

# THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

## Annual Self-Assessment

# 2021-22



VALE of GLAMORGAN



BRO MORGANNWG

## 1.0 Executive Leader & Chief Executive Introduction

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

The Annual Self-Assessment Report reflects on the work of the Council over the past year in working to deliver our vision of 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future'. It is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate our key achievements as well as to identify the challenges we still have to tackle. The self-assessment findings aim to provide an honest and balanced account of our performance in achieving our 2021/22 Annual Delivery Plan commitments. It draws on a variety of data sources and other insight from our annual planning and performance framework that have enabled us to draw conclusions on how well we are using our resources to support achievement of the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.



Overall, based on our review of last year's performance, we believe that on balance we have met our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22, in what continued to be a challenging year for the Council.

It has been a very positive year and we are proud to have achieved so much in the face of such challenging times. We have worked together successfully with our partners, communities, residents and service users to continue to respond to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, whilst at the same time, moving quickly to support our recovery. Alongside this, we have continued to protect and deliver vital and valued services contributing to improved outcomes and the overall well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.



Over the past year we have made good progress in delivering key priorities including; new schools as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme; exchanged contracts with Cardiff & Vale College on the development of a college based at Barry Waterfront; ongoing delivery of our ambitious Council house building programme incorporating new green technologies to reduce our carbon footprint; increased the choice available to vulnerable adult residents to support and improve their well-being through the 'Your Choice' initiative; financially supported 26 community led projects through our Strong Communities Fund, which has benefitted communities; invested in digital technology alongside face to face interactions to enhance our reach and engagement with citizens, service users, learners and partners; increased participation in physical activity by targeting areas of low participation through a variety of initiatives involving nearly 280 partner organisations; secured nearly £18.75m of planning contributions which have been committed to community improvement schemes across the Vale; progressed an ambitious project to reduce homelessness and support people to move on to more permanent accommodation; supported residents experiencing food insecurity whilst reducing food waste through schemes such as the Penarth Food Pod, Llantwit Major Food Access - CF61 Food Share, the Big Bwcs Bwyd in Barry, Cadfeld Van and Ysgol y Draig.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers and partners who have responded with flexibility and agility - helping residents to access services in new and different ways to ensure everyone is supported through these turbulent times.

We are now adjusting to living with Covid-19 following the final lifting of restrictions last year. However, we must remain vigilant, and we are committed to coming out of this crisis stronger than ever and continuing to grow as a place of opportunity and ambition for all.

Looking forward, there are significant challenges and areas where we know we need to do more including accelerating our economic recovery, responding to the cost-of-living crisis, tackling poverty and inequality, supporting and enhancing the mental health and well-being of young people, strengthening public participation and finding sustainable solutions to address the significant pressures on social care, housing and homelessness services. We must also invest in protecting our environment through Project Zero and push forward with our ambition to achieve net zero status by 2030, which will also help to support jobs, skills and opportunities for local people. These are key priorities for the Council for the foreseeable future. We recognise that we need to enhance internal capacity and maximise the use of local knowledge and understanding of our communities to help tackle the socio-economic legacy of the pandemic. In response, we will continue to invest in building a flexible and adaptable workforce that is productive and agile, uses technology and data insight effectively and engages effectively with residents, communities and partners to deliver services and reduce inequalities. The Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity agendas will also provide us with opportunities to work together with our communities and partners in building a sustainable economy that supports prosperity for all.

Our financial position remains challenging, exacerbated by not just the significant pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic but also by an short-term financial settlements from Welsh Government which hampers long-term financial planning and our financial sustainability overall. We will continue to lobby Welsh Government for a genuine multi-year settlement to enable effective financial planning to support service sustainability for the long term. Despite the ongoing uncertainties we face, we will continue to apply a sound and prudent financial management and work collaboratively with our whole community so that we can continue to invest in our Council and the Vale of Glamorgan. As we continue to shape and evolve our local services in this uncertain climate, it is now more important than ever that we remain **ambitious, open, together and proud** in working together towards **strong communities with a bright future**.

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## 3.0 Responding to Emerging Trends

Over the past year, we have faced significant challenges from a variety of evolving issues such as our continued response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic, the emerging humanitarian and global security issues arising from the invasion of Ukraine, an escalation of the climate change emergency and the global energy and Cost of Living crisis. Although the UK has completed its transition from the EU and secured a post-Brexit trade deal, EU-UK relations are strained, and the economic effects and uncertainties associated with Brexit continue to be a cause of concern. Outlined below is a summary of these key emerging trends/challenges and what our planned response has been to date along with what our areas of focus will be over the forthcoming year.

### The Climate Emergency

The Council recognises that climate and ecological change is the globally defining challenge of our time.



In response to the Council declaring a Climate Emergency, the Council established [Project Zero](#) that sets out the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. This project brings together a variety of work policies, strategies and plans that are already underway. It also sets out the challenges we face and what our proposed activities are to meet these

challenges such as the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy, improving the carbon status of our housing stock, schools and public buildings, the promotion of active travel and public transport as well as sustainable procurement and a focus on community engagement. It recognises that everyone has a role to play and a responsibility to think about our legacy for future generations.

The key challenge associated with Project Zero, is how we will achieve what we have set out within our [Climate Change Challenge Plan](#) (specifically the eighteen challenges outlined in the Plan) with the need to demonstrate strong leadership, fulfil our responsibility to current and future generations and to make a difference now. This will remain a clear area of focus going forward alongside a need to further develop and then sustain the investment, innovation and focus on the actions required over the coming years. Another key challenge is in relation to engaging with our communities to support us in delivery of Project Zero and facilitate change on the ground. To date, the Council has had positive conversations with citizens regarding the climate change agenda, which has highlighted the strong desire within communities to see and be part of this change. Looking forward our emphasis will be on how we capitalise on this to empower our citizens more widely to play a more 'active role' in defining and working towards our net zero goals. It is hoped that overcoming these challenges will enable us to meet our Project Zero goals to **reduce the organisation's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and contribute to a net zero Wales by 2050.**

In July 2021, the Council also declared a nature emergency in response to the recognised link between climate change, the escalating loss of habitats and its impact on our ecology and biodiversity. A Local Biodiversity [Action Plan](#) is being implemented and activities identified through this plan are also aligned to the work of Project Zero.

Positive progress has been made during the past year in relation to our commitments set out in the Climate Change Challenge Plan which is detailed in our latest [Project Zero Update Report](#) and includes work around use and promotion of electric vehicles, active travel, sustainable energy and transport and improved infrastructure including low carbon schools and Council homes. We are also developing and consulting upon key enabling plans such as the Green Infrastructure Plan and Tree Strategy to further enhance our ability to achieve our net zero goal. We recognise, however, that there is much more to do.

## The Cost-of-Living Crisis

The emergence of a cost of living crisis continues to gain momentum and is increasingly putting financial pressure on UK households. This is the scenario where the cost of our everyday essentials such as energy, food etc. rises over and above average incomes. There are a number of cross-cutting forces behind this evolving crisis, which reflects the complex and interconnected nature of our global markets. Predominately the crisis is the result of increasing price inflation outstripping the growth in wages and/or benefits, leaving less disposable income in citizens' pockets which has been further exacerbated by recent tax rises.

The most recent data (August 2022) shows that inflation rose by 10.1% in the 12 months to July 2022, which is up 9.4% from June. The Bank of England have forecast that inflation will continue to rise over the course of 2022 and has predicted that inflation could rise above 13% if left unchecked. The Bank of England also anticipates there will be a period of 'stagflation' where there is slow economic growth or recession combined with increasing inflation.

In terms of what is driving inflation, this has been in part the legacy of Covid where the reopening of the economy saw increased global demand for products at a time when supply chains disruption from Covid was still an issue. Added to this has been ongoing effects of Brexit that has also led to delays and good shortages. Also impacting this is the energy market which has also been a significant contributor to rising inflation. At a time when demand for energy increased, our supply had reduced leading to sharp global wholesale rise in gas prices. Although this rise was originally driven by factors associated with supply and demand, the volatility in the energy market has been further exacerbated by crisis in Ukraine and the ongoing threat that Russia will turn off gas supplies to Europe. Ukraine is referred to as the 'breadbasket of Europe' particularly in terms of its export of grain and sunflower oil. Since the invasion of Ukraine, exports of these goods have significantly declined leading to global food insecurity fears, which in addition to energy prices has driven up inflationary pressures on food. Added to this, UK petrol and diesel prices have hit record high following a surge in demand for fuel with the opening up of the economy associated with Covid. The rise in fuel costs is compounding inflationary pressures associated with transport of supplies/goods such as raw materials and food. Recently announced tax rises have also contributed to driving up inflation.

In tandem with the rising costs of living, workers are seeing a stagnation in their wages, where salaries are not able to keep pace with inflation. Consequently, our communities are increasingly feeling the impact on their finances. **The cost of living is expected to rise further during the immediate to medium term** and we will need to support our communities and citizens to navigate and overcome the worst impacts of this crisis, with a particular focus on safeguarding our most deprived and vulnerable citizens. Recent data from the <sup>1</sup>Office of National Statistics which has informed the latest [Vale of Glamorgan Cost of Living Analysis](#) tells us that **around 9 in 10 adults continue to report their cost of living has risen over the past month with nearly half (48%) of adults reporting they were spending more on their food shopping** each fortnight. No one is immune from the effects of the cost of living crisis, but it is widely acknowledged that it disproportionately impacts on the poorest of households the most, as they find it more difficult to cope with rising rates of inflation. We are already seeing an increase in the number of people claiming Universal Credits (UC), a payment to help with living costs for those on low income or out of work. The latest [Economic Impact Analysis](#) for the county tells us that from April 2020 to September 2021 there had been consistent growth in the number of people in receipt of UC across the Vale of Glamorgan. After September 2021, claimants began to decrease *until* April 2022 when we saw a total of 9,694 people in receipt of UC. **It is anticipated that these increasing pressures may be felt more by those identified as more vulnerable and those households whose budgets may have the least amount of capacity to absorb these pressures.**

<sup>1</sup> [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 June to 3 July 2022](#)

Looking forward, the Council faces significant challenges, in terms of supporting those most **in need who are experiencing hardship in terms food/fuel poverty, housing needs and employment**. A key element of our work will be how best to effectively target our resources to reach those most in need and in particular to identify any areas of unmet need. This will put additional demand upon our services at a time when our resources are already being stretched. Similarly, the Council is also vulnerable to rising cost pressures associated with inflation. The rising cost of construction materials, food supplies, energy costs and staff wages will all have an impact on the costs of service delivery, at a time when our budgets uplifts are unable to keep up with rising cost of living. Consequently, this could challenge our ability as a Council to maintain levels of service delivery and has the potential to disrupt our ability to achieve our well-being objectives and key priorities as a Council including major capital programmes such as the Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools) programme, Council housing programme and other transformation projects that include Project Zero.

In response to this crisis, the Cost-of-Living working group was established in May 2022. The group consists of officers from across the Council and is chaired by the Director of Corporate Resources. Initial discussions were focused on overseeing the administration of the Welsh Government's Cost of Living Support package that features a £150 cost of living payment to all households in Council Tax bands A-D and to all Council Tax bands who receive support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. In May 2022, we began issuing £150 Cost of Living Support payments to more than 35,000 eligible residents under the terms of the Welsh Government Scheme to help with the cost-of-living pressure. The Group has also overseen the administration of a Welsh Government discretionary fund to support those not eligible for the main scheme, but who are impacted by the financial pressures associated with the cost of living. The Council was given discretion on who this element of funding was targeted at. The group has since undertaken a review of grant schemes managed by the authority to identify potential opportunities where funding streams could further support residents with rising costs. This piece of work has also been used to better understand and identify any gaps in how we are supporting vulnerable groups/individuals in terms of costs of living. In addition to this, a detailed analysis of the possible impacts of the rising costs of living has informed the publication of a [Cost of Living Support hub](#) on both the Council's website and internal StaffNet site. The hub provides further information through which residents can access information on support and entitlements and apply for additional benefits. The hub will be regularly updated to provide information on further support as and when it becomes available.

Throughout the year, we have continued to work with our partners to meet the needs of those experiencing hardship in our communities. We have supported residents experiencing food insecurity whilst reducing food waste through schemes across the Vale such as the Penarth Food Pod, Llantwit CF61 Food Share and the Big Bwcs Bwyd sites in the County and delivery of over 1,000 food crisis bags during May-June 2022. To address housing pressures, we completed Holm View Phase 1 and the Court Road Emergency Housing Scheme developments with good progress being made on the St Cyres Road, Hayeswood Road and Hayes Road developments. We have also continued to offer a One Stop Shop support service in both Barry and Penarth resulting in a positive impact on service users which is most apparent in terms of improved housing situation, economic and financial situation and personal health and well-being.



