



Annual Self-Assessment and Well-Being Report 2023/24

October 2024



OUR VISION FOR TORFAEN

Improve the sustainability, connectivity and well-being of our county by strengthening our communities, by creating a thriving local economy and by protecting and enhancing our environment

OUR VALUES AS AN ORGANISATION

Supportive, Fair, Effective, Innovative





Our Annual Self-Assessment & Well-Being Report 2023-24

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Foreword

Welcome to our Annual Self-Assessment and Well-Being report for 2023–2024.

This report is our annual update on the progress we have made in delivering and developing our key services, including details of the work we have carried out to take forward our 9-priority objectives within our County Plan.

As we express every year, our successes are a result of the dedication, creativity, passion and hard work that exists in every directorate across our organisation and within the communities we serve.

Looking towards the year ahead, although we know we are faced with many challenges, there is also cause to feel excitement with what is to follow next. We know the financial outlook remains challenging with no great influx of resources on the horizon, but we are prepared for that and are adjusting how and what we do in order to not just cope, but need to improve upon, as we go forward.

Our developing Communities approach will deliver greater resilience to our communities and the residents who live in them, enabling people to live with greater independence. By 2027, our aim is to radically change the way we operate, placing ‘communities’ and ‘wellbeing & prevention’ at the heart of the way we design our services, so that we can empower our communities to be healthier, better connected and more equal.

Our communities’ approach will sit alongside our commitment of being the first Marmot Council in Wales, complementing our endeavour to improve the way we plan over the longer term. Greater focus on planning over the longer term will enable us to be more effective, in tackling the intergenerational challenges associated with inequality.

Finally, we will take forward our innovative plans to work more closely with Blaenau Gwent Council. Under a shared Chief Executive for an initial 9 month ‘discovery phase,’ we will begin to explore the potential for efficiencies, resources that can work at scale, and potential for increasing innovation and creativity across both authorities.

Reducing inequality and improving well-being is driving forward all that we do in Torfaen, but this goal is also part and parcel of our financial strategy. Early intervention and prevention, improving the resilience and well-being of individuals and communities and tackling the wider determinants of health, are all part of the council’s medium term financial plan. We know we cannot expect to cut services without having an impact on residents that ultimately impacts on the lives of those already most disadvantaged.

Our plans are therefore rightly ambitious, and we know our approach, though different to many other Council’s across Wales is the right way to take Torfaen forward in a sustainable manner and to address the inequality that exists within our communities.

We value everyone with our organisation and as we move forward, it is reassuring to know we can rely on the dedication of all our staff working alongside partners, community groups, volunteers and elected members to shape our success story.



**Councillor Anthony Hunt,
Leader of the Council**

**Stephen Vickers,
Chief Executive**



1. Background

Our Annual Report

Our 'Annual Self-Assessment and Well-Being Report' sets out our conclusion as to how we have performed within the previous year and reflects upon where we need to focus our attentions, in the year ahead.

Though much of this report looks back on what has been delivered throughout 2023-24, it also sets the scene for significant organisational change that is required, up to 2027 and beyond.

Like all public bodies across Wales, we are required to comply with certain statutory duties. Our 'Annual Self-Assessment and Well-Being Report', combines our statutory reporting requirements and statutory publishing duties, under both the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act 2021.

In particular, both Acts requires us to;

- Publish an annual report of our progress against our Well-being objectives (WBFG Act 2015); and
- Publish an annual Self-Assessment Report, setting out the extent to which we are meeting our performance requirements.

Local Government & Elections Act 2021

This is our third report, under the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 and at the heart of this new performance regime, is the requirement for all councils to keep their performance arrangements under review. Councils need to do this through robust, continuous self-assessment of their findings, of which are reported through this annual report.

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (WBFG Act) puts into law seven priority well-being goals that all public bodies are required to work towards. It details the way in which public bodies must work and collaborate with each other to improve the well-being of Wales.

In working towards these goals, public bodies are required to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This report demonstrates how we have linked our key priority well-being objective areas to this Act and our commitment towards it.

2. Selecting our Objectives

Our County Plan 2022-2027



Our County Plan was adopted by Council in December 2022 and will be in place for the duration of the existing Council administration – up to 2027.

The Plan and our objectives have been developed around four central themes that will guide our policy making and service design, over the coming years. Grouping initiatives together into themes has helped to ensure decisions and planning is not undertaken in silos and is focused more around the 'bigger picture' and vision for the County.

Our themes are not self-contained, they are more cross-cutting and will form the basis by which delivery of current plans and all future proposals will be tested. The themes of our work are:

Well-being...

Maximising independence, early intervention and prevention, partnership working and to tackle key drivers of inequality

Sustainability...

Improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being for Torfaen and the world

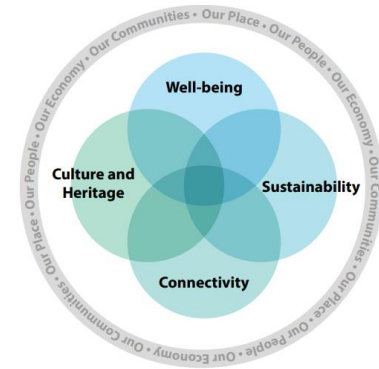
Connectivity...

Welcoming, resilient and empowered communities, joining up skills and businesses enabling a physically and digitally accessible Torfaen

Culture and Heritage...

Respecting our history, welcoming of diversity, proud of our place, celebrating who we are and what we stand for

Our 9 key priorities area's that we will work to deliver on, and of which will collectively form our well-being objectives, throughout the life of the plan, are as follows:



OUR WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES 2022-27

Well-being Objective 1 - We will raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives

Well-being Objective 2 - We will encourage and champion children, young people and families so they can thrive

Well-being Objective 3 - We will tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives

Well-being Objective 4 - We will make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally and physically.

Well-being Objective 5 - We will respond to the climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment

Well-being Objective 6 - We will make Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities.

Well-being Objective 7 - We will promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical wellbeing.

Well-being Objective 8 - We will support our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit

Well-being Objective 9 - We will provide efficient customer focused services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services.

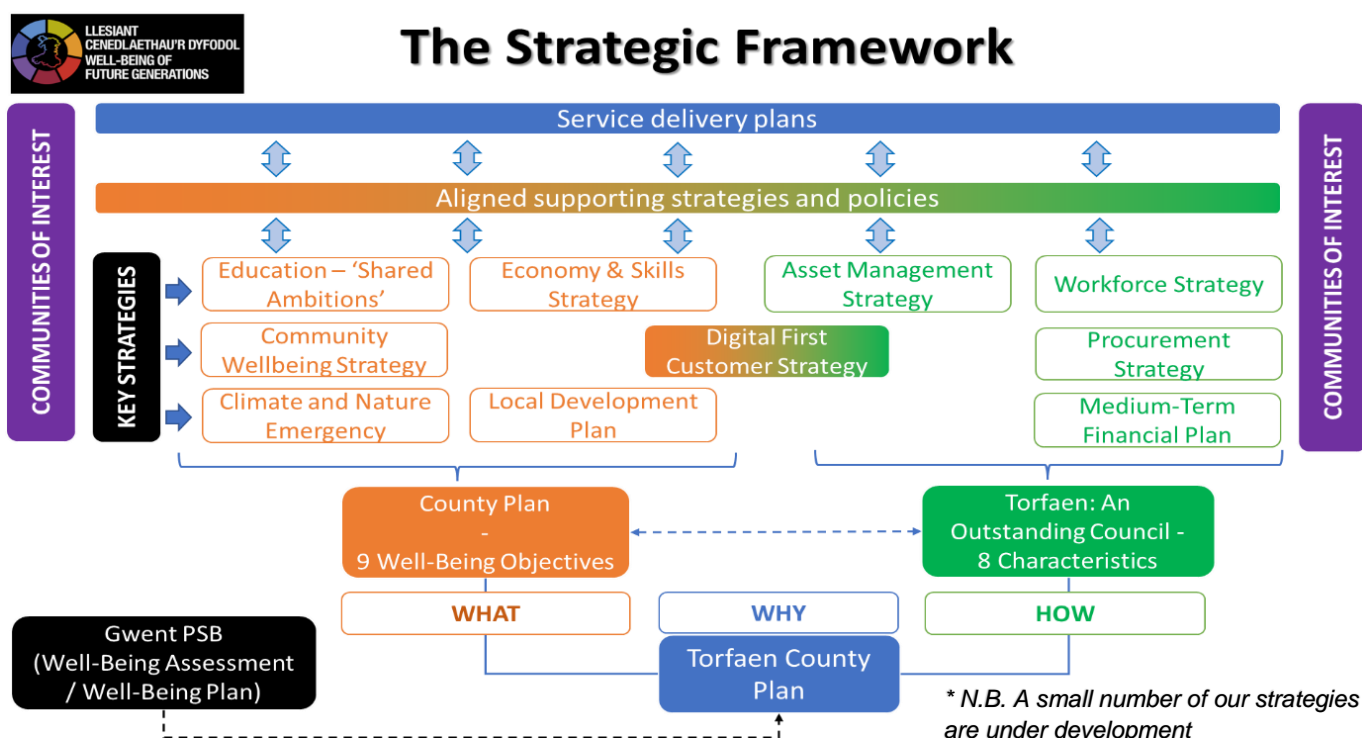
These 9 wellbeing objectives were developed through the consideration of an extensive evidence base, from existing commitments and previous key drivers including the Well-being of Future Generations Act. They describe what 'we will' set out to achieve over the coming years - not just for Torfaen, but in meeting the collective responsibility to improve well-being in Wales. They are also underpinned by:

