track. In Directorates where sickness absence levels are an area of concern, an action plan is in place to address the issues through specific/tailored actions.

The data for the period April 2019 to March 2020 indicates a **slight increase in turnover** (from 9.27% to 10.01%), in comparison with the same period in the previous year. The total number of leavers across all services increased from 472 to 492. Corporate turnover has increased from 10.74% to 11.65%, as has turnover in Schools from 7.98% to 8.58%.

Overall, **voluntary turnover** (where employees have chosen to leave the employment of the Council) **has increased** from 7.86% to 8.39% during the period. Corporate voluntary turnover has increased from 8.81% to 9.6%, as has voluntary turnover in Schools, marginally from 7.02% to 7.32%. Voluntary turnover accounts for 80% of all leavers in 2019/20 which is a decrease on the previous year's performance of 85%. The Resources Management and Safeguarding Service has the highest percentage of people leaving the Council at 16.24% (32), closely followed by Children and Young People's Services at 14.93% (33). Generally, voluntary turnover levels have increased in all Directorate areas. As per the previous year, Social Services have the highest percentage of employees that have chosen to leave the Council at 12.30% up from 11.89%, last year.)

The overall turnover rate of 10.1% and voluntary turnover rate of 8.39% for the Vale of Glamorgan Council for 2019/20 compares favourably with an overall turnover rate of 15.7% and voluntary turnover rate of 12.9% for public sector organisations. Whilst this performance is positive, a few service areas across the Council continue to report **difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff** in key areas. These relate mainly to Social Services, Finance, ICT, Housing and Building Services, Regeneration and Planning, Neighbourhood Services and Transport. In response to these challenges, a variety of succession planning initiatives have been introduced by the relevant service areas in partnership with Human Resources in order to increase service resilience in the short to medium term whilst also working towards future proofing skills of our workforce. These have been undertaken alongside service reshaping and restructure in line with the Council's change agenda. These initiatives are also being supported through work undertaken via the staff appraisal scheme (#itsaboutme), iDev, the employee and management competency frameworks, the evolving corporate succession planning and talent management pilot, and the Learning Café.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the rapid take up of remote working which could deliver cost savings for the Council. However, the rapid uptake means that consideration will need to be given to mitigating the **impacts of increased remote working on council staff and residents' well-being**, especially work/life balance.

Our workforce is our greatest asset, initially the challenge has been centred on how we can keep our key frontline workers safe whilst continuing to operate our critical services. As we move from crisis towards recovery and more of our operations begin to restart, the challenge will be how we can **safely manage the return of staff to the workplace where staff are unable to undertake their duties at home**. We anticipate that home working will continue to be in place for many staff for several months, but also recognise that for some staff the experience has been challenging as they have had to balance the demands of work with home schooling and/or other caring responsibilities. Going forward we will need to take into account the **social impact this crisis has had on our staff and how we can continue to check in and connect with our workforce, whilst supporting their mental health and well-being**.

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## 7.2.2 CUSTOMER

Like most other local authorities in the UK, the Vale is faced with **limited resources and increasing demand for most of its services** and will need to find the most efficient ways of working whilst complying with statutory requirements and the rising expectations of its citizens and communities. In response to these challenges, we continue to work with our partners, residents and our communities to ensure we are able to meet these challenges without compromising the quality of the services we provide or commission.

The recent pandemic will test how we operate our services both now and, in the future, therefore this unique situation provides us with an opportunity to look towards new ways of working and delivering services that matter most to our citizens. The challenge going forward is how we **involve and engage our workforce and our citizens in shaping these changes to transform our services, so they are sustainable in the future**. The scale of transformation required will only be possible with the involvement and support of our workforce, the citizens and the communities we serve.

**Citizen engagement** features as one of the Council's core values within its Corporate Plan and we proactively encourage residents and customers to share their views and experiences of our services as it promotes engagement, gives us an indication of how we are performing from their perspective and enhances our approach to service development in the Council. Whilst our latest Public Opinion Survey 2018/19 (undertaken every two years) and more recent customer feedback via our customer contact centre (2019/2020) show that residents are largely satisfied with Council services overall, there remain areas of dissatisfaction which need to be addressed. The findings of customer feedback surveys undertaken throughout the year across our services have been used to inform service planning for 2020/21 with this in mind. This includes planned activities to improve the condition of roads, pavements, road safety and parking in town centres. In addition, we continue to increase citizens' awareness of the Council's budget situation via a wide variety of media so they are better informed about the significant levels of savings the Council is required to make over the next few years.