This work will be ever more important in the coming year, and we will continue to support those struggling with the cost of living and experiencing, financial difficulties, problems with their housing or struggling to access suitable employment. Further schemes will be developed, including "A Warm Welcome" to offer warm spaces throughout the coming autumn and winter.

## Involving our Communities

Involving and engaging with our communities is central to everything we do. Engaging with our communities during the pandemic was not only essential but a lifeline to many of our most vulnerable and isolated citizens. Working alongside Glamorgan Voluntary Services, we have continued to raise the profile of volunteering through the Vale Heroes website and galvanised support in communities to take action in areas that matter most to our citizens. Throughout the course of the pandemic we also continued to support our vulnerable citizens in terms of accessing



transport to vaccination and testing centres. We also continue to engage with our local businesses and community groups on how we can offer support that will build organisational resilience in testing times. Learning from the legacy of 'Vale Heroes', we want to capitalise on our previous success by **building upon existing relationships as we adapt to new ways of working in the modern world, reflecting changes in technology and reshaping our services to ensure they are fit for the future. This is reflected in our response to the cost of living work referenced earlier in this report.**

Citizens and communities are 'our experts', they know their communities and understand what they want from public services and are best placed to identify what needs improve. Therefore, we are committed to becoming a 'listening organisation'. This requires us as an organisation to be able to better understand the connections whether it be between people, places and their experiences in order to influence change and inform future service developments. In order to do this we need to effectively engage and listen to our communities to not only improve our services but to also contribute to enhancing the overall well-being of our citizens. We know that people engage with what they feel part of and what they value. Therefore, developing as a 'listening organisation' that effectively engages with its citizens and local communities is indispensable when it comes to developing a sense of ownership in local decision-making and service delivery.

Community engagement enables us to better understand our communities' needs and aspirations, however, it is not without its challenges. A key element of challenge is how we **engage with and effectively identify the needs of an increasingly diverse and evolving population to ensure that our services are fit for the future and are informed by 'lived experience'**. Another key area of challenge is how we **overcome barriers to engagement to increase public participation and how can we demonstrate our 'listening culture' through our decision-making processes. Finally, there are challenges associated with improving public awareness and understanding of the Council, its functions and its finances to enhance public engagement particularly amongst seldom heard groups and/or those with protected characteristics.**

Moving forward we intend to focus on embedding a 'listening culture' that will strengthen our approach to engagement with our service users and our communities through the delivery of our new [Public Participation Strategy 2022-2025](#). This Strategy will not only redefine how we engage the views of our citizens but will be a powerful enabling tool to support us in the redesign and co-production of services, so they are fit for both now and the future. The Participate Programme will be mobilised in 2022/23 to deliver the Strategy's commitments in practice and at pace, involving elected members, staff and partners.

In terms of our priorities going forward, developing this 'listening' approach is going to be vital in building on our foundations for a community conversation on climate change. This will see community-based conversations that will use a diverse range of engagement methods such as social media platforms, community connectors and face-to-face conversations. Our focus will also be on taking steps to increase participation amongst 'undiscovered voices' whether it be young people or individuals with protected characteristics to help shape and inform the work of the Council and enrich people's lives.



## Providing Care and Support



The social care system is under significant pressure due to the rising demand for our services and tackling challenges associated with our capacity. Progress on reforming social care has repeatedly stalled over the years and the pandemic has brought into sharp focus the challenges facing social care and in some instances has only served to further exacerbate the issues around demand and capacity.

The insufficient social care capacity to meet growth in demand for social care services is not just in the context of the volume of demand, but also the severity and complexity of need. In common with the position across Wales, there are increasing numbers of Children Looked After in the Vale with complex needs requiring care and support. 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. Similarly, we are witnessing an increasingly ageing population in the Vale of Glamorgan. Our citizens are living longer and are in turn presenting with more complex needs that places further pressure on our budgets and our ability to meet their care and support needs.

The increased demand for social care services has also been driven by the pandemic, as those recovering from Covid often have many weeks/months of recuperation and may require some form of reablement package or residential care following discharge from hospital. The pandemic has also contributed to the delayed presentation of care, which has made it difficult to maximise opportunities to signpost individuals to preventative care and support services at an earlier stage. Consequently, we are seeing citizens presenting at a later stage who require greater levels of intervention/support. The reluctance of individuals to seek appropriate health care support at the most critical time, has resulted in the presentation of more complex needs in our communities. In addition to this the pandemic has created feelings of isolation and has negatively impacted on the mental health and well-being of individuals. A consequence of this has been where informal carer arrangements breakdown, which places additional demand on our service to provide urgent care.

A key factor driving service capacity is the workforce pressures we face. In keeping with the national picture, the Vale of Glamorgan's Social Services is experiencing higher staff turnover/shortages and difficulties within recruiting and retaining some staff (in particular within residential and domiciliary care). Staff shortages/absences within residential and domiciliary care roles have been further compounded by high Covid-19 infection rates amongst staff. The staffing issue is not being experienced in isolation but is also a much wider issue also affecting our externally commissioned care providers, which in turn impact on capacity to offer packages of care. The staff capacity issues being experienced by our externally commissioned providers, exposes the vulnerability of the social care market where there are not sufficient packages of care available to meet rising demand. This becomes particularly apparent where the lack of availability of packages of care impacts on safe hospital discharges and hospital flow.

In the backdrop of these issues, the challenge going forward is on **how we fulfil our statutory roles in meeting the most basic of needs and safeguarding our more vulnerable residents.** The key threat to our Social Services continues to be, **sustaining service delivery and performance whilst managing rising demand against a backdrop of limited resources.**

Good progress has been made to in relation to establishing a capacity planning Working Group whose role it is to oversee the development of recruitment, retention and succession planning initiatives and how workforce approaches are developed in response to emerging demand. We have enhanced the recruitment of



Reablement Support Workers. Consideration is also being given to developing Kick Start opportunities within the Vale Community Resource Service for candidates who can drive. We have worked in collaboration with our partners to embed the Single Point of Access (SPOA) into a broader Wellbeing Matters service to ensure we can effectively integrate our resources to meet the needs of individuals at the right time and with the right team/professional. We have agreed to establish and recruit new Social Care Officer posts within Children and Young People Services. This will enable us to enhance our ability to 'grow our own' by building resilience and enhancing retention in key areas. We are also working with social work agencies to explore options for encouraging Social Workers to return to the profession. Within Adult Services, we have worked closely with Social Care Wales in relation to a number of our workforce issues around attraction and recruitment via their We Care Wales programme. To enhance recruitment of domiciliary and care home staff we have also developed a fast-track recruitment programme in the Vale that has enabled us to recruit and train new starters in tandem, so that they become work ready quicker. This fast-track programme was launched in January 2022. The scheme will recruit and train staff for more than 20 care providers operating in the Vale, as well as for roles with the Vale of Glamorgan Council. It is hoped the Fast Track to Care programme will be instrumental in supporting the recruitment and retention to residential care and domiciliary care roles both internally and externally to the Council. Therefore, our focus going forward will be on **building resilience within our own workforce, enhancing stability in the wider social care sector through continuing to work closely with our externally commissioned care providers to improve capacity and develop sustainable care solutions that will enable us to better meet the care and support needs of our citizens.**

A more detailed overview of key challenges and achievements associated with Social Services delivery over the past year is outlined in the Social Services [Director's Annual Report](#).

### **Improving our Economic Infrastructure**

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting local communities and the local economy. It can unlock an area's potential, enable residents to access education, skills, and work opportunities support local retail and business areas, and increase the viability of new sites for homes and businesses. The UK Government have replaced some EU funding with new **funding streams such as the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), LUF is competitive in nature and heavily oversubscribed. Consequently, this has required considerable input of resources with no guarantee of success** at the end of the process. Authorities in West Wales in the Valleys have existing staff in place who are currently managing EU funding programmes and working on projects. This is not the case in the Vale of Glamorgan. Furthermore, if we are successful, the funding demands **significant financial control and project monitoring to ensure delivery of projects** within defined timescales or else risk financial penalty. Approved funds come with an administration fee and the Vale will need to recruit additional staff whereas other authorities are able to move existing EU admin staff into these new roles. We will not know however if we have ultimately been successful in securing nearly £19.9m to transform Barry Docks waterfront until the Autumn of 2022 (it has been indicated that this could be in the Governments Autumn budget statement but there are no guarantees on this). This will see the development of a new marina and lock gates as the centrepiece of our plans, which will serve as the catalyst for the next stage of the regeneration of the waterfront. The scheme also includes a business incubator space which would sit alongside the marina including hospitality businesses as well as a 2 acre linear park. Additionally, there are plans for the construction of a new, green, purpose built water sports facility at Barry Waterfront. Designed to boost leisure opportunities and wider community use of the area, the facility would provide a new home for the Ocean Watersports Trust and will not only benefit local clubs and organisations but also schools, youth groups, and the general public by giving them access to first class facilities to enjoy the water. The new space will also provide meeting rooms, community spaces and classrooms, as well as equipment storage space. The Council has also submitted a draft investment plan (via RCTBC) to the UK government to gain access to over £14m of funding provided by the Shared Prosperity fund and this plan will now be further developed to ensure that the Council and its communities and business benefit from this financial support.

The Council also faces additional economic regeneration challenges connected to sourcing significant investment in linking employment to where people live, regeneration programmes of work have also been subjected to the same inflationary pressures on goods and services. In enhancing our economic infrastructure, there is the need to consider climate change with a particular focus on decarbonising the economy. **At a time when the Bank of England is forecasting a recession, attracting inward investment from businesses will become more challenging, which will have a knock-on effect on our ability to further enhance our local infrastructure.** One of the key factors compounded by Brexit and Covid-19 has been the availability of contractors and labour in the market to be able to undertake key regeneration projects and the rising cost of materials associated with inflation is likely to make the costs of delivering key regeneration projects more costly and potentially unviable if availability of successful funding bids is diminished. **There are also the anticipated challenges in balancing the need to develop an ‘holistic’ infrastructure that not only enhances economic development but improves transport links within our communities, regenerates areas of deprivation, addresses skill gaps and enhances cultural investment.**

During the past year we have delivered a programme of investment in all our town centres, including town centre planting schemes, new café licenses, smart footfall counters and organised business networking event schemes. We also secured funding to support commercial growth within the Enterprise Zone boundary including potential development of a new college site at the airport. We exchanged contracts with Cardiff & Vale College (CAVC) on developing a college based at Barry Waterfront and are progressing design work on the scheme to transform the BSC2 in Barry into an office and leisure facility. Despite the challenging economic environment, we committed £18.74m to schemes across the Vale which will support improvements in our economic infrastructure for the long term. In addition, in-year we spent nearly £5.6m on public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public open spaces and public art enhancements. 189 affordable housing units were delivered, with a further £469,874 in S106 affordable housing contributions secured for new projects. Construction has commenced at Hayeswood Road, Barry (53 units) and St Cyres Road, Penarth (14 units) as part of the Council house building programme, with contracts being exchanged for an additional 32 units of housing at Coldbrook Road East, and Colcot Clinic, both in Barry.

We also need to sustain investment in our schools and housing ensuring we have the right infrastructure in the Vale to support economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The challenges and risks associated with school investment and our Sustainable Communities for Learning (previously 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools) investment programme are expected to increase over time as we are faced with supply chain issues escalating cost of materials which will continue to have an impact on the deliverability of projects. Without additional funding from the Welsh Government to address these market changes, any up-and-coming schemes may not be feasible within current budgets.



The Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly accelerated digitalisation in local government as councils have risen to the challenge of delivering public services remotely. **There is now an increased expectation for digital services delivered in innovative ways to meet citizens’ needs. Maintaining the required levels of investment in digital technology infrastructure to sustain and enhance these new ways of working for the long term in line with growing expectations, will be challenging within existing resources. Alongside this, there is a need to address skills gaps and staff capacity which limit our capabilities for digital transformation.**

Beyond the immediate pressures of increasing service demand and limited resources, we also recognise that there is a huge opportunity to deliver services better, faster and with improved outcomes while staff can also become better equipped to work together to empower our communities. To this end, we have acted ambitiously in investing in digitalisation of our services and upskilling staff, which is helping to improve the

well-being of citizens by making our services more accessible, supporting independent living, reducing social isolation, supporting education and skills and the local economy. In the face of limited resources, a key focus going forward will be to work more collaboratively to identify and implement innovative solutions to deliver sustained digital transformation whilst addressing digital exclusion as service provision becomes increasingly “digital first”.

