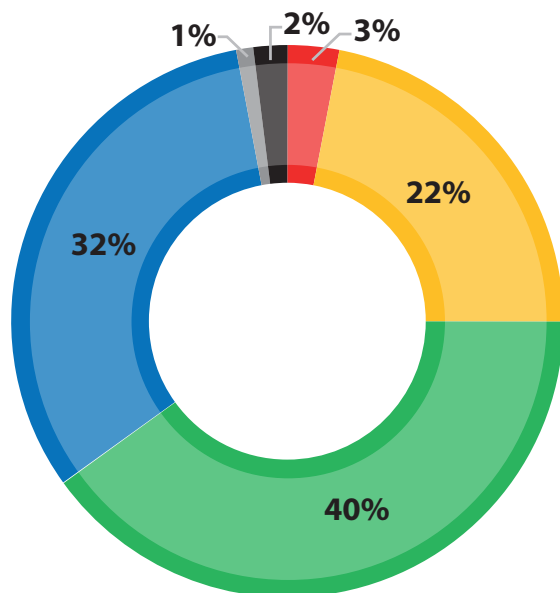


Highlights of our Annual Self-Assessment and Wellbeing report 2023/24

Our County Plan outlines our medium-term wellbeing objectives, while our Characteristics of an Outstanding Council provide the framework for setting standards. Together, they set out the mechanisms for achieving the council's ambitions.

In Torfaen our county plan priorities are helping:

- raise educational attainment
- children and families to thrive
- reduce inequalities
- connect people and communities
- improve the local environment and increase recycling rates
- new businesses start-up
- people choose healthier lifestyles
- make communities safe and attractive
- deliver citizen focused services.



- BLUE (action completed)
- GREEN (action on target)
- AMBER (action off target but with a clear route back to 'GREEN')
- RED (action off target - significant concerns)
- GREY (action not yet due to start)
- BLACK (action aborted)

Our progress against our key activities in 2023/24:

Overall, we have made good progress against each of our Well-Being Objectives, with the vast majority being reported as either on target or completed (73%). However, 22% of actions experienced some difficulties, though we are confident that there is a clear plan to get them back on track and 3% deemed as having more significant concerns.

Nearly three quarters of all projects were delivered, with a further quarter delayed, but with an absolute commitment to deliver. Therefore, given there were 176 activities, having only 3 aborted and 5 causing concern, shows the scale and pace of delivery. Most of this can be attributed to the hard work of officers and the impact of the new performance and project management processes which we've embedded across the Council. Many of the challenges associated with these projects are due to their complexity, with further difficulties associated with inflation, finances, the cost of living and workforce.

A full report setting out in more detail the progress made, against each of our Well-Being Objectives was received by Council in July 2024 and is available to view here. Key highlights on our progress over the last year, against a selection of key activities, under each of our 9 County Plan Well-being Objectives, is as follows:

Some key highlights from the last year:

Wellbeing objective 1

– raising educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain qualifications and skills needed to live positive lives

- **Strategically aligned our children's services** and education services, into a single directorate, which better informs our decisions on how we provide support and intervention for our children and young people.
- **Carried out termly evaluations** of teaching and learning in all of our schools.
- **Received positive feedback from Estyn** on how we are now effectively holding schools and support services to account for their work and improving outcomes for pupils.



- **Finalised our Rapid Rehousing Plan**, in line with Welsh Government's ambition to prevent and mitigate homelessness.
- **Utilised Housing Support Grant Funding**, to convert Pearl House into 15 one-bedroom flats, for homeless people in Torfaen.

Wellbeing objective 4

- make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally and physically

- **Secured £420,000 investment in two active travel/ safe routes to schools' schemes.**
- **Continued to upgrade the Pontypool and New Inn Train Station.**
- **Launched our new Torfaen Veterans' Support Hub in Cwmbra**n which offers a wide range of services, including assistance with benefits and housing, access to mental health resources, and opportunities for acquiring new skills.
- **Launched our new partnership programme, 'Connecting Torfaen'** which will help increase funding opportunities for our Third Sector organisations.