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

Whilst good progress is being made corporately with how we **manage, monitor and learn from complaints**, there is more work to do to ensure we meet our target timescales when dealing with complaints. In 2019/20, 67.6% of all (380) complaints (under the corporate procedure) were dealt with within target timescales compared to 58.3% (238) in the previous year. In addition, we need to address issues earlier to prevent them from going on to the second stage of the process. During the year, 6.6% (37) of all complaints were dealt with at stage 2 of the corporate process compared to 7.1% (29) in the previous year. The complaints dashboard system using Oracle enables corporate complaints data to be monitored on a month by month basis giving real-time information on how each service area is managing and responding to complaints across the Council. This monitoring gives us an opportunity to understand if there is a gap between a resident's expectations and the standard of their public services. However, for this process to work effectively, going forward, there is a need for services to update the dashboard promptly ensuring accurate data informs learning.

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 and ensure all are aware of service standards; review and revise information and communication that we provide to our customers; and to ensure that all complaints are recorded accurately on Oracle to facilitate learning from complaints.

During 2019/20, 72 issues relating to **Social Services** were raised by service users and/or their carers/family which were followed up with a visit. In most cases, the Complaints Officer was able to alleviate the anxieties of individuals and signpost them onto other services where appropriate. As a consequence of these proactive efforts, fewer issues escalated into enquiries and complaints. Of the issues identified through these visits, 58 went on to become enquiries requiring a more formal response and just 12 went on to become a complaint. Of these 58 enquiries, 22 related to Adult Services and 32 related to Children and Young People Services and 4 were in relation to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division.

As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, 56 complaints were received, which is lower than the previous year where there were 63 complaints. Of these 56 complaints, 14 were for Adult Services, 34 were for Children and Young People Services and 8 related to our Resource Management and Safeguarding Division. During this period, 4 complaints relating to Children and Young People Services were referred onto the Ombudsman for investigation.

During the year, 43% of social services complaints were resolved within the designated timescales. Social services complaints are increasingly becoming more complex and this has impacted on the timeliness of our response, particularly where legal advice is required. Although just under a half of the complaints were resolved within designated timescales, it should be noted that in all instances the complainants were made aware of the reason for the extension to the timescales and mutually agreed to an extension. Although, this is not taken into account as part of the statutory guidance. We pursue robust monitoring of our complaints, and on a weekly basis the Complaints Officer circulates a report to all Senior Management to flag any potential complaints that require follow up. This has proven to be an effective escalation tool to remind managers of the importance of responding to complaints within the required timescales. The majority (11) of complaints received during 2019/20 were in relation to a member of staff and the second highest number (9) were either because the complainant was unhappy with the care they had received or the quality/ level of service that was available. The other areas of complaint related to either charges for services, communications or other.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic will have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future. **Sustaining and improving levels of service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for services at a time when resources are stretched is going to become increasingly more challenging.** As a consequence of the pandemic we anticipate there will be the **emergence of greater health and economic inequalities and increased need for crisis support for families, a greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs.** We anticipate that the impact of COVID-19 will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable in our society.

### 7.2.3 FINANCIAL

Central government's ongoing austerity drive has created a period of unprecedented financial pressure in the public sector. For the last ten years the Vale of Glamorgan Council has been making significant savings across the organisation, around £59m. The Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan estimates that further savings of £11 million are required between 2020/21 and 2022/23. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly challenging to set a balanced and sustainable budget given the need to continue to make efficiency and budget savings at a time when **service demand across most Council services is increasing.** Through its transformation programme, the Council continues to make positive progress in meeting the challenges that lie ahead with a specific focus on sustainable service spending, maintaining an appropriate and sustainable level of earmarked reserves and making the most of our assets.

Our financial position is set to become even more challenging given the emerging impacts of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Like all local authorities across the country, the Vale has been at the forefront of the response to the coronavirus pandemic which has put immense pressure on its finances. Supporting communities and keeping vital services running has never been more critical but this has led to high increases in demand and necessary unforeseen expenditure for the Council. At the very same time, however, we are facing significant and immediate reductions in income which is likely to impact on our ability to meet the agreed 2020/21 budget. The financial emergency support packages provided by both Westminster and the Welsh Government to help local authorities respond have been welcomed, However, this support is likely to only be available in the short term, potentially contributing to a **significant increase in funding shortfall and impacting on the financial resilience of the Council.**

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan is not only based on assumptions on the state of the national and local economies over the next three years but is also the financial expression of the council's policies, informed by local priorities. Therefore, like every other Council we will **need to reevaluate our MTFP in the light of the pandemic.** This will be especially crucial if the local economy falls into recession, spending is not easily reduced back to pre-crisis levels and income streams do not bounce back quickly. The COVID-19 crisis will be long-lasting and far reaching, affecting more than one financial year.