### **Transforming the Way we Work**

The Pandemic created a unique opportunity to not only understand the services people valued the most, but it also enabled us to look at how to operate our services in new ways. **In response to Covid-19, we successfully adapted to new ways of working and adopted new service delivery models, however, the challenge going forward is whether these new operating models are sustainable for the long term.**

Now, together with rising demands for our services, the need to help people with increasingly complex health needs, the widening gap between poverty and prosperity, climate change and digital advancement, requires a new transformative approach that will enable the Council to become resilient and deliver more with less.

In transforming the way we work the **key challenges will be how we tackle Climate Change (including decarbonisation), how we lift people out of poverty, how we build, empower and engage our communities and how we maximise the potential of partnerships to effect change and enhance the well-being of our communities.** This will require greater innovation in the way we work, to embrace new models that enable us to operate service in an agile way. We will also need to use our assets more efficiently, push forward our digital agenda, develop and support our workforce and secure commercial opportunities and investments. This will not be easy and the approaches we will take will be many and varied. There is no one ‘right way’ to do things as we approach new territory and lead the way for change.

In line with our approach, through our Strong Communities Fund, we financially supported 26 community-led groups and organisations. 22 wards have received £1.127m of funding during the year supporting sustainable community initiatives and to benefit residents. We successfully completed the first stage of transfers of outdoor sports sites with all bowls clubs now operating independently of the Council. We also developed a public engagement database and rolling calendar of activities and adopted the ‘Participate Vale’ portal for e-petitions and engagement activities.

In 2020 the Council launched its first Local Authority Trading Company, The Big Fresh Catering Company, designed to enhance the provision of school meals, and generate new streams of revenue via public trade. This model allows for all surplus to be reinvested into local schools and does not require subsidies from the Local Authority. This past year, the Big Fresh has continued to grow, working in partnership with Penarth Pier Pavilion to re-open the venue to the public and ensure its financial viability. The venture continues to yield a number of benefits to local education and communities, including financial support to schools from its surplus, grant funding for a number of programmes including extension of the school day provision, supporting well-being centres, food pods, outdoor learning environments as well as community groups such as local football clubs and arts groups. These investments would not have been possible without this innovative operating model, and the partnership working between The Big Fresh Catering Company, the Council, school leaders and our local communities. This model and the lessons learned are helping to inform future innovative models in a number of service areas across the Council.

Reflecting upon previous reshaping activity and lessons learned from the pandemic, we have **refocused our Reshaping Strategy** and identified three areas of opportunity such as taking action on big community issues, changing the way we work and: opportunities to use our resources differently. The future emphasis of our transformational programme will be extended to incorporate consideration of the Council's community leadership role and innovation in the ways the Council operates, in addition to the focus around resource utilisation.



### **Financial Outlook**

The Council currently faces **many financial challenges associated with the UK's exit from the European Union, the significant financial cost of the pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the economic shock from the rising cost of living.** Significant steps have already been taken to effectively manage and reduce our costs, without it compromising our standards of customer service. The Reshaping Programme has been instrumental in identifying and securing service efficiencies and savings through reshaping our services which has looked at service redesign charging for services, delivering services in partnership locally with other public bodies and/or over a regional footprint. However, the cost of delivering services is still rising and adding more pressure than in previous years. Although the funding received from Welsh Government in the last two years has been higher than anticipated it has not been enough to address budgetary cuts in previous years and although the Council and local businesses benefited from additional Covid-19 related recovery funding, it has not fully covered the financial impact associated with our response and recovery from the pandemic. **It is also anticipated that inflationary pressures such as the rising cost of food, materials and energy prices alongside cost pressures associated with becoming a 'living wage' employer will impact our budgets as will an increasingly ageing population and a growing number of children and young people presenting with social, economic, mental well-being and complex additional learning needs.** Our projections outlined in our [2 Budget Strategy 2023/24](#) indicate that, even with an increase in Welsh Government funding, there will still be a shortfall that would require the Council to make reductions in spending therefore impacting the services we currently deliver.

The Council's challenges associated with constrained finances and rapidly rising demand for critical services are well documented. Our ability to take a longer term view in addressing identified systemic issues continues to be hampered by the short term way in which we are funded. We need to continue to lobby Welsh Government to move away from the sporadic use of different funding streams to enable us to make strategic investments based on a clear picture of how critical services will be funded in the future. This approach is in keeping with the ethos of Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The projected cost increase for 2022/23 has grown significantly since the £8.5m reported in March 2022 and this is having a major effect on our budget planning; it will be a challenge to identify savings to meet the funding gap and to deliver them. **The challenge will be to undertake longer term planning for services rather than simply reacting to immediate pressures.** A genuine multi-year settlement from Welsh Government will enable effective financial planning to support service sustainability for the long term. Aided by long term financial planning, our ambition over the coming years is to maximise the transformational opportunities brought about by our response and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure we continue to identify new cost-effective opportunities for service delivery.

## 4.0 Our Self-Assessment Report

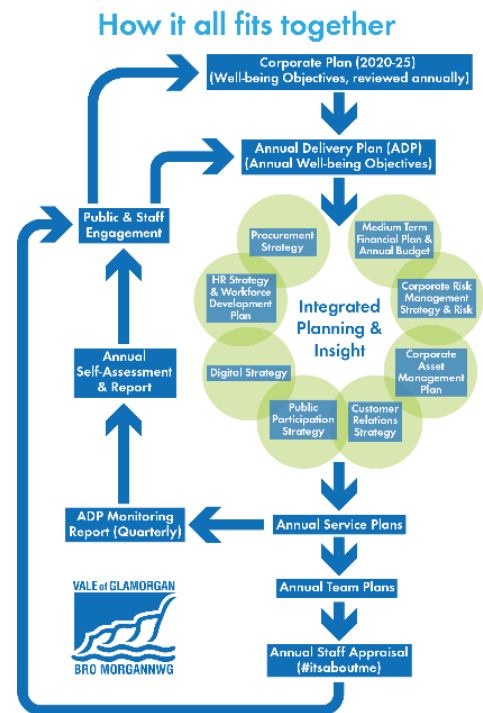
### How it all fits together

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

Our Well-being Objectives for 2021/22 are:

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

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



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

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

### How have we assessed our performance?

Our existing annual performance management and governance arrangements are our key means of meeting our new performance duties. Our approach to self-assessment is integrated within these arrangements which provide opportunities throughout the year for internal and external performance challenge thus enabling us to review at any point in time, how well we are achieving our Well-being Objectives. Alongside these arrangements, we are also developing our internal insight which draws together performance, data and public engagement information throughout the year alongside governance related insights from internal and external audit work programmes which has helped provide a robust evidence base for the annual self-assessment conclusions.

In line with this approach, consideration has been given to existing statutory performance and reporting requirements in specific service areas including Social Services (The Director of Social Services Annual Report), Learning & Skills (Estyn’s self-evaluation requirements) and Regeneration & Planning (The Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report) alongside corporate performance/ self-assessment arrangements, where



there is a focus on ensuring that the insight and evidence sources from these other self-assessment processes is used to serve multiple purposes, that is, to inform both service specific improvement (and statutory reporting requirements) and the broader strategic level understanding of how the Council is operating as a whole, in using its resources effectively and meeting its well-being objectives (as part of the Council's wider self-assessment). Aligning our self-assessment approach in this way demonstrates an integrated approach and will enable us to effectively meet both regulatory and statutory performance and reporting requirements using the same insight and evidence sources.

A wide variety of information sources (including those listed below) have helped to inform our self-assessment judgements and areas for future focus:

- [Quarterly/annual performance](#) and [risk review and reporting](#) associated with the key steps (actions) and performance metrics aligned to our Annual Delivery Plan commitments and our Well-being Objectives for 2021/22. The feedback from Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee informs performance improvement;
- Findings from our [Internal Audit and Risk Work Programme in our Annual Internal Audit Report](#);
- [Inspection reports, Advice and recommendations](#) from our external Regulators throughout the year including the Audit and Risk Assurance process, the [Annual Audit Summary](#) and progress with our [regulatory 'insight' tracker, which reviews monitors progress with implementing our regulatory recommendations](#);
- Findings from the [Annual Directorate level self-assessments](#) on our use of resources (people, finance, assets, performance and risk management, engagement and insight) to support achievement of our Annual Delivery Plan commitments and contribute to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. These have been subject to an internal peer 'critical friend' challenge process involving Executive/ Cabinet portfolio holders and relevant Scrutiny Committee Chairs, the Chief executive and a Peer Director;
- An overview of [engagement findings](#), and [complaints and compliments](#) across all Council services over the past year;
- [Staff Engagement findings](#);
- [Engagement with staff, and Vale citizens](#) on our self-assessment findings and the relevance of our Well-being Objectives;
- Engagement and challenge of our self-assessment findings via Governance & Audit Committee, elected members (via Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet) and Trade Unions.
- Financial monitoring including the [Statement of Accounts](#) and assessments of [organisational financial sustainability by Audit Wales](#) and compliance with [the CIPFA Financial Management Code](#);
- Key insights from the [Annual Governance Statement](#) and [Internal Audit Opinion](#) on the Council's control environment in relation to governance, risk management and internal control.
- Our [Annual Strategic Equalities Plan Monitoring Report](#)

Drawing together these insights have enabled a comprehensive organisational sense check of our progress over the past year in meeting the ADP commitments as aligned to our Well-being Objectives. It has also enabled us to identify and celebrate our key achievements and successes whilst also identifying our key challenges as well as those areas where performance has not been as expected and consequently requires further attention.

## Review of our Well-being Objectives

Each year Vale citizens, Council staff, elected members and other key partners help to shape the steps we will take to achieve our Well-being Objectives through our Annual Delivery Plan commitments. Through this process they are asked to confirm the relevance of our Well-being Objectives. In addition, annually, through our integrated planning and performance management arrangements, we continually review the relevance of our Well-being Objectives, focusing on the intended outcomes, achievements and challenges. Through this

work in 2021/22, we are assured that our Well-being Objectives are appropriate and continue to remain relevant to the priorities outlined in the Public Services Board's (PSB) Well-being Plan 2018-2023 and will continue to complement the work of the PSB going forward.

This year, in line with our new performance duties, we have engaged with key stakeholders including Vale citizens and Council staff during the Summer (August-Sept 2022) and asked them what they think about our achievements over the past year and the areas we need to focus on in the coming year. Having considered our progress with the Annual Delivery Plan, we also asked people whether our four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives continue to remain relevant.

During the consultation period (5<sup>th</sup> August – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022) we carried out an extensive programme of engagement which involved attending a number of summer events, promoting an online survey, and publishing social media animations and various posts. The consultation received 125 individual responses to the survey, and whilst around 2.5k people looked at the animations, we received 30 comments via social media across the various animations. A further 20 responses were received from Council staff. Survey responses received varied from those that answered all questions and those that focused on responding to just one or two questions. A significant number of social media comments related to general complaints/ service requests rather than specific consultation feedback on the survey. Related comments were consistent with the responses from the online public survey.

Overall, there was a low response to the consultation. In addition, it must be noted that as a public consultation, the respondents are self-selecting which means that the responses are not drawn from a representative sample of the population and consequently may include some campaigning, that is, respondents using the survey to express dissatisfaction about a specific issue or decision. Despite the low response rate, a summary of respondents' views (outlined below) provides us with a snapshot of stakeholder views and gives us useful insights which will help to shape next year's Annual Delivery Plan priorities.

What is also clear from the survey analysis is that there is a general lack of awareness and understanding of what the Council does and that we need to do more to communicate information in a way that is easier for people to understand so they are encouraged to participate in engagement activities. These issues are being progressed through our new Public Participation Strategy.

Overall, 81% (of 123 survey respondents) agreed that our Well-being Objectives remain relevant. Similarly, 84% (of 20 staff respondents) were also in agreement overall with our Well-being Objectives. Relevant feedback via social media was also consistent with the conclusion that our four Well-being Objectives continue to remain relevant.

Across the key Annual Delivery Plan themes, the majority of respondents were in agreement (84%) with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. 92% (of 20 staff respondents) were also in agreement with our proposed priorities for the coming year.