- Commitments and previous key drivers including the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Collectively, we consider our well-being objectives to be the right areas to focus on, to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen, by seeking to ensure 'that the

needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

- Key strategies and plans which provide more detail about what we are going to do and how we will do it.
- Primary involvement of our communities and others. Particularly during the development of our strategies and plans, to ensure that our priorities and actions are the right ones for Torfaen.
- Secondary involvement which is central to the future delivery of our priorities by asking our communities how they can support and work with us to deliver our objectives going forward.
- Gwent Well-being Assessment carried out by the newly formed Gwent Public Service Board, including the well-being assessments for Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon and their surrounding communities. This told us about wider aspects of well-being across the county today but also how it is most likely to develop in the future, based on challenges, such as: social and economic differences, an ageing population, health inequality, educational attainment gaps and climate change.

This has been simplified within the illustration below:



A full version of our [County Plan](#) is available to read or download.

Sitting alongside our County Plan, is our statutory [Well-being Statement for 2022/27](#), which explains in more detail how we have derived our objectives and how they will contribute to the 7 national well-being goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Our Well-Being statement also acts as a key driver for improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen by seeking to ensure ‘that the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

Introduction of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

Part 2 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, places specific social partnership duties on all public bodies, subject to the well-being duty, as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In particular, part 2 of the Act, has been amended to substitute ‘fair work’ for ‘decent work’ in the existing

'A prosperous Wales' well-being goal, within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act).

Although this is a small amendment, the Well-being of Future Generation Act now sets out that:

- If the national well-being goals are amended, a public body **must review its well-being objectives**.
- If, on a review, a public body determines that one or more of its well-being objectives are no longer appropriate, it must revise the objective, or objectives concerned.
- Where a public body revises its well-being objectives it must publish them as soon as is reasonably practicable.

As part of this annual reporting process, we review our well-being objectives every year. At the end of 2024, our Leadership Team considered the amendment to the Act and agreed that:

- In light of the SPPP Act 2023, County Plan Well-Being Objective 6 should be amended to:

'We will make Torfaen a great place to do business delivering fair work for all by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities'

Furthermore, it was agreed as required through the SPPP Act that the Council's Employee Relations Consultative Committee (ERCC) should also be consulted on this proposed change. Following consultation, the ERCC proposed that the objective be further changed to:

'We will make Torfaen a great place to do business delivering fair work for all by working with local employers & trade unions, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities'.

This will therefore become 'Well-Being Objective 6' from 2025-26.

Gwent Public Service Board (PSB)



The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act has been introduced in Wales to ensure sustainable development is embedded at the heart of the public sector.

The Act means public bodies have a duty to think about people now and in the future when they make their decisions. To do this, the Future Generations Act sets out:

**What public services are aiming for:
Seven national well-being goals**



**How public services should work:
Five ways of working**



Under the Act, the Council has both a collective and an individual duty.

Our collective role:

This involves working with public sector partners, through a Public Services Board (PSB), to set joint well-being objectives, that we will deliver together.

PSBs are statutory partnerships that bring together public services in an area to improve well-being, both now, and in the long term. PSB's are required to assess the well-being of the area they cover and form well-being plans on a five-year cycle. Membership of the Gwent PSB can be viewed [here](#).

Gwent PSB adopted its first [Well-being Plan](#) in July 2023, setting out how public services will collaborate to respond to some of Gwent's key well-being challenges.

The plan runs from 2023-25 and sets out two interconnected well-being objectives and five underpinning steps to be delivered over a five-year delivery period.

Gwent PSB well-being objectives:

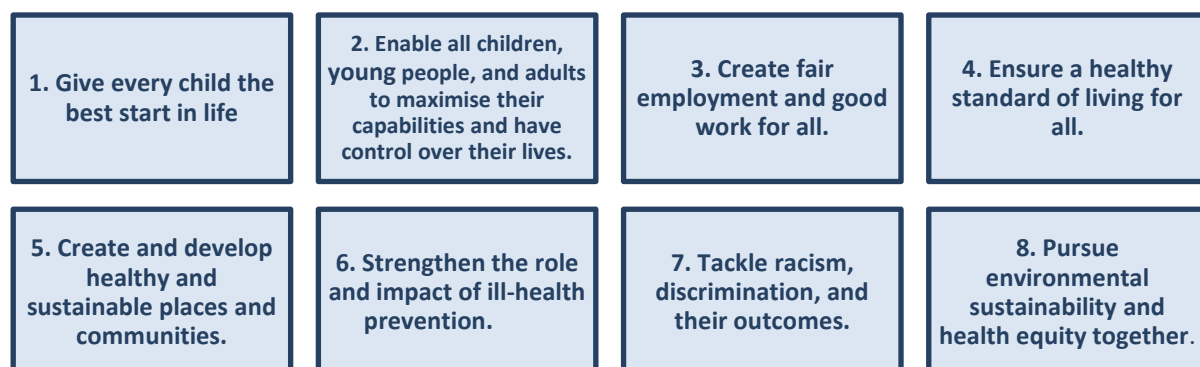
1. *We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.*
2. *We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.*