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As part of the Final Revenue Budget Proposals for 2019/20, an efficiency savings target of £247k was set for the Council, which is significantly lower than the targets set in previous years. This target was set in recognition that it has become increasingly difficult for services to deliver further savings without reducing service provision following £59m being achieved in the last 10 years. Progress on the **achievement of our 2019/20 savings** has been monitored and reported to relevant Committees and Cabinet during the year. As at end of year, (100%) of the required efficiency target has been achieved.

Across service Directorates: 100% of the savings target of £162k attributed to the Learning and Skills Directorate were achieved; in relation to Social Services, £ 505K of £545K (93%) of savings were achieved; the Environment & Housing Directorate has delivered £560K (49%) of the required savings target of £1.140m, an underachievement of £446K and work is continuing to identify schemes to close this gap. The Managing Director & Resources Directorate achieved £904K (98%) of its savings target of £921K and work remains ongoing across Corporate Services to identify additional savings to meet the shortfall during 2019/20.

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There continues to be significant cost pressures across many Council services, many ongoing from previous years, for example: the **Community Care and Children's placement budgets within Social Services, the highly volatile pupil placement budget and the reducing recoupment income budget within Learning & Skills**. In these areas a small number of new customers can have a dramatic effect on budget outturn, impacting on achievement of savings and a balanced budget at year end. These service areas continue to strive to manage growing demand and rising customer expectations however these are becoming increasingly difficult to contain.

The **financial pressures on the Council are likely to continue, exacerbated by the recent pandemic** and, while we will continue to try to protect services for the most vulnerable in our community, it is increasingly difficult to cushion the impact of cuts to early intervention and prevention services across council services and support for those in need through our targeted work. These remain key priorities for the Council in achieving its vision of strong communities with a bright future. We will continue to work with our partners and communities to ensure we are able to meet these future financial challenges while mitigating the impact of cuts on residents and service users.

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The Council's ability to fully deliver its **Reshaping Services Programme** remains an on-going challenge given the continuing period of austerity and increasing service demand across most council services. During 2019/20, reshaping projects have delivered a saving of £2.383m against the year's target of £3.020 (79%). This performance has been attributed a red performance status, indicating an outcome that is below the forecast of 100% for the year. This performance is reflective of the complex nature of Reshaping projects and their achievability is potentially impacted by a range of issues and risks.

The unprecedented impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic at the end of March 2020, presents an **opportunity for the Council to fundamentally review the way it operates and ensure synergy between its recovery strategy and the longer term transformation of the organisation**. This will ensure that the actions taken are consistent and integrated in line with the Council's vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future.

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The **re-profiling of European and Grant funding** for a number of Council initiatives continue to present significant challenges for the future. Not knowing the level of funding and also the short term nature of existing funding continues to create instability and uncertainty in terms of planning future work which may in turn impact on sustaining the high levels of performance achieved to date in delivering many of these initiatives. Some of these national funding streams may impact adversely on our ability to invest in the Vale over the coming year.

These issues are likely to be exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which happened at a crucial time in the trade deal talks between the UK and Europe. With the Government's current stance being that of not extending the talks, it is likely that UK may leave without a trade deal. There is **a risk that whilst our**



**attention and resources are drawn to immediately address the priorities arising from COVID-19, that our capacity to prepare and adapt to forthcoming policy and legislative changes as a result of Brexit could be compromised.**

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Work in relation to maximising **income generation** and **commercialisation** opportunities is progressing as part of the corporate project workstream element under the Reshaping Services Programme. A significant amount of work is being undertaken to develop this area which is relatively new to the Council. A range of issues are being progressed such as sponsorship for events, advertising, a charging policy for information, and optimising use of Council assets. Alongside these, we are also looking at opportunities to sell additional services that will enhance user experiences beyond our basic service offering and in so doing creating financial returns that support the sustainability of our valued local public services. However, there is a need to take a measured and balanced approach to generating additional income whilst safeguarding our local public services and ensuring access to services remains equitable to all. During the year **£92k** of additional income was generated through various activities, however this performance fell short of our additional income target of £220k for 2019/20.