## 5.0 Our performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22

**Overall performance (RAG) status for the Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22 is GREEN**




Presented below is a **summary of our performance** in relation to our four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and overall performance of the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22. The Direction of Travel provides an indication of the direction of performance when compared with the previous quarter. For instance, where our performance status (RAG) has improved it is indicated by , where our performance status has remained the same compared with previous quarter it is shown by and where our performance status has declined it is represented with

At end of 2021/22, the overall performance (RAG) status for the Annual Delivery Plan as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives is **GREEN**. This judgement reflects the good progress made in relation to meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the period with 87% of planned activities and targets achieved. In addition, all four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a **GREEN** performance status at end of year to reflect the progress made to date. This performance is positive given the significant ongoing challenges associated with the pandemic, the UK’s exit from the European Union, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the economic shock from the rising cost of living.

Overall, the direction of travel has remained static for all Annual Delivery Plan actions aligned with our four Well-being Objectives when compared with the previous quarter (quarter 3). Although, for performance measures, there has been an improvement in the measures associated with Well-being Objective 1 when compared with the previous quarter.

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

All Service Plan Actions and All Performance Measures	PERFORMANCE STATUS							Overall RAG Status
	GREEN		AMBER		RED			
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures
321	67	287(89%)	48 (72%)	0	5 (7%)	34(11%)	14(21%)	<b>GREEN</b>

Combined total of Service Plan Actions and Performance Measures	PERFORMANCE STATUS			Overall RAG Status for all Well-being Objectives
	 <b>GREEN</b>	 <b>AMBER</b>	 <b>RED</b>	
Total	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions and Measures
388	335 (87%)	5 (1%)	48 (12%)	<b>GREEN</b>




ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related	10/34 (29%)
NON-COVID Related	24/34 (71%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	9/14 (64%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	5/14 (36%)

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

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

Our overall RAG status for 'Working with and for our communities' is GREEN




Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 1		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 1
		 GREEN		 AMBER		 RED		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures
134	15	118(88%)	8 (53%)	0	1 (7%)	16(12%)	6 (40%)	<b>GREEN</b>

ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related	5/16 (31%)
NON-COVID Related	11/16 (69%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	3/6 (50%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	3/6 (50%)

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

Our overall RAG status for 'Supporting learning, employment and sustainable growth' is GREEN

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 2		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 2
		 GREEN		 AMBER		 RED		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions Measures
37	18	35(95%)	17 (94%)	0	0 (0%)	2(5%)	1 (6%)	<b>GREEN</b>

ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related	2/2 (100%)
NON-COVID Related	0/2 (0%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	1/1 (100%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	0/1 (0%)



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

Our overall RAG status for 'Supporting people at home and in their community' is GREEN

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 3		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 3
		<b>GREEN</b>		<b>AMBER</b>		<b>RED</b>		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Overall RAG Status
100	22	90(90%)	14(64%)	0	4(18%)	10(10%)	4 (18%)	<b>GREEN</b>

ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related	2/10 (20%)
NON-COVID Related	8/10 (80%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	4/4 (100%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	0/4 (0%)

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

Our overall RAG status for 'To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment' is GREEN

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 4		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 4
		<b>GREEN</b>		<b>AMBER</b>		<b>RED</b>		
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Overall RAG Status
50	12	44(88%)	9(75%)	0	0	6(12%)	3(25%)	<b>GREEN</b>

ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related	1/6 (16%)
NON-COVID Related	5/6 (82%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	1/3 (33%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	2/3 (66%)

## 5.2 Our Year in Numbers 2021/22

This year, national benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance across most service areas. We are currently working with Data Cymru to develop a national self-assessment core dataset which will help inform next year's annual self-assessment process. In the interim, we have continued to assess our performance by using local trend data and other service data insights where available. Progress against our Corporate Performance Measures Framework has been reported to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet every quarter, including an [end of year \(Quarter 4\) report in July 2021](#).

Below is a selection of performance indicators across our four Well-being Objectives for which data is available and compares our current performance with that of last year's (2020/21). Performance in some continue to be affected by the pandemic, especially where there has been a need to reprioritise resources in response to related challenges.

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





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

**189** job entries via Communities for Work (CFW) and CFW+, up from 98 last year.

**£4.111 m** of investment dedicated to transport improvement, exceeding last year investments of 1.403m

**70** job-placement and apprenticeship opportunities created within the Council, from 30 in 2020/21

**7.6%** average vacancy rate in our main town centres, improving from last year of 9.61%

**54** community led organisations financially supported, up from 29 in 2020/21.

**1262** local businesses supported on funding, business planning and new start-ups, down from 2833 in 2020/21.

**240** residents engaged via Communities for Work Plus (C4W+) initiative, progressing from last years figure of 217

**9%** of young people in contact with the youth service who achieve an accredited outcome, remaining static from 2020/21

**96.4%** planning applications determined in time, improving from 2020/21 figure of 92%.

**90%** Listed Building applications determined in time, increasing our performance from last year 80%.

Spent **£5.576m** of S106 contributions on enhancements to public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public open space and public art enhancements in 2021/22, up from £5,427m

Successfully secured **£2.276m** in S106 contributions to benefit our communities, up from £2.193m in 2020/21



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

Anti-social behaviour along the Cardiff & Vale coastline has more than halved in the last two years, reduced by **55%** due to the success of Operation Elstree (a multi-agency operation aimed at keeping coastal areas safe and family-friendly). As part of #OpElstree, we have also increased: patrols on foot, horse, quad bike and by boat (by 1,000+ hours); use of section 35 notices to move people on; CCTV van presence in key locations; use of safety bands to reunite missing children; fines for illegal parking, littering (1,800+) and joint educational events.

**334 days**

taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant, a slight increase in days compared to 2020/21, 332 days

**19.7 days**

taken to let an empty property, compared to 19.5 days in 2020/21.

**92%** of Supporting

People service users said that the support received has helped them to maintain their independence, down slightly from 92.8% in 2020/21.

**14**

new homes have been created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use, exceeding last years figure of 9.

**97%**

food establishments 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards, remaining static from 2020/21

**913,694**

visits to our sports and leisure facilities from 253,938 in 2020/21.

**13**

new foster carers recruited compared to 10 last year, helping to enhance placement stability for our children and young people.

**189**

affordable housing units delivered, decreasing from 229 in 2020/21.

**13**

new accessible/adapted homes delivered, exceeding last years figure of 2.

**96.5%**

of people who have received a Disabled Facilities Grant feel the assistance has made them safer/ more independent at home, increasing from 95%.

**44.9%**

households successfully prevented from becoming homeless, decreasing from 76.9% in 2020/21

**100%**

domestic abuse victims felt safer as a result of target hardening (safety measures taken), remaining static from last year.

**0.90%**

rent lost due to properties being empty, from 0.88% in 2020/21



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

**100%** of our main road lighting has been converted to LED, up from 68.2% last year.

An additional **29,296.38 m<sup>2</sup>** <sup>\*</sup> of parks, open spaces and highways land sown with wildflowers or maintained as a naturalised area, increasing to 274,993.38m<sup>2</sup> from 2020/21's figure of 245,697m<sup>2</sup>

**70.1%** household waste collected was either prepared for reuse and/ or recycled, slightly decreasing from last years figure of 70.8%

**1 day** taken to clear fly-tipping incidents, compared to 0.92 days in 2020/21

**5** Beach awards Achieved, compared to 7 last year

**10** Green Flag Parks achieved and maintained from 2020/21

**100%** highways were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness, which has remained static since 2020/21

**126 kg** residual waste generated per person, which remains the same as last year.

**100%** of Dangerous Structures inspected within 1 working day of receipt, remaining static from last year

\* This relates to number of m<sup>2</sup> of Parks, Open Spaces & Highways land that has been sown with wildflowers or being maintained as a naturalised area in line with the councils biodiversity re-wilding programme  
274,993.38m<sup>2</sup> of land is equivalent to 38.5 football pitches



## 6.0 Headline Performance 2021/22

This is the second Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) that responds to our Corporate Plan 2020-2025. Our Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22, sets out for each of our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives the steps we intend to take in-year to work towards achieving our vision of **Strong Communities with a Bright Future**. These activities have been shaped by a wide-ranging review of evidence and needs assessments and through engagement with Vale of Glamorgan citizens, employees and our partners in the public and third sector.

The ADP emphasises six cross cutting themes to which most if not all actions in the Plan will contribute. The themes of tackling Climate Change (Project Zero), responding to the cost-of-living crisis; providing care and support; involving our communities, improving our infrastructure and transforming how we work, also represent some of our most significant challenges as a Council now and for the medium to long term future. Outlined below is a review of our performance for 2021/22 based around these themes.

### **Annual Delivery Plan Consultation**

During the consultation period (5<sup>th</sup> August – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022) we carried out an extensive programme of engagement which involved attending a number of summer events, promoting an online survey, and publishing social media animations and various posts. The consultation received 125 individual responses to the survey, and whilst around 2.5k people looked at the animations, we received 30 comments via social media across the various animations. A further 20 responses were received from Council staff. Survey responses received varied from those that answered all questions and those that focused on responding to just one or two questions. A significant number of social media comments related to general complaints/ service requests rather than specific consultation feedback on the survey. Related comments were consistent with the responses from the online public survey.

Overall, there was a low response to the consultation. In addition, it must be noted that as a public consultation, the respondents are self-selecting which means that the responses are not drawn from a representative sample of the population and consequently may include some campaigning, that is, respondents using the survey to express dissatisfaction about a specific issue or decision. Despite the low response rate, a summary of respondents' views (outlined below) provides us with a snapshot of stakeholder views and gives us useful insights which will help to shape next year's Annual Delivery Plan priorities.

What is also clear from the survey analysis is that there is a general lack of awareness and understanding of what the Council does and that we need to do more to communicate information in a way that is easier for people to understand so they are encouraged to participate in engagement activities. These issues are being progressed through our new Public Participation Strategy.

## 6.1 Implement Project Zero

### What we said we'd do

We said we work in partnership to tackle climate change and respond to the nature emergency and to engage with the community about what needs to change.

### What we've achieved

# Implement Project Zero

Purchased 12 electric pool cars as part of our fleet replacement strategy which will reduce emissions by 26,304kg each year. Work has continued to make electric vehicle ownership more accessible through a programme of installing 18 new electric vehicle charging points in car parks in our main towns as well as on street provision. Extended the EV tax scheme which launched in December 2021. We have also adopted a policy that requires the installation of electric charging points in new developments in the Vale.

Developed and are due to commence public engagement to shape our Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Successfully secured funding to ensure the future of the valued Greenlinks Community Transport service.

Established a Local Nature Partnership, agreed and are delivering a programme of local natural environmental improvements.

100% of our main road street lighting has been converted to LED, nearly 15,000 LED lanterns.

Our Council Housing building programme has incorporated new green technologies designed into new housing schemes being progressed at the former Colcot Health Clinic, Barry, Hayeswood Road, Barry, phase 2 of Clos Holm View, Barry and at St Cyres Road, Penarth.

As part of the Cardiff Capital Region, the Council has been involved in the purchase of the disused Aberthaw Power Station.

£36.4m has been committed to the project which will support future plans for the site for renewable and green projects. The masterplan includes: a battery storage facility to support green energy projects; development of a zero-carbon manufacturing cluster which will include green hydrogen production facilities; a green energy innovation centre to promote innovation, growth, knowledge and community interaction with the zero-carbon future of Wales; development and maintenance of a bio-diverse ecology park which will include a visitor centre, providing amenities to the local community and supporting industrial de-carbonisation and future giga-plant facilities.

Secured funding for 6 additional Active Travel schemes through S106 monies which continue to support behaviour change including extending OVO bikes infrastructure, installation of bike pumps/repair stations throughout the Vale. 18 schools have signed up to Living Street's WOW project which encourages children to walk, cycle or scoot to school. Work is also progressing on major transport improvement schemes at Weycock Cross and Penarth to Cardiff Bay, M4 Junction 34 to A48 and Dinas Powys and a transport interchange at Barry Docks.

Delivered improvements to waste management by rolling out new recycling arrangements, an electronic booking system for Household Waste Recycling Centres, working with communities to re-energise and refocus our commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle, opening a new re-use facility and ensuring that all our waste contracts have ethical end destinations for the resale and reuse of recyclable material generated from Vale residents.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will continue to promote active travel, community and public transport and to install electric vehicle charging points. We will develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy and deliver our Biodiversity Plan. We will invest in waste management and our buildings making them more energy efficient and we will review our procurement practices.

### **What you said**

24% (of 121 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to Project Zero with 36% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 40% were neutral about our progress in relation to Project Zero and on balance considered that whilst some achievements were positive, the Council's commitments do not go far enough. Respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to Project Zero highlighted major projects such as the Barry biomass-gasification plant, Model Farm development, Barry Docks development and the Barry Marina proposals as evidence that demonstrated a lack of understanding by the Council of its environmental impacts.<sup>2</sup>

35% (of 20 staff respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to Project Zero with 15% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 50% were neutral about our progress in relation to Project Zero and on balance considered that whilst some achievements were positive, the Council's commitments do not go far enough. Respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to Project Zero cited a desire for staff to contribute to the Net Zero agenda alongside a call for the Council show more community leadership for example, through further review of Council assets and policies. Staff also wanted to see a focus on green infrastructure and biodiversity, public transport and support towards the delivery of EV infrastructure.