Five underpinning steps:

- *Take action to reduce the cost-of-living crisis in the longer term.*
- *Provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes.*
- *Taking action to reduce our carbon emissions, help Gwent adapt to climate change, and protect and restore our natural environment.*
- *Enable and support people, neighbourhoods, and communities to be resilient, connected, thriving and safe.*
- *Take action to address inequities, particularly in relation to health, through the framework of the **Marmot Principles**.*

To support the PSB to tackle the high levels of inequality across Gwent, it has begun working with the Institute of Health Equity, using guiding principles identified in Professor Marmot's review, [Fair Society, Healthy Lives](#), for achieving greater health equity. Since the original review, a further two principals have been identified, as important to improving health.

The 8 Marmot Principles:



Two facilitated stakeholder workshops were held during February and March to identify, and sense check the best approaches for enabling effecting change and to make the most of public resources, so that the well-being outcomes for Gwent's communities are optimised. Partner leads for collaborative steering groups have also been identified to oversee the PSBs work and lead specific areas of focus.

At a local level, we have become the first '[Marmot Council](#)' in Wales, meaning we are using the wider determinates of health to plan and shape the work that we do across our organisation well into the future.

We have also been [awarded funding](#) through the Health Determinates Research Collaboration Fund to enhance our research capacity and capability to support a culture of evidence based decision making, in relation to health and health inequalities.

3. Mission, Vision & Values

The ethos of our newly reconfigured Senior Leadership Team continues to place a strong emphasis on collective responsibility and mutual support to achieve shared goals, in working towards our well-being objectives.

The Councils vision is to: ***“improve the sustainability, connectivity and well-being of our county by strengthening our communities, by creating a thriving local economy and by protecting and enhancing our environment”***

The values of our council are, to be ***Supportive, Fair, Effective*** and ***Innovative***.

Our values play an essential part in the culture of our organisation. By values we mean the core beliefs and guiding principles, by which we carry out our business and the relationships we have with others.

Our values will only be made real by the behaviour we demonstrate. This includes how we do things; how we treat others; what we say and how we say it.

The changes we continue to make to our organisation will put our vision and values as well as sustainability at the heart of everything that we do, both in terms of what we are looking to achieve, but also in the way we will work towards our objectives.

Alongside the development of our County Plan, we continue to assess ourselves against a set of internally focussed objectives - our 8 characteristics of an outstanding Council. We believe these characteristics define the conditions that will enable us to thrive as a council, helping us to become more efficient and effective and giving us the greatest opportunity to deliver on our County Plan objectives.

4. Our Self-Assessment 2023-24

We continue to develop a culture where all parts of the organisation aim for better in everything that we do - no matter how well they are already performing. Honest and open self-assessment is fundamental to realising our ambition.

This means we must have processes in place to continually self-assess whether we are;

- Exercising our functions effectively
- Using our resources efficiently and effectively, and
- Have governance arrangements in place, to secure the above.

Our self-assessment report is an aggregation of all of the self-assessment work that we have undertaken in the previous year. Our report has been through a rigorous process to ensure it is informed by a wide array of evidence and that the conclusions being drawn are the right ones. The key conclusions set out within our self-assessment report were reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee, as part of the statutory process in October 2023.

This part of the report sets out the progress we have made against our 2 organisational frameworks, our ‘County Plan’ and ‘Torfaen, An Outstanding Council’, that we continue to use as a means to assess the progress we are making and how well we are performing.

a. Our County Plan - Reporting against our Well-Being Objectives 2023-24

Our County Plan 2022/27 commits the Council to nine high-level ambitions we want to deliver on or achieve during the lifespan of the County Plan. These ambitions are reviewed on a regular basis and as schemes and projects are developed, form part of an annual delivery plan each year - moving our ambition into action. This approach is particularly important so that the plan can be iterative and agile and so that new initiatives, challenges, and opportunities can be responded to, throughout the lifespan of the plan (such as the emerging PSB regional Marmot work). A copy of the [County Plan Delivery Plan for 2023/24](#) is available to read or download.

The “basket” of activities and performance measures, set out within each year’s delivery plan will begin the Council’s journey towards each of our ambitions up to 2027 – linked to our well-being objectives and have formed the basis of our quarterly monitoring and reporting during 2023/24 and beyond.