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The importance of effective **procurement** has never been more relevant given diminishing budgets, and this remains a key priority for the Council going forward. In addition, we have a duty via the WCFG Act to maximise opportunities to improve the well-being of our citizens through our procurement processes. We are making more use of standard specifications for appropriate goods and services, using partnering and collaboration as a means of achieving economies of scale and securing sustainability of some of our services for the future. During the year, we have continued to use the frameworks available to us via the National Procurement Service framework. However, we acknowledge that there is a need to further build capacity across the Council and with our partners to ensure a more strategic and commercial approach to contract management and effective contract and supplier management to maximise both the opportunities for additional income generation and the potential savings these could bring. We are embedding a consistent approach to all procurement decisions - by applying the 5 ways of working at the beginning of the process and considering how our procurement activities will contribute to delivery of our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This will enable us to better evidence how our procurement activities are helping us to meet our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and contribute to the national goals.

#### 7.2.4 ASSETS

The potential financial costs associated with **addressing any non-compliance issues in relation to the Council's building assets will be a challenge given reducing budgets**. This will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2020/21.

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There is a **need to accelerate our actions on the decarbonisation agenda, helping to meet Wales' target of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030**. The Council declared a climate emergency on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019. Currently the Council's Carbon management Plan 2018/19 to 2020/21, focuses on reducing our carbon footprint and delivering savings through schemes such as Re:fit, reducing demand and installing renewable energy; further upgrading of street and trunk road lighting and the maintenance of our heating and electrical systems. Further work is required **extend our focus to other areas such as land use, procurement and transport**.

#### 7.2.5 DIGITAL VALE

The Council's **Digital Strategy** sets out how technology will support and enable the Council to grow and develop in the coming years. A key challenge in this area is the fast pace of new technology developments which highlights the need to constantly iterate the business use of technology across the Council to maximise our opportunities to improve efficiency and accessibility of services for Vale citizens. New technology is changing the needs of the workforce and presents challenges in terms of the skills required to support and use the technology to its greatest effect. The need to develop robust financial business cases is a challenge the Council will continue to work to meet. Our continued emphasis on a 'one council' approach via the Digital Strategy will focus on creating a seamless experience for Vale citizens when accessing council services, developing more

efficient ways of working and overall seek to reduce costs. The use of engagement mechanisms, such as the management development sessions, our manager and employee core competency frameworks and our staff appraisal and development scheme, will be instrumental in ensuring the organisation has the skillsets needed to make best use of technology.

During the year approximately **£43k** of savings was achieved with work underway on a number of projects focusing on customer and employee systems and further enhancing website functionality to encourage customers to shift to digital channels of service delivery e.g. digital recruitment, sickness reporting, hybrid mail, e-form integration to enable digital customer service requests and roll out of Office 365. However, this performance fell short of our savings target of £87k for 2019/20.

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A key part of the Council's response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic has seen a significant shift towards **greater use of digital technology to prevent spread of infection**. However, this will potentially exacerbate the existing digital divide. Potentially, this will **significantly disadvantage some of the most vulnerable groups who may not have access to online services**. In the longer term this is likely to be a permanent acceleration of the digitisation trend, so additional targeted support may be needed to tackle the growing digital divide. Given the increased use of digital technology, there is also a need to ensure resilience of our digital infrastructure and public information channels.

## 7.2.6 WORKING IN COLLABORATION

Welsh Government's emerging proposals relating to **Local Government Reform** will continue to be a key area of activity, impacting on council services specifically in identifying and pursuing any collaborative activity that will benefit the Council in the long term. Given the current economic climate of limited resources, increasing demands on services and complex community expectations, the Council is committed to developing new strategic collaborations and partnerships as a key response to these challenges.

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Despite our progressive approach to working with partners, collaboration in relation to **developing alternative models of service delivery across a range of council services both locally and regionally** remains an ongoing challenge in a climate of diminishing resources. Linked to this is the volatility of Welsh Government grant funding streams which impacts on our ability to develop, commission and sustain integrated health and social care services that enhance our capacity whilst still meeting our statutory requirements to deliver core services. There are also challenges associated with developing more streamlined approaches to commissioning preventative services that are more joined up across organisational boundaries in line with requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

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Our ability to work in collaboration (with other key partners), to develop and agree approaches to **joint Scrutiny arrangements** for increasing numbers of new collaboration arrangements remains a challenge given the resource requirements required to sustain these. The City Deal is an example of recent collaboration where work has been ongoing during the year to establish approaches to joint scrutiny.

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There is a need to address challenges associated with **Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption collaboration (VVC)**. An increased number of referrals of children for adoption and the numbers waiting for placement and for adoption support services is impacting on workload and performance in other areas such as the timely recruitment and assessment of potential adopters. This combined with the downturn in enquiries from prospective adopters is impacting on our ability to recruit. Therefore, recruitment of adopters remains a key priority for 2019/20. Meeting demand across the range of functions of the VVC also continues to be an ongoing challenge. The findings and recommendations from a review of the service will support us in addressing these challenges going forward.