These views reflect the complex challenges we face in addressing an ambitious climate change agenda alongside building a sustainable and resilient economic recovery post COVID-19. These challenges are being further exacerbated by inadequate government resourcing, a lack of expertise in this area and the limitation of existing regulatory powers to support the necessary changes for the long term. The Council's aim of climate adaptation and mitigation relies on building effective partnerships, community engagement, infrastructure strategies, education and sustainable services, however, these will take time to develop and need adequate investment. We will continue to promote the opportunities this approach offers to public sector partners, businesses, communities and Vale citizens in order to proactively embed climate change adaptation strategies and strengthen local resilience.

83% (of 123 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year are outlined below and these will help to inform the development of the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24:

- Improving walking and cycling infrastructure, public transport and promoting active travel;
- Protecting biodiversity;
- Supporting residents and businesses to make existing homes and businesses more eco-friendly/energy efficient e.g. solar power, heat pump technology;
- Reducing build on green spaces and ensuring everyone has access to nature;
- Making Electric Vehicle points more accessible and affordable;

<sup>2</sup> The Council takes note of concerns raised but it is important to be aware that issues such as those highlighted above cannot be taken in isolation and must be considered in the round, with reference to all legislation and impacts as well as economic and community well-being. The Council also has a role in explaining both the process that leads to the issues and development highlighted and how this seeks to mitigate impacts going forwards.

- Supporting development of community energy efficiency schemes and joint neighbourhood heating schemes;
- Increasing recycling opportunities for residents and visitors;
- Building a culture within the Council and across our citizens, that respects the environment.

95% (of 20 staff respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Further improving carbon efficiency within the Council's buildings and assets;
- Improving local transport services (buses and trains);
- Providing support to make existing homes more energy efficient;
- Integration of blue and green infrastructure and protection of biodiversity;
- Promoting respect for the environment with a call for both the public and staff to do more.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to our response to the climate change emergency 'Project Zero' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that on balance, we have been successful in meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to Project Zero, although work will continue in collaboration with our citizens, communities and partners to build climate adaptation and mitigation as a long-term strategic priority for the Council.**



## 6.2 Respond to the Cost-of-Living Crisis

### What we said we'd do

We said we would help those struggling with the cost-of-living and experiencing financial difficulties, problems with their housing or struggling to access suitable employment and provide more opportunities for play and sport.

### What we've achieved

# Respond to the Cost of Living Crisis

Packed and delivered a total of 645 food parcels, that were distributed through Council Teams in Supporting People, Flying Start, Employability Team, Intake and Family Support, Adult Social Services, Young People Leaving Care 15 Plus Team, and the Contact Centre. Partners also distributed some to their service users, these were Hafod, Pobl, Llamau, Atal y Fro, and The Wallich.

Supported particular vulnerable groups that are facing pressures as a result of the cost of living using WG funding e.g. one-off payment of £100 for every children/young person eligible for the Pupil Development Grant for the forthcoming academic year, and a £500 payment to unpaid carers and an additional £1,498 payment to registered care home workers, domiciliary care workers and Personal Assistants in Wales alongside the introduction of the real living wage.

Implemented a package of financial support to residents from the UK/WG that includes £400 off energy bills for all households, £650 one-off payment for households in receipt of means-tested benefits, an additional £300 for pensioners, £150 for those in receipt of disability payments and a £150 council tax rebate for households in Council Tax bands A to D.

Rolling out free school meals to all primary school pupils as part of a Welsh Government response to the rising cost-of-living pressures on families.

Established a cost of living information hub on our website, signposting public to support and advice. Also, increased our use of social media to communicate with citizens on cost-of-living matters and raise profile of support and advice that is available.

Established a Multi-Agency Landlord group which regularly considers how we can mitigate the adverse impacts of cost of living on tenants.

Preventing homelessness amongst our citizens by targeting support at loan and arrear payments using Welsh Government funding.

Implemented the WG funded Winter Fuel Support Scheme for those in receipt of working-age means-tested benefits, with eligible households receiving a one-off cash payment of £200 towards their energy bills. The funding will also be used to support a further fuel payment in the autumn.

Partnered with Citizen's Advice to signpost residents to additional advice and support relating to cost of living.

Utilised Welsh Government funding to provide financial support to local food banks and community food initiatives. Also, in addressing period dignity within our communities.



# Respond to the Cost of Living Crisis

130 rooms have been secured until 2023 as emergency accommodation for homeless persons with work ongoing to support clients to move on to more permanent accommodation. Also, provided 11 units of emergency accommodation housing on our Court Road amenity with a second scheme underway which will provide complex need supported accommodation for the most vulnerable clients in bed and breakfast to move into until they acquire the skills for independent living. 930 people have been provided with B&B accommodation over the past two years.

As part of our Community Investment Scheme, the Opportunity Knocks Employment and Skills programme, supported 140 residents through our Vale employability shows, 60 residents through our pre-employment training programme, and 30 residents through our residential employability boot camp. Increased employment prospects by creating 7x6 weeks of work placements within the Council, secured 369 weeks' worth of training via our housing development programme, helped 110 residents gain employment, and helped 961 residents gain accredited vocational qualifications.

Increased take up of play and sports opportunities, targeting areas of low participation through projects such as Active Education Beyond School Day, Welsh Government's Summer of Fun/Winter of Well-being, Active Girls on the Move, Healthy at Home, Family Active Together and also older people 60+. Additionally, there were over 74,500 participations in sport and physical activity through opportunities created through the Active Young People Programme working in partnership with over 180 partners. A further 98 organisations involved in 87 leadership and volunteer training opportunities involving 2206 training hours and 2183 volunteer hours committed by young people through the Active Young people Programme.

Established a one stop information shop next to the Penarth Food pod so service users can drop in to get advice on a range of matters including housing, debt, money advice/benefits, education and skills, Digital Inclusion, free play equipment and how to borrow items from the Benthgyl library of things.

771 residents accessed the Council's One Stop Shop and received multiple support sessions over the year on a range of issues resulting in a positive impact in terms of improved housing situation, economic and financial situation and personal health and overall well-being.

189 young people and adults experiencing barriers to employment and training were supported into jobs through the Communities for Work Programme.

Established a 'Cost of Living Crisis Huddle' which is assisting residents through a comprehensive package of support and advice to promote financial inclusion and mitigate adverse impacts of welfare reform and increasing cost of living.

329 tenancies were sustained 6 months after receiving money advice support, demonstrating that help with maximising income, claiming the right benefits and managing money has made a significant positive impact.

Supported over 300 veterans on issues such as homelessness, debt, benefits, mental health and well-being. Secured £19K in grant funding which is supporting digital inclusion initiatives for veterans.

Supported residents experiencing food insecurity whilst reducing food waste through schemes across the Vale such as the Penarth Food Pod, Llantwit Major Food Access - CF61 Food Share, the Big Bwys Bwyd in Barry, Cadfeld van and Ysgol y Draig.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will work to reduce homelessness and tackle food poverty, providing benefits, employment services, money advice and what assistance we can, to those struggling with the effects of the cost-of-living crisis.

#### **What you said**

20% (of 120 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to responding to the cost of living crisis with 30% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 50% were neutral about our progress and on balance considered that whilst some achievements were positive, the Council's commitments do not go far enough in supporting residents not on benefits, especially working families that are struggling. The main reasons cited by respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to the cost of living crisis, was the lack of support for many working families just above the benefit threshold who are struggling to make ends meet, the view that the Council was not doing enough to support fuel and food poverty and that there is a lack of information to access what support there is.

40% (of 20 staff respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to responding to the cost of living crisis with 40% neutral about our progress. 20% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with our judgement that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to the cost of living crisis, citing a lack of support for working people/families just above the benefit threshold who are struggling to make ends meet, the increase in homelessness presentations particularly in younger people and the greater need for Food Banks.

The Council cannot tackle the impact of the cost of living crisis on citizens by itself and consequently our focus has been on building new local collaborative approaches and strengthening existing ones with key partners in the private, public and third sectors, with a particular focus on long-term solutions aimed at addressing cost of living pressures that ultimately reduce the need for emergency support. This work is being undertaken at a time when demand for our services is at a record high and our financial and people resources are already under significant strain, exacerbated by rising inflationary costs. However, we remain positive that our collaborative approach will enable us to better integrate our resources to facilitate a sustainable approach that not only targets support at those facing the most complex cost of living challenges, but also provides support to those citizens that until now have not met the criteria for accessing support.

80% (of 121 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Providing more support for working families struggling with the cost of living crisis;
- Providing more support for fuel poverty and food insecurity through public/private partnerships and volunteer initiatives;
- Supporting community well-being initiatives e.g. public growing spaces and community groups which have social, mental and physical benefits as well as providing residents with skills to grow and cook local fresh produce.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting residents to help themselves and improve their employment prospects;
- Increasing access to energy efficiency measures and retrofits to help reduce energy costs;
- Preventing homelessness and supporting those who are.

95% (of 20 staff respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Focusing on employment services, getting people off benefits and into work;



- Supporting working people/families that are not in receipt of benefits but are still feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis;
- Scaling up community level support;
- More urgency in dealing with the cost of living crisis.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to our 'Response to the Cost of Living Crisis' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that on balance, we have responded positively in meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to the cost-of-living crisis. The cost-of-living crisis significantly challenges not only how we operate our services, but also how we support our citizens and communities. The crisis itself is being driven by multiple external factors which remain outside our direct control. It has created a scenario where the cost of our everyday essentials such as energy, food is rising over and above average incomes. There are a number of cross-cutting forces behind this evolving crisis, which reflects the complex and interconnected nature of our global markets. Therefore our focus needs to be on both 'future proofing' our services, so they are financially sustainable going forward and further developing our role as a 'Community Leader' by building a package of targeted measures to support those most in need. We will do this by continuing to work in collaboration with key partners across all sectors to develop a sustainable approach to addressing the impact of cost of living pressures on our citizens which may be with us for some time to come.**

## 6.3 Involve our Communities

### What we said we'd do

We said we would ensure people have a stronger voice and are able to influence and shape services and activities in the Vale.

### What we've achieved

# Involve our communities



Residents have helped shape a more sustainable and inclusive Arts service resulting in an increased number and diversity of opportunities for Vale citizens to participate in the arts, cultural and learning activities through: new Makerspace areas at Penarth and Barry libraries; more digital exhibitions and digital activities; a comprehensive program of commercial and community arts events at Penarth Pavilion including a cinema; an annual Vale arts census to identify needs and establish support for local arts organisations.

Service users and key stakeholders have informed a new Advocacy Strategy and the re-commissioning of a Regional Advocacy Services for adults which will help ensure that their best interests are being taken care in relation to their healthcare.

Renewed our focus on building in the voice of young people in all aspects of council business and strengthening the partnership between young people and the Council in shaping our recovery priorities and developing sustainable services for the future.

Encouraged active involvement by residents to promote community ownership of local environmental improvements with residents influencing the designs, play equipment and other recreational facilities in their areas e.g. play areas in Penarth at St. David's Crescent / Owain Crescent, The Grange Open Space, Windmill Lane Play Area, Belle Vue Pavilion, and the Paget Road Public Art scheme, Dingle Public Art Scheme and the Historic Shelter Public Art scheme.

Engaged with communities in St Luke and St Paul's estate of Penarth to make the place cleaner, greener, healthier and connected as part of the 'Clean Slate' Project. This work has contributed to active community involvement in the development of a food pod, a play area for children, a community garden and green house, litter pick-up and amnesties as well as an information hub to support the community.

Adopted a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy co-produced with tenants and leaseholders. This work has also informed how tenants receive communications, with the introduction of a newsletter, leaflets and a new group to monitor service quality. Also more tenants have been trained up as Digital Champions, delivering ICT training and support to other residents in preparation for the expansion of the range of online services which tenants can access.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will continue to increase community engagement and involvement across all services, implement our Public Participation Strategy and increase youth participation and the involvement of all those who are seldom heard.