Wellbeing objective 5

- address our climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment

- **Created a new governance regime** to help us raise our recycling rates to meet Welsh Government's target of 70%, by 2025.
- **Expanded our kerbside recycling service**, to include used batteries being collected within black recycling boxes, and weekly cardboard collections.
- **Invested in our recycling vehicles**, including new in-cab technology and staff training, to improve the quality of the service.
- **Introduced new recycling points** for our residents, for plastic bags and wrapping, known as "stretchy" plastics.
- **Offered our residents free compost**, as part of a trial to reuse green waste, collected from local homes – free of charge.
- **Continued to work in partnership with Bron Afon Community Housing** to increase the number of flats

with recycling facilities.

- **Continued to hold Spring Clean events**, with both volunteers and school children to tackle litter hotspots around the borough.
- **Appointed two new Decarbonisation Officers** to provide help and advice to our residents, communities, and businesses, in order to help us meet Welsh Government's 2050 net zero target for carbon emissions.
- **Installed solar panels** on 14 schools.
- **Submitted our Flood Risk Management Strategy** to Welsh Government which sets out our strategy to manage flood risk over the next six years.
- **Developed plans** for Blaenserchan Colliery to become our 8th Local Nature Reserve.

Wellbeing objective 6

- make Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities

- **Launched a new Torfaen Business Direct Service to support new and aspiring businesses** who are looking to set up their business, in Blaenavon or Pontypool town centres.
- **Launched a new business start-up club.** The fully-funded Startup Club will provide entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge they need to set up and run their own businesses, including weekly expert-led workshops and support.
- **Worked with Torfaen Business Forum and 'top 60' businesses within our area** to help consider strategic investment and business plans.
- **Delivered 17 Tech Grants totalling £44,833** aimed at supporting investment in new technologies which has created an investment of £185,000 within our local businesses.

Wellbeing objective 7

- promote healthier lifestyles in torfaen to improve mental health & physical well-being

- **Produced a Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Well-being Strategy** for all schools.



- **Allocated £2.3 million** in Shared Prosperity Funding to build a new floodlit all-weather community sports pitch for the north of the borough.
- As part of our wider investment in sports facilities within the borough, **the construction of 3G pitches** are also taking place at our Welsh medium secondary school - Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw and on former school fields in Llantarnam.
- **Opened a multi-functional community facility at Croesyceiliog School** as part of a £30 million investment which includes a new sports hall and changing facilities, dance studio, conference rooms and a theatre with capacity for 200 people, which local groups and clubs can now book to use.
- **Continued to develop and expand opportunities for people to improve their fitness, health & well-being**, including for Dads by Dads and mother and daughter fitness sessions).

Wellbeing objective 8

– **supporting our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit**

- **Continued to pursue funding to regenerate our town centres:**
 - £9.3 million from the UK Government Levelling Up Fund to create a Pontypool Cultural Hub project. This Government funding aims to create jobs and grow the local economy within a specific area.
 - More than £1m invested in transforming three derelict buildings within Blaenavon Town Centre. (Market Tavern, former bookmakers and former butchers in Broad Street)
- Invited our residents to comment on plans for a new drainage scheme at our **British site** to help improve site safety.
- **Provided additional investment of £1.64 million** to redevelop Greenmeadow Community Farm.
- **Approved a new 10-year plan to protect and improve the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** in Torfaen.

Wellbeing objective 9

– **provide efficient customer focused services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services**

- **Finalised our Digital First Customer Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan**, setting out how we will use Digital, Data and Technology to improve the customer experience and our operational efficiency.
- **Invited our citizens to participate with us in our Torfaen People’s Panel meetings**, so that they are able to have their say on the work the council does or is planning to do.
- **Relaunched our Torfaen Youth Forum**, which is a group that enables young people to talk to us, about issues that affect them.