## 7.3 CORPOARTE RISK REGISTER: END OF YEAR POSITION SUMMARY STATEMENT: 2019/2020

### **Overview:**

At year end, there were 15 corporate risks on the Register which included the recent addition of CR15: Additional Learning Needs.

### **Risk Statuses:**

5 risks scored medium/high, 9 risks scored medium and 1 risk scored medium/low. The recently added Additional Learning Needs risk has resulted in a medium/high (9) risk status on the Register. This risk status has been predominately driven by key factors, that relate to the demographic growth in demand and the complexity of need associated with children presenting with Additional Learning Needs, which in turn impacts on our capacity and financial viability to meet these growing needs. These challenges have further been compounded by the impact of the new responsibilities and duties arising from the Additional Learning Needs (Wales) Act.

### **Direction of Travel:**

The majority of risks on the Register have remained static with the exception of Information Security, which has increased from a medium (6) position on the Register to a medium/high (9) status. The threat from cyber-attacks and their potential impact has increased significantly over the last 12-18 months and whilst the Council has controls in place to address cyber threats, these need to keep up with changing external threats. As a result, our controls need to be reviewed in light of this. Additionally, with the introduction of 365 we now have a number of threat areas that need addressing as the benefits also bring governance risks and additional exposure from the external facing internet. This will require further investment in Advanced Threat Protection systems to strengthen our existing controls. For example, we are seeing a large increase in attempts to break into 'Vale user 365' accounts from all over the globe and targeted, sophisticated attempts to trick users into opening infected email attachments or webpages which contain ransomware or other malicious software. Consequently, the residual risk has moved temporarily from a medium to medium/high position.

### **Forecast Direction of Travel:**

At year end, the forecast direction of travel for risks on the Register have predominately remained the same, with the exception of environmental sustainability and welfare reform risks that have both been forecast to escalate over time. It is anticipated that the environmental sustainability risk will escalate in response to the growing concerns associated with climate change to reflect the Council's position of declaring a climate emergency. It is also anticipated that the welfare reform risk will escalate over time as a result of the risks associated with financial and social impact of the changes. It is forecast that the Information Security risk over the next 6 months will reduce as we look to strengthen our controls and reinforce policy with staff backed up by further technical controls and not just paper-based policy.

### **Emerging risks areas:**

#### **COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

At the end of March 2020, it quickly became apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic was rapidly becoming a significant global public health crisis. The restrictions imposed as a result of the crisis have disrupted just about every aspect of our daily lives on a scale that has never been seen before. The magnitude of COVID-19 and its impact on the economy, health, social care, community safety, arts, culture, sport and education has rapidly become an emerging area of concern. There is the need to evaluate and define the risks associated COVID pertinent to the Council, that takes into account both the immediate and medium to longer term aspects of the risk. The cross-cutting nature of COVID as a risk, is likely to impact on all corporate risks contained within the Register. Therefore, there will be the need to review all risks contained on the Register in this context to reflect the potential impact COVID-19 could have on how we redefine and describe those risks and also any potential impact the pandemic may have on their overall risk status on the Risk Register.

## **Brexit**

Brexit continues to be an emerging area of risk on the Horizon. The Coronavirus pandemic struck at a time when the UK was still in talks with the European Union on a potential Brexit trade deal. At present, the UK Government has not requested an extension to the trade negotiations with Europe that are due to come an end in December 2020. The uncertainty and implications of Brexit continue to be a cause for concern, especially in light of COVID-19. Whilst our attention and resources will continue to be directed towards addressing the immediate priorities arising from COVID-19, there is chance this could impact on our capacity to prepare and adapt to the forthcoming policy and legislative changes as a consequence of Brexit. Given the volatility of the situation, COVID-19 has the potential to further augment the risks associated with Brexit.

Considering the emerging aspects of risk as a consequence of COVID-19 and the proximity of the trade talks coming to an end in December, it is anticipated that Brexit will continue to maintain its medium/high position on the Register, reflecting these pressure points. Going forward our mitigating actions associated with Brexit will need to be reviewed in tandem with the impact and our recovery from the pandemic.

## **Legislative Change and Local Government Reform**

The legislative and policy landscape in relation to this risk is gradually shifting. As a result of the pandemic, Stage 2 scrutiny of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill (the Bill) has been suspended by Welsh Government. It is anticipated that scrutiny of the Bill will resume in October 2020. Two options are being considered, 1 to introduce the new legislation for April 2021 or 2 delay the implementation to April 2020. WLGA has recommended option 2.