#### **What you said**

28% (of 121 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to involving our communities in shaping services and activities in the Vale, with 38% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 34% were neutral about our progress with the majority citing a lack of consistency in how the Council interprets/uses the views of residents in informing decisions. Also, many felt that the Council needed to be more proactive in engaging regularly with citizens about what it does from the start and not as an add on or to tick a box. Respondents also considered that more effort was needed to increase public awareness of how and why decisions are made. Limited evidence of engagement and involvement of local communities in shaping Council decisions and failure to listen to and respond to the views of residents (even if those decisions were outside of the Council's direct control) generally and more specifically on key local issues such as the Barry Biomass plant and Rhoose development were cited by respondents as the main reasons for strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with our judgement that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments to involve communities.

25% (of 20 staff survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to involving our communities in shaping services and activities in the Vale, with 20% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 55% were neutral about our progress. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement, felt that there was a general lack of understanding as to how and where decisions are made in the Council and that more must be done to address this alongside providing better opportunities for more meaningful engagement.

The Council understands and values the need to engage and involve service users, citizens and our communities in decisions that affect their lives and communities, consequently, there is a long standing commitment to increase citizen participation in order to enhance our effectiveness, transparency and accountability in decision-making, service design and delivery and overall outcomes. Recent events such as Covid-19 have brought to the fore the importance of the lived experience of our citizens in providing valuable insights to our decision-making, and that people must feel welcome to participate. This is the focus of our new Participation Strategy which aims to ensure that all our stakeholders have an opportunity to influence decision-making in a sustained and meaningful way and we have involved our citizens in co-producing this.

Survey respondents views emphasise the need to ensure that we are engaging with stakeholders early enough so that they can not only shape the answers to local issues/activities, but the questions asked, and the topics considered. In addition, there is a need to provide feedback to stakeholders on how their views have informed the decisions and subsequent courses of action. Stakeholders need to see what impact their involvement has had. We recognise that we need to be more transparent at the start about the terms of engagement, that is, what can be achieved through participation, otherwise stakeholders can feel alienated if outcomes do not meet their expectations. This is particularly relevant for development proposals where the consultation process with the public is governed by legislative requirements which the Council has no control over. We are looking at new and innovative methods including digital approaches to ensure that we are effectively tailoring engagement to suit people's needs and interests to not only increase participation opportunities, but also the likelihood of people taking up opportunities.

87% (of 121 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Involving third sector organisations more in the work of the Council;

- Proactively seeking, listening and responding to citizens (all ages) lived experience to inform how the Council shapes services and decision-making and demonstrating transparency through the process;
- Maximising use of technology to increase engagement with citizens;
- Targeting and encouraging involvement from disengaged communities and under-represented groups;
- Involving communities in shaping and delivering climate change interventions;
- Identifying specific annual targets to demonstrate what is being achieved.

85% (of 20 staff respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Increasing awareness of the needs of people with disabilities for example access to sports clubs;
- Support for Council teams to ensure a consistent and fully resourced approach to consultation and engagement activity;
- Address the lack of understanding regarding decision-making and make engagement more meaningful.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to 'Involving our Communities' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that on balance, we have met our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to engaging with communities to help shape our services and activities. However, we recognise that there is further work to be done to enhance our approach and reach. In line with our Public Participation Strategy, we will work collaboratively towards meaningful, accessible, timely and balanced engagement to help us achieve better outcomes for service users, citizens and our communities.**



## 6.4 Provide Care and Support

### What we said we'd do

We said we would meet the needs of our more vulnerable residents and ensure people have access to information, care and support.

### What we've achieved

# Provide care and support

An additional 5 care agencies signed up to the 'Your Choice scheme' increasing the choice available to vulnerable residents to support and improve their well-being and independence. Agreed a regional care home contract with partners and the Health Board to improve services and outcomes for vulnerable adults.

Over 1,400 vulnerable young people accessed a variety of youth work projects, interventions, well-being support well-being mentoring and homelessness prevention through digital and face to face opportunities.

Successfully delivered Operation Elstree (a multi-agency operation aimed at keeping coastal areas safe and family-friendly) with the Police, Welsh Ambulance Service, RNLI, South Wales Fire & Rescue and local businesses. Anti-social behaviour along the Cardiff & Vale coastline has more than halved in the last two years, reduced by 55. Achieved the reduction despite the number of visitors to our coast returning to pre-pandemic levels this summer. As part of #OpElstree, we have also increased: patrols on foot, horse, quad bike and by boat (by 1,000+ hours); use of section 35 notices to move people on; CCTV van presence in key locations; use of safety bands to reunite missing children; fines for illegal parking, littering (1,800+) and joint educational events.

Established an accessible community hub in Llantwit Major which has helped older people in the Western Vale feel happier, healthier and less lonely by connecting them with their community, support services and social activities.

97% of our food establishments met food hygiene standards and we successfully prosecuted 7 food premises in breach of food standards. Of the 100% of high risk premises inspected in relation to trading standards, 93% of breaches were rectified. Investigated and managed 428 outbreaks of communicable disease in care homes, schools, nurseries, and domiciliary care establishments. 368 of these were Covid-19 outbreaks.

Implemented an Anti-social Behaviour Early Prevention Programme for young people which has contributed to a 48.25% reduction in first time entrants into the criminal Justice system.

We have met our pledges to resettle Syrian and Afghan refugees as part of the UK Resettlement initiative. 73 people/families have been provided with a comprehensive package of support and assistance to resettle in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Recruited an additional 13 new foster carers, 27 new kinship carers and 2 parent and child foster carers, helping to enhance placement stability.

Significantly increased school and community-based counselling for vulnerable children, young people and families offering both digital and face to face service options, including a school based counselling website in partnership with Barnardo's.

Rolled out digital medication in Ty Dy Dyfan with work progress in our remaining residential care homes.

Provided additional education and well-being sessions outside of the school day to support children in Barry and are currently rolling this out in Penarth and the Western Vale. Also, increased school and community based counselling for vulnerable children, young people and families, and piloted a school based counselling website in conjunction with Barnardo's.

Collaborated with key partners (via Operation Elstree) on a CCTV technology upgrade and the increased coverage will make everyone safer and lead to further reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will develop services to support people, we will be more age friendly, keep people safe and be more joined up across health and social care. We will continue to work with children and their families and in our schools and youth services with an increased focus on pupil well-being.

#### **What you said**

33% (of 118 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to meet the needs of vulnerable residents and ensuring that people have access to information, care and support, with 31% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 36% were neutral about our progress and on balance considered that whilst some achievements were positive, accessibility to information, timely advice and support across the board needed to improve. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the above statement cited a lack of timely advice and information to support residents as well as limited support to enable residents to stay in their own homes for the long term as the main reasons for disagreeing with our performance judgement.

55% (of 20 staff respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to meet the needs of vulnerable residents and ensuring that people have access to information, care and support, with 15% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 30% were neutral about our progress. Respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to Providing Care and Support cited that waiting lists for care and support were at an unprecedented high yet staffing levels were at a record low making it difficult to deal with the increased demand for our services.

Although the survey results only provide us with a small snapshot of how we have performed in relation to meeting the care and support needs of our citizens, it provides us with valuable insight into understanding public perception and opinion. It is clear from the findings of the survey that some residents feel that more needs to be done in ensuring we can meet the care and support needs of our most vulnerable citizens. Some key areas highlighted by residents was the need to improve to access to timely information, advice and support and to improve access to support that will enable our residents to live at home independently for longer. In the context of rising demand for our social care services, providing timely information, advice and support is vital to ensuring that we can provide care and support at the earliest opportunity. Signposting our citizens to support services in our communities will be a key element of this to ensure that we can develop a more preventative approach to how the needs of our citizens are met and in turn avert their needs becoming more complex over time. In the context of Adult Services, developing our Single Point of Access for information and advice via our Contact Centre, using digital technology to develop online referral forms and working with partners to develop multi-disciplinary teams are examples of how we can develop a more holistic approach to providing early and timely access to information, advice and support to proactively meet the needs of our citizens. Another key area of focus highlighted by the survey was the need for greater support to enable residents to be able to live independently at home for longer. In the wake of the pandemic, we have seen a surge in demand for domiciliary care. Demand for domiciliary care packages currently outstrips supply which is putting pressures on our capacity to meet the needs of residents. A key area of improvement going forward will be on how we can further develop care capacity in our communities through enhancing opportunities to integrate our health and social care services. This will require us to continue to focus on developing our 'Alliance Model' for integrating health and social care services, alongside developing other models of joint working with the Health Board to develop sustainable integrated services that are fit for the future.

89% (of 118 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Improving accessibility to childcare for working families;
- Addressing retention issues in social care to improve continuity of care to residents;
- Improving support to learners in schools especially due to the impact of the pandemic;



- Improving community well-being (all ages) including mental health in a sustainable way;
- Improving access to affordable housing and accessible housing;
- Becoming a Dementia Friendly organisation;
- Supporting residents to stay at home/live independently for longer;
- More joined up working between health and social care;
- Improving accessibility to information and advice;
- Improving support to carers (paid and unpaid);
- Improving support for older people, those with disabilities and young people.

100% (of 20 staff respondents) agreed with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Increasing services and opportunities for older people, young people and people with disabilities;
- Increasing staffing levels across the Council particularly Social Services;
- Expanding and delivering community projects in the wider Vale not just targeted areas;
- Improving health and well-being support to get economically inactive residents back into work with a focus on shortage areas such as care.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to 'Providing Care and Support' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that despite the challenges and constraints we have faced, we have achieved our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to meeting the care and support needs of vulnerable residents and ensuring that people have access to information. However, we recognise that there is need to enhance timely access to information, advice, support and care so that we can meet the needs of citizens proactively at the earliest opportunity. By working collaboratively with our key partners we are confident we can transform our services in ways that will enhance the well-being of service users and our wider community.**

## 6.5 Improve our Infrastructure

### What we said we'd do

We said we would improve infrastructure across the Vale and invest in our schools and communities.

### What we've achieved

# Improve our Infrastructure

£18,738,499 of contributions have been committed to schemes across the Vale with £5,576,157 spent on schemes in-year including public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public open spaces and public art enhancements.

Completed the annual programme of preservation works on our highways and other highways improvement works e.g. the Penarth Esplanade, Pier and Pavilion.

Developed and adopted an Investment Strategy to support our recovery and economic growth from Covid-19.

189 affordable housing units were delivered in-year and we also secured a further £469,874 in S106 affordable housing contributions which has supported work with partners to increase the supply of Affordable Housing in the Vale.

Worked with partners including WG and Cardiff Airport to secure funding to support commercial growth within the Enterprise Zone boundary including potential development of new college site at the airport.

Exchanged contracts with CAVC on developing a college based at Barry Waterfront and are progressing detailed design work on the scheme and commenced work which will transform the BSC2 in Barry into an office and leisure facility.

Established a programme of investment in all our Towns Centres with a focus on revitalising them including town centre planting schemes, new cafe style licences which have already seen increased interest and applications, installed smart footfall counters and organised business networking events. We also commenced a new spatial masterplan for Barry which focuses on connecting the town centre with the waterfront and other improvements.

Improved school buildings at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg, South Point Primary School, ALN Resource Base Whitmore, ALN Resource Base Gladstone, St David's CiW Primary School, Pencoedtre High School and Whitmore High School.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will review the Local Development Plan, build new council homes, invest in our schools and support our town centres and as part of the Cardiff Capital Region we will focus on planning, transport and economic development across South-East Wales.

#### **What you said**

38% (of 122 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to improve infrastructure across the Vale. 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed with our judgement and 33% were neutral about our progress. Respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement cited insufficient investment in schools, local community facilities, public transport and the highway network as the reasons for this view. There was also a view that housing developments are outstripping infrastructure improvements which is putting further strain of school places, health and social care and other local services.

40% (of 20 staff respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to improve infrastructure across the Vale. 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with our judgement and 35% were neutral about our progress. The main reasons cited by respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement that the Council had met its 2021/22 ADP commitments in relation to improving infrastructure was the poor condition of the Vale's highway network including the volume and flow of traffic, a lack of investment in green infrastructure to contribute towards Project Zero and address the climate and nature emergencies and a need for more affordable/Council housing.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting local communities and the local economy. In order to tackle the climate and nature emergency and adapt to its impact, we know we must invest in our green infrastructure because only with such investment will future growth be truly sustainable and achieve positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for our citizens. Despite the challenging financial outlook, we remain committed and are investing in innovative ways across the Vale to ensure sustainability of our assets whilst delivering community and citizen well-being benefits e.g. the Penarth Pavilion and Esplanade. Given the funding challenges, there is a particular focus on maximising our use of Section 106 obligation and planning gain monies to invest in our priorities including greening our schools, improving active travel facilities, improving existing and creating new green spaces, increasing affordable housing through our housing building programme and creating new and enhancing existing community facilities. The views of survey respondents emphasise the need to ensure that community engagement remains integral to our decision-making thus bringing our citizens with us on that journey towards creating greener, more resilient, and sustainable places for people to live and work.