Our second Delivery Plan highlights the key activities we planned for 2023-24 financial year, in meeting our ambitions, as set out within our County Plan. Our delivery plan focuses on commitments beyond the day-to-day services, to show how we will progress our priorities in meeting our vision. “Respecting our past, shaping our future, we will improve the sustainability, connectivity and wellbeing of our county, by strengthening our communities, by creating a thriving local economy and by protecting and enhancing our environment.”

An overview of progress against each objective is set out below:

County Plan Delivery Plan 2023-24						
	BLUE <i>(action completed)</i>	GREEN <i>(action on target)</i>	AMBER <i>(action off target but with a clear route back to 'Green')</i>	RED <i>(action off target - significant concerns)</i>	GREY <i>(action not yet due to start)</i>	BLACK <i>(action aborted)</i>
1. We will raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives	14	6	3	1	1	0
2. We will encourage and champion children, young people and families so they can thrive	7	11	2	1	0	0
3. We will tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives	15	21	4	0	0	2
4. We will make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally and physically	3	3	2	1	1	1
5. We will respond to the climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment	8	6	7	0	0	0
6. We will make Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities	2	6	8	0	0	0
7. We will promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical wellbeing	5	3	3	0	0	0
8. We will support our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit	2	6	6	1	0	0
9. We will provide efficient customer focused services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services	1	9	3	1	0	0

OVERALL PROGRESS UPDATE

57	71	38	5	2	3
32.4	40.3	21.6	2.8	1.2	1.7

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% are deemed as having more significant concerns.

The above analysis demonstrates that nearly three quarters of all projects were delivered with a quarter delayed, but with an absolute commitment to deliver. Therefore, given there were 176 projects, having only 3 aborted and 5 causing concern, shows the scale and pace of delivery. Our progress, can to a large degree, be attributed to the hard work of our officers and the impact of the new performance and project management processes, which we have 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](#).

The following section of this report highlights our progress over the last year, against a selection of key activities, under each of our 9 County Plan Well-being Objectives:

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1:

Raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives

Improving outcomes for our children and young people....

Over the last two years, there have been several developments within the council that have impacted upon our education services.

As part of our organisational drive to improve education standards, there have been several changes to the leadership and management structure. This has included strategically aligning children services (previously placed within Social Care) and our education services, under one single Children and Families directorate, focused on developing and improving outcomes for our children and families across the borough.

These changes and the robust analysis of a range of whole school data is giving us an improved picture of our schools which informs our decisions on how we provide support and intervention. As a result, all these changes have started to realise tangible benefits for our pupils and us as an organisation.

Termly focused areas have been identified with our School Improvement Partner, the Education Achievement Service (EAS), and over the course of the new school year these evaluations have helped us to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in all of our schools. School improvement partners are currently undertaking the reviews and termly reports are being generated and shared with our educational leadership and Accelerated Improvement Group.

During July 2023 and January 2024, Estyn inspectors revisited our Children and Families Directorate to conduct a monitoring visit, as a follow up to their core inspection, which took place in March 2022.

The Estyn team were on site for a number of days to consider progress against:

Recommendations 4: to improve strategic leadership of learning and additional learning needs (ALN)
Recommendation 1: to improve outcomes for learners, particularly in secondary schools

Both monitoring visits resulted in positive feedback, which highlighted that as an organisation we continue to drive improvements across education services, where the council are now holding schools and support services to account more effectively for their work, thus helping secure better outcomes for pupils and developing a culture where continuous improvement is the main focus.

While the changes we have implemented since the inspection, have significantly improved the leadership and performance within our Education Directorate, we do appreciate that in some areas it is still too early to confidently measure the impact of many of these recent changes; this is why it is an imperative that we continue our forensic approach to improving standards and continuous improvement, constantly challenging ourselves to do better.

It is reassuring that inspectors recognise the relationships between the local authority, our schools and partners have strengthened with increasing openness and transparency, and it is reassuring that Estyn recognised improvements within our journey and the importance that we place upon our priority to improve the lives of our pupils and to help them thrive into adulthood.

The next monitoring visit will take place in the summer term of 2024. Click here to view the [July 23 Estyn Monitoring Letter](#) and [January 24 Estyn Monitoring Letter](#).

It is also pleasing to note, that out of 7 of our schools that have been inspected by Estyn throughout 2022/23, all schools have received positive feedback with no schools being placed in a statutory follow up category of: Significant Improvement or special measures. One of our schools (Cwmbran High) however, does still remain in special measures. This school continues to receive an enhanced level of support from the Local Authority and there are indications of improvements and progress being made, as a result of strengthened leadership within the school.