PRIORITIES & CHALLENGES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD:

We have identified a number of challenges we are facing, associated with each of our well-being objectives. These will need to be overcome in order for us to realise our ambitions. To take our ambitions forward in the year ahead we have published a delivery plan for 2024/25.

Our 2024/25 delivery plan has been developed considering new and existing key challenges and the progress made against our 2023/24 Delivery Plan.

Our Annual Delivery Plan for 2024/25 was adopted by Council and published in February 2024. It moves our ambitions into action as we move into the next phase of delivering our County Plan. This annual approach to County Planning means that our plans going forward will be iterative and agile, taking into consideration any new initiatives, challenges and opportunities that have arisen which can be responded to, throughout the lifespan of the County Plan.

Throughout the year, we will continue to monitor and demonstrate our progress on a regular basis, in order to evidence the success of our ambitions. This will be central to delivering upon our aspirations.

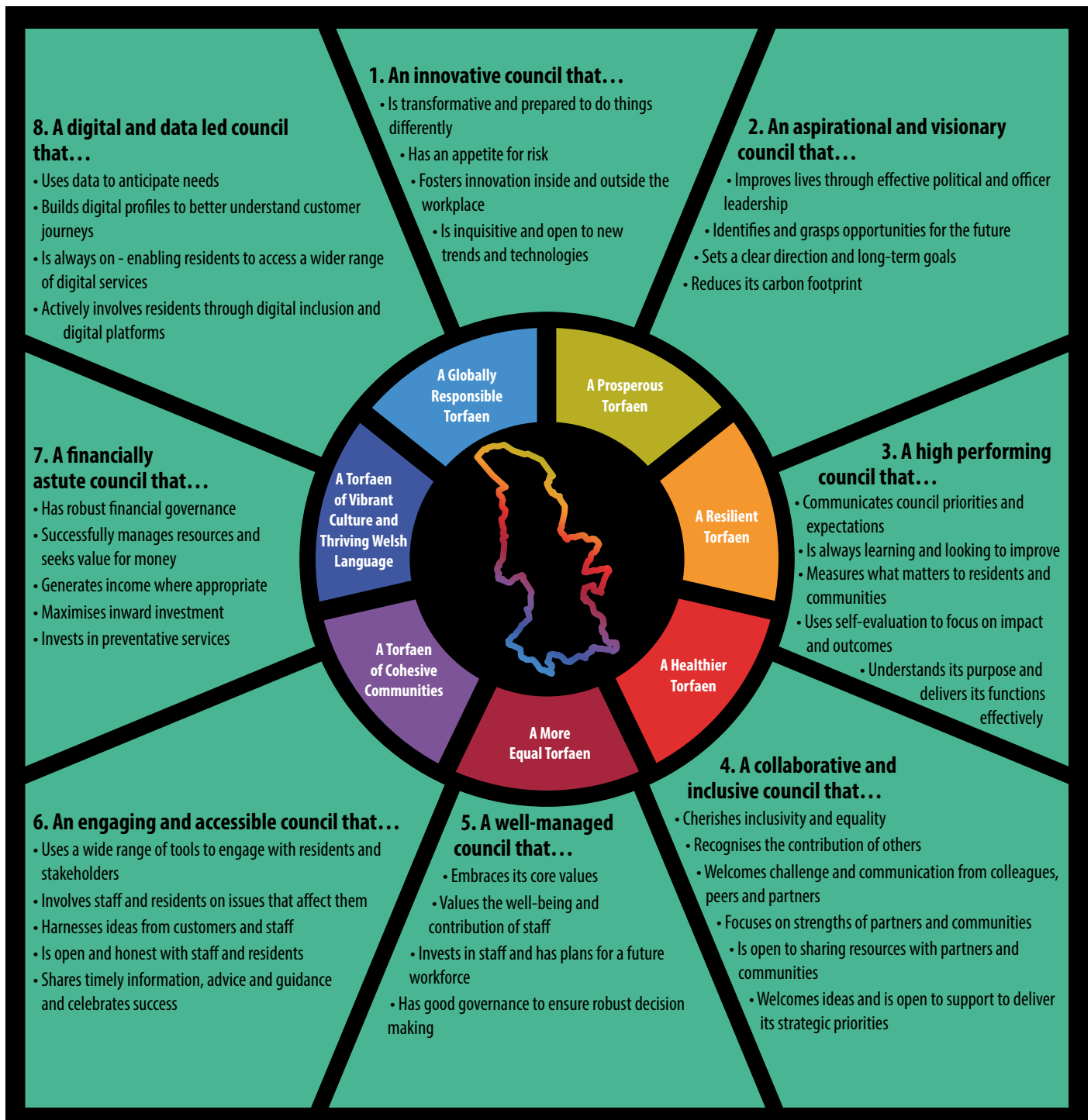


TORFAEN: AN OUSTANDING COUNCIL:

Our own internal 'Characteristics of an Outstanding Council' framework drives improvement within Torfaen Council.

Where our County Plan focuses on the improvements, we will deliver for the people who live and work within Torfaen, our Characteristics of an Outstanding Council framework sets out how we will become a more efficient and effective organisation, better equipped to deliver our County Plan aspirations.

In the same way as we do for the County Plan, we continue to monitor the key actions that we believe will take us forward to become an outstanding Council. Below is an overview of the progress we have made against our 8 characteristics during 2023/24:



An innovative council that:

1

- created a platform on our intranet for staff to put forward innovative 'Rebel Ideas' for change that are shared with the council's Leadership Team and with each other
- developed our service planning processes to be more joined up internally.

An aspirational and visionary council that:

2

- worked closely alongside our public service partners to become a 'Marmot' region in order to reduce inequalities and address key challenges to current and long-term wellbeing across the region
- is developing a master plan, based on the Marmot Principles, which will provide a longer term vision for the county.

A high performing council that:

3

- continues to develop our use of PowerBi to further automate performance reporting across the council