78% (of 122 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Increasing the number of and access to affordable homes and assisted living accommodation;
- Reducing development on greenfield sites and focusing on reusing our brownfield sites;
- Ensuring developments also invest in local facilities and active travel infrastructure;
- Improving integrated public transport and connectivity;
- Investing more equitably in communities across the Vale of Glamorgan, not just in Barry.

90% (of 20 staff respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Improving the Vale's highway network;
- Integration and connectivity of green/blue infrastructure which should be considered at the earliest stages of planning and project development. This would ensure that adequate space, funding and time is given to its proper implementation as a fundamental component of all that we do as an authority;

- Redeveloping existing brown field sites to make them more appealing to the public;
- Building more Council homes and enabling both social and private developers to significantly increase the number of homes they are building, sustainably.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to 'Improving our Infrastructure' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that on balance, we have met our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to improving our local infrastructure. Work will continue to engage with our service users, citizens and communities in the climate change conversation to ensure that we are investing in the right infrastructure, in the right paces to support our climate change goals and achieve positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.**



## 6.6 Transform the way we work

### What we said we'd do

We said we would change the way we work and take forward innovative projects across all services, improving the services we provide.

### What we've achieved

# Transform the way we work

Through our Strong Communities Fund, we financially supported 26 community led groups/ organisations on projects that have benefited the communities and contributed towards our Well-being Objectives. Of 120 successful applications to date, 22 wards have benefited from £1.127m of funding. Community benefits include: Mobile Benthg in the Vale; refurbishment of the scout hall in Rhose, branding and advertising for Metalidads support group; a climate action project with Peterston Community Council; improvement to play equipment at King George V memorial in Llandough; extension and refurbishment of Rhose community library; kitchen refurbishment at Romilly Bowling Club; Aberthin village hall refurbishment; refurbishment of Vale cricket club showers and toilets and many more.

Successfully completed the first stage of our planned transfers of outdoor sports sites with all bowls clubs now operating independently of the Council. We are progressing the next phase of transfers involving rugby clubs, with Barry Rugby Club the first to be transferred, while discussions are at an advanced stage with the Old Penarthians Club and the Penarth Athletic Club. This will help reduce operational costs for the Council and ensure sustainability of these facilities for our communities.

Reviewed future use of our office accommodation with the Eich Lle - Your Space project bringing together a strategy for office accommodation with digital and people considerations to ensure a strategic approach is taken to this area of work.

Implemented the first phase of a major project to enhance customer experience at our Customer Contact Centre. This has added new functionality such as using maps to better identify incident locations, the ability to create an account so that residents can track progress on their transactions with us, improved email communications to keep residents up to date and usability of forms, all of which have made transacting with the Council online easier.

In line with our commitment to encourage more citizen participation in informing our decision making, a public engagement database and rolling calendar of activities have been developed alongside a new 'Participate Vale' portal for e-petitions and engagement activities. This is enabling us to draw together public perception insights alongside performance and other data insights to enhance and inform our decision making.

We have invested in a variety of digital platforms alongside face to face interactions to enhance our reach and engagement with citizens, service users, learners and partners.

### **Looking ahead to 2023/24, are these the right areas to focus on?**

We will work more with the community, to be more joined up and to make better use of technology, our buildings and our workforce to improve our services.

#### **What you said**

29% (of 121 survey respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to transform the way we work. 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed with our judgement and 21% were neutral about our progress. Respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement cited a lack of innovation in services generally, poor communication, lack of accountability, vague objectives and targets, poor customer response times impacted by remote provision and poor service accessibility for those that are not technology savvy as the main reasons for their disagreement. A number of respondents also stated that it would be helpful to publicise information throughout the year on our performance and achievements.

40% (of 20 staff respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that we have met our 2021/22 ADP commitments to transform the way we work. 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed with our judgement and 45% were neutral about our progress. Respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed with our judgement cited a lack of sufficient support to improve system and process efficiencies, deterioration of services, a lack of staff resource to deliver projects and a lack of Council ambition in the scale of innovation.

Against the backdrop of a challenging financial outlook, inflationary cost and demand pressures, higher citizen and service user expectations, the Council faces significant challenges in becoming more innovative in reshaping its services to protect valued local services whilst working towards delivering a sustainable green recovery from the pandemic. This is new territory and whilst there is no one 'right way' to do things, we recognise the important role of service users, our citizens and communities in making this goal a reality. The complexity of these challenges is reflected in the views and expectations of respondents. We recognise that in challenging times lies the opportunity for a fundamental shift in thinking about how we operate in order to future proof and protect the services that matter to our citizens. We are working on improving citizens awareness and understanding of the decision-making process and increasing opportunities for them to participate in and effectively inform that process. Through our Public Participation Strategy, we are also reframing how we engage with citizens, service users and communities with a focus on tapping into and nurturing capacity so we can co-create solutions to address identified community issues and also to help deliver valued services sustainably.

88% (of 121 survey respondents) were in agreement with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:

- Making the Council website more user friendly;
- Improving community consultation and engagement;
- Tackling digital exclusion and ensuring there are still options for people to access services, especially older generation;
- Being more specific about Council priorities and how we will measure success so people can judge whether they have been achieved;
- Strengthening relationships with community councils and ensuring clarity about expectations given financial challenges;
- Improving community understanding of what the Council does, will do and cannot do and promoting a 'self-help' culture within communities;
- Using new technology in a personal way, moving away from the call centre model;
- Improving service response and quality by getting staff back into Offices.

85% (of 20 staff respondents) agreed with the proposed priorities for 2023/24. Commonly suggested areas of particular focus for the coming year were:



- Making the improvement of services a priority before looking to invest in buildings and technology;
- Developing and offering more services online whilst recognising that we must also improve access to services for those that are digitally excluded such as older people;
- Increasing staff resources to transform services and deliver projects.

The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents in relation to 'transforming how we work' broadly fall within the areas of focus previously proposed for this ADP theme, giving further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

**Our conclusion is that on balance, we have met our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 in relation to transforming how we work. However, we recognise that we need to fundamentally rethink how we operate and be more innovative in our approach if we are to succeed in future proofing and protecting the services that matter to our citizens. We remain committed to transforming our services in a collaborative way involving service users, communities and partners to enable us to co-create and deliver sustainable service models for the future.**

## 7.0 How we are using our resources

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

Our integrated corporate planning approach outlines a series of corporate enablers that support us in delivering our Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) commitments as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. These enablers include assets, finance (including procurement and commissioning), people and performance. We also have integrated planning and risk management mechanisms that support us in delivering outcomes, ensuring good governance and accountability. In keeping with the legislative requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, annually it is necessary to undertake a council-wide self-assessment to demonstrate a clear understanding and self-awareness of how we are applying the 5 ways of working [Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015] in respect of the corporate enablers in order to identify what we are doing well, the outcomes we are achieving and the areas we need to improve.

To inform this work, self-assessments have been undertaken across the Council's five directorates, which have enabled a more holistic self-assessment with informed judgements across each enabler, cognisant of service contributions. These position statements have provided a baseline assessment of how we are applying the five ways of working to maximise our use of resources to support achievement of our ADP commitments as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. They also identify key directorate and service challenges and priorities for the short, and medium to long term.

The findings of the Directorate self-assessments have been subject to an internal peer 'critical friend' challenge involving a Presenting Director, Peer Director, Cabinet member(s) and relevant Scrutiny Committee Chair(s) based on relevant portfolios and committee remits. Overall, changes were recommended to the ratings/judgements assigned by one Directorate (Environment and Housing upgraded its 'people' and 'assets' ratings from 'fair' to 'good' based on discussions) following the internal peer challenge. All Directorate self-assessment ratings were subject to a further moderation exercise involving the Executive Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources to ensure consistency of approach and no further recommendations were made to the approved ratings. It is important that our approach to self-assessment continues to evolve, and we will continue to review our approach informed by the learning and any identified best practice from colleagues across Wales in this first year of meeting the new performance requirements.

Based on the findings of the Directorate self-assessments, we have attributed a council-wide rating of '**Good**' to reflect the positive progress to date in our integrated approach to using assets, people, finance, engagement and data insights and managing performance and risk to support achievement of our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. Applying the five ways of working to these corporate enablers has enabled us to identify the areas across the Council where we are doing well and those areas where we need to further embed this way of working in order to maximise our chances of achieving our Well-being Objectives and contribution to the national goals. The table below aggregates the [Directorate ratings](#) for our corporate enablers into an overall judgement for the Council.

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	Rating
How well are we managing our assets?	Good
How well are we managing our people?	Good
How well are we managing our finance, commissioning and procurement?	Good
How well are we performing and managing our risks?	Good
How well are we engaging and using engagement insight?	Good
<b>Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'</b>	<b>GOOD</b>

## 7.1 Achievements

A summary of our headline achievements over the past year across the key themes of People, Finance (which includes procurement and commissioning), Assets, Performance Management and Engagement and Insight is outlined below.

### Engagement & Insight

- Strengthened how we engaged with our key partners, citizens, service users, learners and our communities in shaping services e.g. arts service, adult and community learning, council tenant services, and numerous community improvement projects.
- Interacted with citizens in innovative ways through a diverse range of communication and advice options eg. interactive web pages, e-forms and apps for specific service needs.
- Renewed our focus on building in the voice of young people in all aspects of council business.
- Developed a public engagement database and adopted the 'Participate Vale' portal for e-petitions and engagement activities.
- Further enhanced volunteer resources to support future delivery of council services and community initiatives e.g. Barry Action for Nature, Penarth Civic Society and Friends of Barry Beaches.
- Built on successful collaborative approaches established during the pandemic with public and voluntary sector partners e.g. new partnerships co-designed with our communities to address food poverty and other challenges such as climate change.

### Performance & Risk

- Strengthened relationships with our partners in response to a challenging financial climate and in recognition of the value that working in partnership to share resources, skills, expertise and experience can have in tackling complex issues.
- Maintained our safeguarding response in the face of significant workforce and service challenges.
- Ensured the effective use of the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards grant funding to support school improvement and pupil well-being.
- Ensured schools made progress with the new curriculum despite the challenges of the past year.

### People

- Effectively mobilised our workforce throughout the pandemic to deliver key frontline services despite significant challenges.
- Proactively engaged with our workforce on upskilling to meet current and future business needs, developing a digital culture and supporting their well-being.
- Increased resilience across our services by successfully identifying and developing talent in our workforce to fill business critical roles.
- Successfully delivered a range of community projects in partnership with volunteers, benefiting communities, enhancing local skills and raising the profile of the Council and career opportunities at the Council.
- Effectively repurposed our workforce in response to emergency situations, ensuring the continuity of essential services and the well-being and safety of residents.

### Finance

- Despite significant financial impact, we have effectively managed our resources ensuring that we started 2022/23 in a financially more resilient position.
- Successfully administered Welsh Government Covid-19 grants schemes which have supported businesses and our communities through a difficult period.
- Robust financial oversight of the Social Services budget and a preventative approach to budget prioritisation has ensured achievement of a break-even budget over the last decade.
- Successfully secured external capital and revenue funding to support our communities and businesses and invest in our regeneration assets.

### Assets

- Spent £5.6m on community schemes including public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public open spaces and public art enhancements.
- Committed £18.74m to schemes that will support improvements in our economic infrastructure for the future.
- Delivered the Penarth Pier and esplanade refurbishments and Penarth library renovations.
- Improved school buildings and delivered new schools at Pencoedtre, South Point and Dewi Sant.
- Reinvested surplus profits from the Big Fresh Catering into our schools and local community schemes including £500k worth of new income schemes for schools.
- Effectively utilised our assets innovatively and differently to maintain service continuity during the pandemic e.g. deployed CCTV to reduce community safety incidents, repurposed leisure centres as vaccination and testing centres, used our Greenlinks service to transport citizens to and from vaccination centres.
- Delivered 189 affordable housing units, with a further £470K in S106 affordable housing contributions secured for new projects.
- Commenced construction of 67 housing units in Barry and Penarth as part of our Council House Building Programme, with contracts exchanged for a further 32 in Barry.
- Sustained our investment in digital infrastructure and accelerated our digital transformation across all service areas which has improved service accessibility and our administrative processes.
- Reduced the number of empty spaces and increased vibrancy of our town centres through a variety of investment schemes.
- Successfully completed the first stage of transfers of outdoor sports sites with all bowls clubs now operating independently of the Council.
- 22 wards and 26 community groups and organisations have benefitted from £1.127m of funding to support local assets as part of the our Strong Communities Fund.