When scrutiny of the Bill resumes, and we gain a clearer understanding of the timeframes for implementation, it is likely we will see an elevation in the risks associated with the Bill. In the interim period, the Council will need to maintain a watching brief on this emerging area and ensure that the Council tracks decisions as it progresses through its final stages of scrutiny. This will ensure that we can effectively prepare for its implementation and respond accordingly to any new developments.

## **7.4 WHAT OUR AUDITORS SAID ABOUT US**

In line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Auditor General for Wales is required to produce an annual report on Welsh councils and other public bodies entitled, the 'Annual Improvement Report (AIR)' which summaries the audit work undertaken during the period 2019 to 2020. The report brings together the key findings from all audit work undertaken in the Council during 2019-20 including those of other inspection and regulatory bodies such as Estyn (Her Majesty's inspectorate for schools in Wales) and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

This year, the Council's Annual Improvement Report will be issued later than usual, in autumn 2020. This approach is consistent with the flexibilities afforded through emergency governance arrangements by the Welsh Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has allowed statutory deadlines to be relaxed in certain areas to enable severely stretched public service resources to be diverted to priority areas at a time of national emergency.

Whilst our regulators have not undertaken all on-site audit work, we have continued to work remotely with our Audit Wales colleagues to conclude a number of pieces of work from the Council's 2019/20 audit work programme. In addition, work has continued in reshaping or deferring previously planned audit work for 2020/21 as new priorities emerge due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, the focus of Audit Wales has been on supporting public bodies to improve their evolving responses to COVID-19 by gathering novel and other practice as it emerges, analysing it rapidly to draw out relevant points of learning and sharing the resulting insights quickly with colleagues in the Welsh public sector.

In the interim, we have continued to make progress on existing Proposals for Improvement that were made in previous years reports. The Council’s Insight tracker incorporates all our regulatory proposals for improvement as well as areas for further development identified by the Council and this monitored monthly by the Insight Board and half yearly by the Audit Committee and the Cabinet.

## 7.4.1 INSIGHT TRACKER

Progress in relation to all our improvement areas is monitored via the Insight Board monthly and reported to Corporate Management Team. The Insight Board Action Tracker incorporates all our regulatory proposals for improvement as well as areas for further development identified by the Council. Progress against our regulatory proposals are reported to Audit Committee and Cabinet. Overall, positive progress has been made during the year in responding to our improvement areas with 10 of the 37 actions on the tracker completed as at March 2020. 24 actions on the tracker relate to local regulatory proposals of which 6 have been completed and 18 remain on track for completion.

A further 11 actions relate to national regulatory proposals for improvement identified by our regulators and in relation to these, 4 have been completed (see below). Progress against our Insight tracker (regulatory proposals) as at March 2020 can be viewed at [valeofgamorgan.gov.uk](http://valeofgamorgan.gov.uk).

Ref	Report	Recommendation/ Proposal for Improvement	Update
<b>National Regulatory Proposals</b>			
NR14	The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales	<p><b>R1</b> To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend Local Planning Authorities (LPAs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose.</li> <li>• use 'Place Plans' as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making.</li> <li>• improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings.</li> </ul>	The LPA has been working with Town & Community Councils (T&CC) to develop a revised Charter to improve engagement. Annual POSW survey invites feedback from T&CC representatives. Engagement and involvement practices on LDP prep will be revisited at Plan Review. The Council intends to provide training workshop to T&CC on Place Plans. The Council will consider adopting any Place Plans that accord with the LDP and relevant guidance as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It would not be appropriate to rotate meetings to alternative venues as this would impede the Council’s ability to webcast meetings and could lead to public viewing and attendance issues. The Council already hold meetings at 4pm which is considered to be an appropriate time, web cast meetings and allow public speaking.
NR15	The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales	<b>R2</b> Local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and	The Council’s Building Control fees are kept under review to ensure that the service is as close