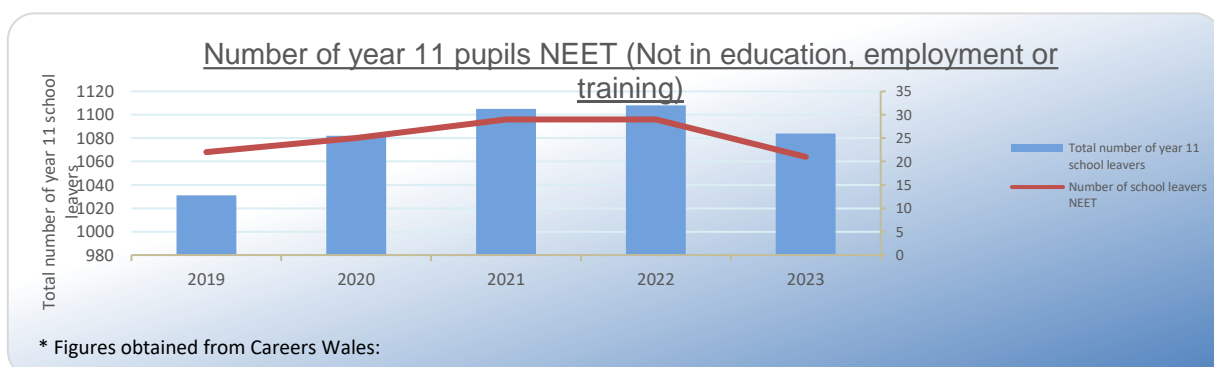
Reducing the number of our young people leaving school becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training)....

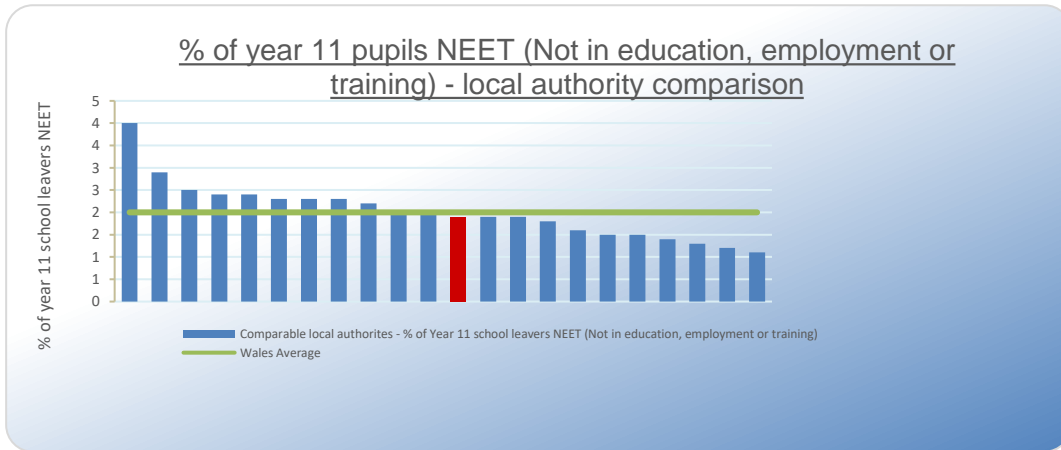
Throughout 2023/24, we have continued with our commitment to provide: effective early intervention for our young people at risk of inactivity or not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Work experience opportunities have been supported in a few different ways by our Inspire Team, who have set up projects/opportunities such as: serving food in our new café within the Civic Centre, volunteering to plant trees within local communities and to undertake bike maintenance projects. In addition, Inspire has set up a process to support our schools in quality assurance and all possible work experience placements for school age pupils.

Our Inspire project has also provided a range of qualifications and courses, as defined by the Qualification and Credit Framework to targeted secondary-school age young people at risk.

In comparison to previous years, our NEET figures for young people leaving year 11 have slightly decreased and is lower than the Welsh average. Whilst we recognise that the number of young people leaving school, not in employment, education and training is still too high, we remain committed to improving outcomes and monitoring/supporting all of our young people who are due to leave school each year.





The % of year 11 pupils not in education, employment or training has been confirmed as being 1.9% for Torfaen for 23/24, which ranks us joint 8th out of 22 LA's. This is an improvement on previous year's performance: 2.1 (19/20), 2.3 (20/21), 2.6 (21/22), 2.6 (22/23)

Providing sustainable schools....

As part of the former 21st Century Schools Programme, we have committed nearly £130 million on new, extended and refurbished schools since 2015.



This investment has continued into the 2023/24 financial year. In February 2024, our Cabinet committee approved the replacement and expansion of Maendy Primary School by awarding a £14 million construction contract to Morgan Sindall.

The construction of the new school building, including childcare and flying start facilities, will start in March 2024 and is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2025.

Pupils will continue learning in the existing school buildings until construction of the new school is complete. The old school buildings will then be demolished, and the school grounds landscaped with two playgrounds, a forest school zone, play equipment and a grass sports pitch.