## 7.2 Challenges, risks and opportunities

A summary of our key challenges and emerging risks and opportunities is outlined below.

### People

- Limited capacity of partners and our workforce to progress the social care and health integration agenda.
- Recruitment and retention in business-critical positions across the Council's workforce.
- Long term costs associated with reliance on agency staff in key service areas where the skills and experience required are in short supply locally and nationally.
- Increasing diversity and attracting and retaining a younger workforce.
- Staff well-being and mental health remains a key concern especially due to increased remote and agile working practices.
- There is a need to further strengthen policies that underpin agile and flexible working and time management to ensure there is equity for all. Addressing workload/capacity issues and reducing levels of presenteeism across our workforce.
- Changes to grant funding at a national level have exacerbated our recruitment challenges and the resilience of some Council services.
- There is a need to take a long-term approach to developing our workforce's digital skillsets aligned to new ways of working and emerging technologies.

### Finance

- Our ability to take a longer-term view in addressing identified systemic issues continue to be hampered by the short-term way in which we are funded.
- Inability to make strategic investments on how critical services will be funded in the future, based on Welsh Government's sporadic use of different funding streams.
- Short termism and uncertainty around funding challenges our ability to plan and develop sustainable integrated social care and health services.
- Provider failure remains an ongoing concern within the social care sector.
- Significant concerns with fragility of the external social care market in terms of their capacity and ability to respond to growing demand whilst being subjected to growing workforce and cost of living pressures.

- Significant resource challenges arising from changes to grant funding following Brexit and the complex and piece meal approach to new UK government funding streams.
- A tightly controlled delivery agreement with Welsh Government on the Local Development Plan Review process opens the Council to further risk in the event of slippage.
- The sheer numbers of learners needing support is likely to have long term resource implications.
- The extended duties in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 applying to Early Years and post-16 will put significant pressure on our resources in future.
- Sustainability of the new ways of working and service delivery models adopted in response to Covid-19.
- Sustaining the required levels of investment in digital technology infrastructure including upskilling the workforce will present resource challenges given the rapid pace of technology.
- Schools' financial resilience to meet the challenges in supporting pupils to catch up, alongside growing demand for additional learning needs and services to meet the social, emotional and mental well-being of learners.
- Ongoing challenges associated with the pandemic, the UK's departure from the European Union, the war in Ukraine and the economic shock of the rising cost of living will continue to impact negatively on many Council services and major projects.
- In 2021/22, we overspent our budget by £1m in delivering waste services, partly due to the increased cost of processing waste and fuel costs. Challenges remain due to the uncertainty around Covid-19, Brexit and the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- Social care services remain under immense pressure for demand for its services.
- Ensuring a sufficient staffing complement to maintain service delivery whilst continuing to meet the growing social care and support needs of our citizens.
- The demand for Children and Young People Services has escalated with an increasing number of Children Looked After that present with complex needs resulting in placement demand exceeding availability.

### Engagement & Insight

- There is a need to manage public expectations when engaging, working with and delivering services for our community within the context of reduced funding and less resources available to us.
- There is a need to develop a corporate approach to volunteering/community involvement to effectively maximise volunteer opportunities.
- Delivering our commitment to become a listening organisation, consistent with our Reshaping Programme and Public Participation Strategy.
- Addressing engagement challenges and resourcing a proactive rolling programme of activity with stakeholders and service users.

### Assets

- Sustaining services in line with growing public expectations for digital/remote learning and service delivery will be challenging within existing resources.
- Developing and sustaining the investment, innovation and focus on the actions required over the coming years to meet our Project Zero priorities and contribute to a net zero Wales by 2050.
- There is a need to Develop an Investment Strategy for our assets with a focus on net zero/low carbon and long-term sustainability. Enhancing collaboration with key stakeholders and engaging with communities to identify opportunities to support the decarbonisation of our assets and delivery of major projects.
- There is a need to review our policies and practices, with a focus on embedding a preventative and long term approach to procurement to support our decarbonisation ambitions and ensure supply chain sustainability.

### Performance & Risk

- Managing the legacy costs of the pandemic and our ongoing response and recovery with respect to governance, our operations, decision making, legislative footing and financial considerations whilst delivering transformational change and addressing the most significant issues including the cost-of-living crisis.



## 7.3 Areas for future focus

Our areas for future focus outlined below have been informed by a variety self-assessment processes including the Directorate self-assessment findings; our Annual Governance Statement, the review of progress in achieving our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives; and findings to date from our engagement with key stakeholders on how well we have met these commitments (engagement activities conclude at the end of September).

These areas for focus will be used to inform the development of our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 to be published in Spring 2023

### People

- Address our recruitment and retention challenges.
- Undertake a review our pay structures.
- Enhance our employment offer.
- Collaborate externally to influence employability skills and career choices of young people.
- Improve the digital capability of our workforce.
- Promote a positive remote workplace culture.
- Improve employee well-being and mental health.
- Increase the diversity of our workforce and promote a culture of inclusivity.
- Invest in local skills programmes and employability schemes.
- Develop workforce skills to support the Council's Reshaping Programme.
- Build internal capacity to work with our volunteers to collectively deliver services.
- Improve external collaboration on workforce planning.
- Implement intelligence led workforce planning.
- Develop the leadership skills to ensure we develop a sustainable workforce for the future.
- Maximise our use of technology to improve quality of learning and learner outcomes and well-being.

### Assets

- Develop a rolling Digital Infrastructure Renewal and Investment Programme.
- Embed the sustainable development principle through our Corporate Asset Management Plan and asset management processes.
- Develop a net zero/low carbon Investment Strategy for our assets.
- Improve service integration and sustainability in use of our assets.
- Develop our use of data insight to inform decisions about our assets and in planning for the long term.
- Review our School Reorganisation and Investment Programme.
- Maximise use of our property portfolio especially for co-working/co-location.
- Further enhance and develop our use of Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) within Social Services.
- Improve accessibility of our services via digital means.
- Further enhance Telecare services to enable people to live independently at home.
- Develop and implement a 'SMART' homes scheme to support independence of vulnerable residents.
- Maximise capacity and community assets in collaboration with the Third Sector.

### Finance

- Lobby Welsh Government for a genuine multi-year financial settlement.
- Develop and publish a rolling five-year medium term financial plan.
- Involve service users and our communities in redesigning and co-producing services.
- Strengthen capacity and streamline our procurement function.
- Develop a sustainable ethical procurement policy.
- Develop a social value framework linked to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.
- Develop an Investment Strategy to ensure services are sustainable both now and in the future.
- Update our Leisure Strategy to promote participation in physical activities and well-being.
- Publish easy to understand financial reports for the public and other stakeholders.
- Improve the challenge to schools and their governing bodies on financial positions.
- Maximise use of grant funding across Council services to target resources effectively towards innovation and transformation.
- Review internal charging arrangements to maximise capital spending.
- Manage placement demand for children and young people.
- Address demand management issues facing social care through effective collaboration and innovation.
- Respond to increasing numbers of vulnerable learners requiring support.
- Collaborate with providers and our partners to build stability within the social care market.
- Focus on developing new models for integrating sustainable health and social care services.
- Meet our requirements for Welsh language provision.
- Improve children and young people's social, emotional and mental well-being.

### Engagement & Insight

- Deliver our Public Participation Strategy to enhance levels of engagement/participation in decision making.
- Increase participation of hard-reach and protected groups in our engagement activities to ensure that views of our citizens are representative of our demographic.
- Develop a long term approach to citizen and service user engagement informing how we plan, develop and deliver services.
- Enhance engagement and reach through increased use of digital tools.

### Performance & Risk

- Develop and resource an integrated approach to using performance insight and intelligence to inform service development and decision making.
- Implement the recommendations from our regulators.
- Work collaboratively to address the long term challenges associated with Brexit, the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.
- Further reshape services in response to a rapidly evolving economic and local government landscape.
- Improve challenge of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.

## 7.3 Areas for future focus : Engagement findings

Below is a summary of the areas for future focus suggested by all survey respondents during the engagement. It must be noted that the majority of these broadly fall within the areas for future focus previously proposed for the six Annual Delivery Plan themes as part of the engagement exercise. This gives further assurance to our self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24. This will be used to inform our Annual Delivery Plan priorities and associated Service Plan actions for 2023/24.

### Public

- Improve walking and cycling infrastructure, public transport and promoting active travel;
  - Protect biodiversity;
  - Support residents and businesses to make existing homes and businesses more eco-friendly/energy efficient e.g. solar power, heat pump technology;
  - Reduce build on green spaces and ensure everyone has access to nature;
  - Make Electric Vehicle points more accessible and affordable;
  - Support for community energy efficiency schemes and joint neighbourhood heating schemes;
  - Increase recycling opportunities for residents and visitors;
  - Build a culture within the Council and across our citizens, that respects the environment.
- 
- Provide more support for working families struggling with the cost of living crisis;
  - Provide more support for fuel poverty and food insecurity through public/private partnerships and volunteer initiatives;
  - Support community well-being initiatives e.g. public growing spaces and community groups which have social, mental and physical benefits as well as providing residents with skills to grow and cook local fresh produce;
  - Encourage entrepreneurship and support residents to help themselves and improve their employment prospects;
  - Increase access to energy efficiency measures and retrofits to help reduce energy costs;
  - Prevent homelessness and support those who are.
- 
- Involve third sector organisations more in the work of the Council;
  - Proactively seek, listen and respond to citizens (all ages) lived experience to inform how the Council shapes services and decision-making and demonstrate transparency through the process;
  - Maximise use of technology to increase engagement with citizens;
  - Target and encourage involvement from disengaged communities and under-represented groups;
  - Involve communities in shaping and delivering climate change interventions;
  - Identify specific annual objectives and targets to demonstrate what is being achieved.
- 
- Improve accessibility to childcare for working families;
  - Address retention issues in social care to improve continuity of care to residents;
  - Improve support to learners in schools especially due to the impact of the pandemic;
  - Improve community well-being (all ages) including mental health in a sustainable way;
  - Improve access to affordable housing and accessible housing;
  - Become a Dementia Friendly organisation;
  - Support residents to stay at home/live independently for longer;
  - More joined up working between health and social care;
  - Improve accessibility to information and advice;
  - Improve support to carers (paid and unpaid);
  - Improve support for older people, those with disabilities and young people.

- More user friendly Council website;
- Improve community consultation and engagement;
- Tackle digital exclusion and ensure there are still options for people to access services, especially the older generation;
- Be more specific about Council priorities and how success will be measured so people can judge whether they have been achieved;
- Strengthen relationships with community councils and ensure clarity about expectations given financial challenges;
- Improve community understanding of what the Council does, will do and cannot do and promote a 'self-help' culture within communities;
- Use new technology in a personal way, moving away from the call centre model;
- Improve service response and quality by getting Council staff back into Offices.

### **Council Staff**

- Further improve carbon efficiency within the Council's buildings and assets;
  - Improve local transport services;
  - Provide support to make existing homes more energy efficient;
  - Integration of blue and green infrastructure and protection of biodiversity;
  - Promote respect for the environment with a call for both the public and staff to do more.
- 
- Focus on employment services, getting people off benefits and into work;
  - Support working people/families that are not in receipt of benefits;
  - Scale up community level support;
  - More urgency in dealing with the cost of living crisis.
- 
- Increase awareness of the needs of people with disabilities for example access to sports clubs;
  - Support for Council teams to ensure a consistent and fully resourced approach to consultation and engagement activity;
  - Address the lack of understanding regarding decision-making and make engagement more meaningful.
- 
- Increase services and opportunities for older people, young people and people with disabilities;
  - Increase staffing levels across the Council particularly Social Services;
  - Expand and deliver community projects in the wider Vale not just targeted areas;
  - Improve health and well-being support to get economically inactive residents back into work with a focus on shortage areas such as care.
- 
- Improve the Vale's highway network;
  - Integration and connectivity of green/blue infrastructure which should be considered at the earliest stages of planning and project development. This would ensure that adequate space, funding and time is given to its proper implementation as a fundamental component of all that we do as an authority;
  - Redevelop existing brown field sites to make them more appealing to the public;
  - Build more Council homes and enable both social and private developers to significantly increase the number of homes they are building in a sustainable manner.
- 
- Make the improvement of services a priority before looking to invest in buildings and technology;
  - Develop and offer more services online whilst recognising that we must also improve access to services for those that are digitally excluded such as older people;
  - Increase staff resources to transform services and deliver projects.