Ref	Report	Recommendation/ Proposal for Improvement	Update
		<p>struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review their building control fee regimes to ensure levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding.</li> <li>• improve capacity by working regionally to integrate services to address specialism gaps, develop joint supplementary planning guidance and develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities.</li> </ul>	<p>to self-funding as possible and this has gone on for many years. The Council already work regionally to improve capacity / resilience e.g. South Wales Minerals Service (Carmarthenshire), South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) work together on key projects, including plans for shared South Wales Viability Model, shared procurement of LDP database, Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for Cardiff Capital Region.</p>
NR16	The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales	<p><b>R4</b> that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority.</li> <li>• revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned.</li> <li>• enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings.</li> </ul>	<p>The Council's scheme of delegation already means over 90% of applications are determined under delegated powers and Committee agendas are focused on key major applications or locally contentious schemes called in by Members. The Council has a generally low rate of overturns of officer recommendations to planning committee (0-5%) and reports are structured and presented clearly at Committee. The Chair of Planning Committee ensures the code of conduct is followed and is supported by Legal Services, Democratic Services and Chief Planning Officers.</p>
NR17	The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales	<p><b>R5</b> The report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We recommend the local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving well-being.</li> </ul>	<p>The LPA's vision is set out in the LDP and demonstrates how it contributes to improving well-being. Officers undertake regular planning committee training and plan to undertake further well-being training in 2020-21. The Council has clear performance indicators which are set out in the Regeneration and Planning</p>

Ref	Report	Recommendation/ Proposal for Improvement	Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate well-being training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities.</li> <li>set appropriate measures for their admission of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on well-being.</li> <li>annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on well-being.</li> </ul>	Service Plan and the Development Management Team Plan. The LPA publishes its Annual Performance Report regarding Development Management performance and Annual Monitoring Report for the LDP, each October demonstrating its performance against key indicators including those relating to well-being.
<b>Local Regulatory Proposals</b>			
LR3	Welsh Housing Quality Standard review including Council housing tenants	<b>P2</b> The Council should work with tenants to review its approach to assisting people experiencing problems with condensation and damp.	The Welsh House Condition Survey has been conducted across all tenures within each local authority and included individual inspections of premises by a qualified surveyor. Within the Vale there were no properties identified as experiencing damp detrimental to health which does not support the WAO findings. However, all reports of damp are investigated with the appropriate remedial action undertaken.
LR20	Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children	<p><b>P1</b> Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify the safeguarding roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Leisure and the Member Champion for Safeguarding;</li> <li>Set out the role of scrutiny in the Council's safeguarding arrangements;</li> <li>Provide information on topics that have safeguarding implications such as modern day slavery, trafficking, child sexual exploitation, counter terrorism and the risk of radicalisation, the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence</li> </ul>	Key appointments within Corporate Leadership are disseminated to staff and linked to their safeguarding responsibilities within their role and there is regular review and updating of the CSG webpage. Corporate and Directorate safeguarding roles are known and understood through dissemination of information to all employees and volunteers and updated as required. Also, there is regular review and update of the SCH web pages. Information on corporate leadership and safeguarding roles is shared on the Safeguarding Hub within StaffNet and in the Bi Annual Safeguarding Newsletter. Safeguarding Hub includes

Ref	Report	Recommendation/ Proposal for Improvement	Update
		(Wales) Act 2015 and self-harm.	membership of Corporate Safeguarding Group and areas of responsibility. I-Annual cabinet report on activity of the Corporate Safeguarding Group references membership/changes to membership of the CS Group. The Cabinet/Lead member takes responsibility for ensuring scrutiny & assurance of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements and the CSG Policy reflects the role of scrutiny in scrutinising safeguarding. Dissemination of key topics to staff via newsletter; training; national safeguarding week.
LR21	Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children	<p><b>P2</b> The Council should strengthen its contractual provisions in relation to the safeguarding training requirements of third parties to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specifying that safeguarding training is mandatory where applicable; and</li> <li>• amending its main agency candidate checks form so that it does not just specify that safeguarding training is mandatory only for Social Care Night Workers.</li> </ul>	safeguarding training strategy communicated and disseminated corporately and to volunteers, contractors including content required and frequency of safeguarding training. Compliance analysed and reported half yearly and annually to cabinet and scrutiny committees. Also standing agenda item for consideration at CSG.
LR22	Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children	<p><b>P3</b> The Council should improve its approach to safeguarding training in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take steps to ensure that the mandatory completion of Violence Against Women and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 training is accelerated;</li> <li>• Clarify when mandatory safeguarding training needs to be refreshed;</li> <li>• Accelerate the rate of compliance with the completion of its mandatory safeguarding training;</li> <li>• Consider ways in which it could extend its safeguarding training offer, for example to taxi drivers and to those</li> </ul>	The training programme has been reviewed and compliance to expectations monitored. As a consequence, changes have been made to the programme to ensure that all staff receive training appropriate to their roles. Reviewed compliance of all Directorates with respect to completion of the Safeguarding e-module. Safeguarding e-module for onboarding process for new employees in place as is the refresher element for existing staff. Arrangements in place for those who cannot access the e-module with a number of approaches to learning to engage this cohort of employees.