- reviewed how we capture the views of our residents, and gathers service users perspectives to inform and improve service delivery.

A collaborative and inclusive council that:

4

- adopted a 'Community Wellbeing Strategy' which sets out a new vision and mission for the council putting 'communities' and 'wellbeing and prevention' as genuine cornerstones of how we design our services
- embedded our Participation Strategy, providing residents with appropriate opportunities to have their say on: the way we work and the decisions we take.

A well-managed council that:

5

- strengthened our Workforce Strategy, by reviewing our current performance appraisal programme in a way that benefits all staff
- launched a new career development programme to help encourage people to pursue a career within the council
- provided our employees with the opportunity to access fully funded qualifications from the Welsh Government Apprenticeship Framework to help develop their skills and to support their professional development.

An engaging and accessible council that:

6

- has set out a new way of working, 'Rebel Torfaen', which enables our staff to feel empowered to put their ideas forward for improving services, through a variety of staff led groups, considering some of the strategic challenges facing the council and mirroring the challenges being considered by the Leadership Team
- is developing a 'Rebel Youth' group that will enable us to better involve young people in the decision making processes of the council.

A financially astute Council that:

7

- received positive feedback from our regulators that we are a well governed organisation whose resources are generally well managed with good financial processes
- continues to operate an effective framework of financial accountability, which can be demonstrated by our robust arrangements for financial control, through our accounting procedures and financial regulations
- developed 'Project Apollo' which is a council-wide approach with eight separate workstreams to address the shortfall in our medium-term financial plan
- continues to develop a Portfolio Management Office that is improving the way we are prioritising Capital investment and securing value for money.

A digital and data led Council that:

8

- secured funding for a Health Determinant Research Collaboration (HDRC) team that will lead on bringing together the knowledge and research to help us better understand our communities.
- developed a Digital First Customer Strategy, that provides a clear strategic vision on our journey to becoming digital and data-led council
- developed digital profiling to better understand our customers and from this have started to use Robotic Process Automation.