The investment is part of our approved capital programme and is the next project to be delivered within the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCfL), formerly known as the 21st Century school and colleges programme.

The school will also help achieve the council's energy aspirations with the school design, achieving Net Zero Carbon with low embodied carbon and will be all electric and powered by air source heat pumps and photovoltaic roof mounted panels. The total cost of the new school with pre-construction work and design is £17,131,842 with the council contributing £5,220,608. The Welsh Government has committed funding for the remainder with £10,790,865 from the Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) programme and £1,120,369 from the Childcare Capital Grant.

Helping our young people & adults to gain qualifications....

Across Wales examination results for 2023, were down on the previous year, but not on pre-pandemic 2019 results.

It wasn't just our school pupils however, celebrating GCSE in the summer of 2023 - more than 50 of our adult learners, also collected their results.

This year, 53 learners within our Adult Community Learning facility took GCSE exams - 100 per cent achieved grades A to C in English and 68 per cent achieved A to C in maths. Not only is it proof of their commitment to succeed, but it also reflects the high-quality teaching and learning that takes place within our schools and within our Adult Community Learning Centre's.



All GCSE maths learners were funded through the UK Government's new Multiply programme, which meant they could access it for free.

Helping our young people & adults to gain skills & employment....

In June 2023, we opened a new one-stop-shop for anyone looking for employment or to improve their skills in Cwmbran Town Centre.

Our Employment Support Officers at the new "Torfaen Works" shop are on hand to provide a tailored package of support to anyone living in and around Torfaen, whether they are unemployed or in employment.



Some of the things they are able to support with, include:

- Practical help with CV writing, interview practice and job searching.
- Information about the local jobs market and job matching.
- Financial assistance to meet training costs
- Key skills training including maths, English and digital skills
- Impartial information, advice and guidance to help shape your career and skills plan.

This has been funded through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund and is the successor to our CELT employment and skills advice pod, which was based in Cwmbran Library.

We have also opened a new test centre for anyone looking to work in the construction industry at our Pontypool Community Education Centre. This centre will provide Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards, which are widely recognised as the standard for proving occupational competence within the construction industry.

By offering the CSCS Test on-site within one of our Torfaen Centres, we are eliminating unnecessary barriers by making it more accessible for our residents. This opportunity will open doors into employment and empower residents to become skilled workers in the construction industry.

In total, during 2023/24 we supported almost 2000 residents with employability support (over 30% more than our target).

Increasing our Welsh medium provision....

We continue to be committed to seeking opportunities and overcoming challenges to promote Welsh language skills and support bilingualism in a positive environment, within Torfaen.

Offering families the chance to move into Welsh-medium education helps to increase those opportunities to learn the language.

In April 2023, we opened a specialist centre in order to develop and enhance Welsh language skills for children wanting to transfer from English-medium to Welsh medium primary school education.

The Carreg Lam Unit (which means 'stepping stone') is based at Ysgol Panteg in Griffithstown and offers 12 places for pupils in Years 2 to 6, who are looking to enter into Welsh medium education. Places are offered on a term-by-term basis and see pupils enrol onto a 12-week intensive language programme to improve their Welsh language skills. They are then supported to move into mainstream Welsh medium education.



Since opening its doors this year, Carreg Lam has seen 18 pupils supported to learn the Welsh language to transition from English to Welsh mainstream education.

The pilot programme is funded by a three-year Welsh Government grant and is one of a series of Welsh-medium immersion units in Wales.

We have also opened a new Welsh medium childcare setting in Pontypool.



The new centre opened at the new Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw primary school in Trevethin in April and has 45 places for children aged between 2 and 12, who qualify for the Welsh Government-funded childcare. Gofal Plant Yr Enfys Gwynllyw currently provides Flying Start provision. There are also plans to provide wrap around childcare for children in school and holiday clubs, as well as places funded by the Childcare Offer for Wales by September.

The centre also marks another milestone in our efforts to enhance Welsh-medium childcare and education provision across the borough.

Increasing school attendance....

Our average attendance rates at both primary and secondary schools have improved over the past academic year.

There has also been a reduction in the number of pupils classed as persistently absent, which means they have attendance rates of below 80 per cent - the equivalent of one day every week.