Ref	Report	Recommendation/ Proposal for Improvement	Update
		working in the night time economy.	Compliance with VAWDASV training phase 1 reported to CSH and Phase two is ongoing. Training matrix considers legislative organisational changes which informs corporate mandatory training programme. Extending the safeguarding training offer by supporting safeguarding level 1 training for those seeking licences.
LR23	Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children	P4 - The Council should consider producing further performance measures (for example in respect of safeguarding training compliance) to enhance the annual safeguarding report and aid transparency	Developed a set of data that is reviewed via CSG and directorate lead officers identified with responsibility for submitting this data. Data is analysed and reported quarterly and annually and informs member updates to scrutiny and cabinet.
LR24	Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children	P5 - The Council should develop a central system for recording and monitoring volunteer information, including any training records and Disclosure and Barring Service checks for volunteers.	This work is ongoing with the data informing compliance monitoring and reflected in reporting.

## 7.4.2 HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION ON COUNCIL: GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Head of Internal Audit to provide an Annual Report to support the Annual Governance Statement. The [report](#):

- Includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control;
- Presents a summary of the audit work undertaken;
- Draws attention to any issues that may impact on the level of assurance provided;
- Provides a summary of the performance for the service;
- Comments on conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

During the year, a total of 62 reviews were completed with an audit opinion and a total of 228 medium and high recommendations made. Of these reviews, 14% (9) were given an audit opinion of substantial assurance, 65% (40) reasonable assurance and 21% (13) limited assurance. The implementation of all audit recommendations is being monitored regularly to ensure that required improvements are made.

From the work undertaken during the financial year 2019/20 and considering other sources of assurance, the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2019-20 is **reasonable assurance**. No significant crosscutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment and the weaknesses identified are service specific.

The COVID-19 outbreak has had little impact on the delivery of the internal audit plan for 2019/20 as relevant testing in all, but 4 reviews had been completed prior to the lockdown coming into force allowing final reports to be issued. Of the 4, one review had been started and carried forward into 2020/21 whilst the remaining three will be considered for inclusion in the 2020/21 plan. The performance of the Internal Audit Service improved from the previous year when compared nationally (Welsh Chief Auditors Group Benchmarking) with 94% of planned audits completed compared to 85% across Wales.

In providing this annual audit opinion, it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that internal audit can provide is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance and control processes based on the matters which came to our attention during internal audit work in the financial year 2019/20 and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

The Internal Audit Service received an external assessment in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in 2017 and is due another in 2022. No areas of non-compliance that would affect the overall scope or operation of the Internal Audit activity were identified and the assessment noted that there were no significant deviations from the Standards. No significant changes have occurred in respect of the working practices since the Regional Internal Audit Service was set established in April 2019. As a result, the Service continues to conform to the Standards during 2019/20.

### 7.4.3 FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER'S REPORT 2020

In May 2020 the Future Generations Commissioner published the first [Future Generations Report](#) as required under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The findings and recommendations in the report have been identified during her four years in office and the report is an assessment of progress made in implementing the Act and sets out a range of advice and recommendations for Welsh Government and public bodies.

A number of areas of positive progress are identified across public bodies and Public services boards around innovation, integration and collaboration although the need to apply the Act to both what and how we do things is emphasised. This is something the Council will be focusing on as it reviews the recommendations and how they apply to our work.

In the report, the Vale of Glamorgan is highlighted for work undertaken, including the provision of non-classroom based cultural citizenship activities using the gallery and library resources to familiarise Syrian refugee families with their new home and a programme of awareness raising of child sexual exploitation, slavery and trafficking. The Commissioner also recognises that work is taking place around engagement and community participation with a particular emphasis on children and young people in deprived areas and developing opportunities through sport, culture and the environment.

The report includes a large number of recommendations which relate to overall progress in Wales, each of the well-being goals and the Commissioner's areas of focus which are housing, planning, transport, Adverse Childhood Experiences, skills, better ways of keeping people well and decarbonisation.

The Corporate Plan 2020-25 includes a range of commitments in line with the Commissioner's priority areas and also details how we are contributing to the goals. In addition, the Council's Insight approach reflects the need to look at the corporate areas of change (i.e. corporate planning, financial planning, workforce planning, risk, performance, procurement and assets) in an integrated way.

The recommendations in the Future Generations Report together with the report of the Auditor General 'So, what's different? Findings from the Auditor General's Sustainable Development Principle Examinations' also published in May 2020 will help to inform work across all parts of the Council and the Public Services Board including work on recovery and climate change. The recommendations will also be considered by the Insight Board and inform the development of the Annual Delivery Plan and Service Plans.