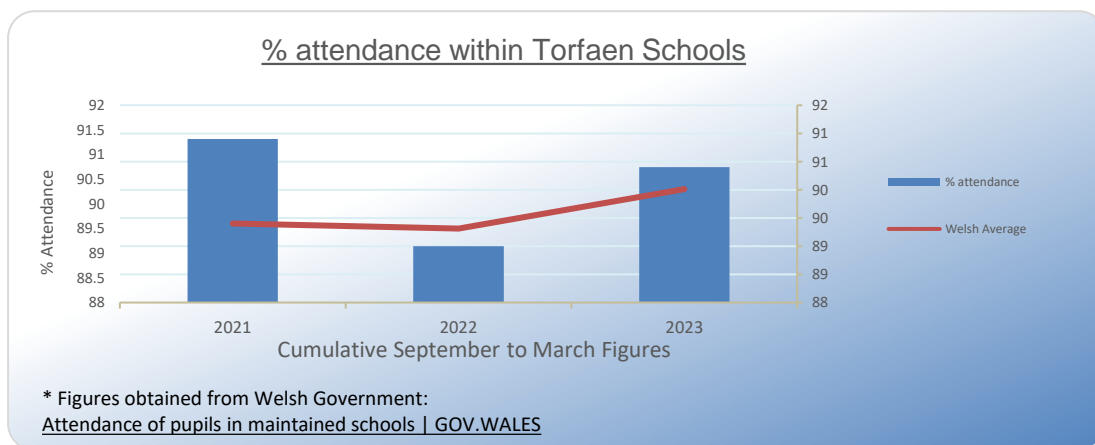
Earlier in 2023, we approved a new Attendance Strategy that reinforces the importance of daily attendance and sets out the help children and families can expect if they struggle to attend consistently. Our #NotInMissOut campaign, has also helped to celebrate the varied benefits of going to school every day.



In March 2024, Welsh Government published their national statistics on pupil attendance within maintained schools. It was pleasing to see that our schools showed the biggest improvement, in pupil attendance across Wales over the past year.

The latest figures reveal that the average school attendance in Torfaen has risen from 88.7% in February 2023 to 90.4% in March 2024.

This improvement has elevated attendance levels across the borough, which had previously been among the lowest in Wales, to above the Welsh average.



Torfaen now sits in 10th place in the table of the 22 local authorities in Wales.

The significant progress in attendance is a testament to the relentless efforts of our education service colleagues, school staff and, of course, families and children. Their dedication and commitment play a pivotal role in this success.

Despite an increase in overall attendance, we have however seen an increase in exclusion rates within our secondary schools. Whilst this is reflective of a national picture, that is not a narrative that we are content with within Torfaen, and a reduction of exclusion rates is a priority area for us within the education service area. As a Marmot local authority committed to building a fairer Torfaen, ensuring attendance in school and giving children the conditions to achieve their potential is one of the greatest opportunities we have to reduce health inequalities across the borough. (A Marmot local authority/Region is a network of local stakeholders committed to tackling inequity through action on the social determinants of health – the social and economic conditions which shape our health).

The council's #NotInMissOut campaign continues to play a vital role in promoting the key messages around what good attendance looks like, and to highlight how schools are creating an inclusive, enriching, and compassionate environment for all learners. It also demonstrates a whole council contribution to our wellbeing objectives of raising educational attainment helping children and families thrive, and our commitment to give every child the best start in life.

Our children's education is of utmost importance, and every day in school counts towards their future success, we are therefore incredibly proud of this achievement, and we will continue to support and strive for even higher attendance rates.

We do, however, recognise that we still have a lot of work to do, to reach our target of an average of 95 per cent attendance, but with the support and collaboration of parents, key partners and the school community, we will be able to achieve this goal.

Our Key Challenges...

Education:

- Increase school attendance to pre-pandemic levels, with an aspiration of 95% attendance.
- To secure improvement within Cwmbran High so that they are no longer in the special measure category.
- Support all learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to achieve outcomes that enable them to progress into employment, education or training (Education, Employment and Training).
- Develop services to manage and reduce the number of school exclusions particularly in secondary schools and in relation to vulnerable learners and learners with additional needs.
- Continue to support learners into Education, Employment and Training when shared prosperity funding (SPF) ceases.
- Progress the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including increasing the number of learners accessing Welsh-medium education and expanding the Welsh-medium workforce.
- Develop the funding strategy for remaining schemes within the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCfL).

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2:

Encourage and champion children, young people, and families so they can thrive

Protecting our young people....

At the start of 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited our Children and Family Services to inspect 'Care Planning for Children and Young People subject to Public Law Outline pre-proceedings'.

The full findings and recommendations from the inspection can be found here: [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

The inspectors from CIW determined that:

"It was clear from the social care records we reviewed that Torfaen County Borough Council is committed to supporting children and young people to remain with their families where it is safe for them to do so. We saw this reflected in an established culture of not issuing proceedings unless other avenues had been explored, which was also evident both in documentation reviewed and in our discussions with lead practitioners."

Whilst we continue on our journey to manage demand, the overall findings of the inspection reconfirm the good work that has taken place in this area and provides reassurance of our direction of travel.

Children Services has gone through significant change in recent years and has amended its structure and professional practices, to manage and safely reduce the level of demand in the service, including the need for statutory interventions. The service area is focussed on continued development and will continue to utilise data in order to shape service delivery.

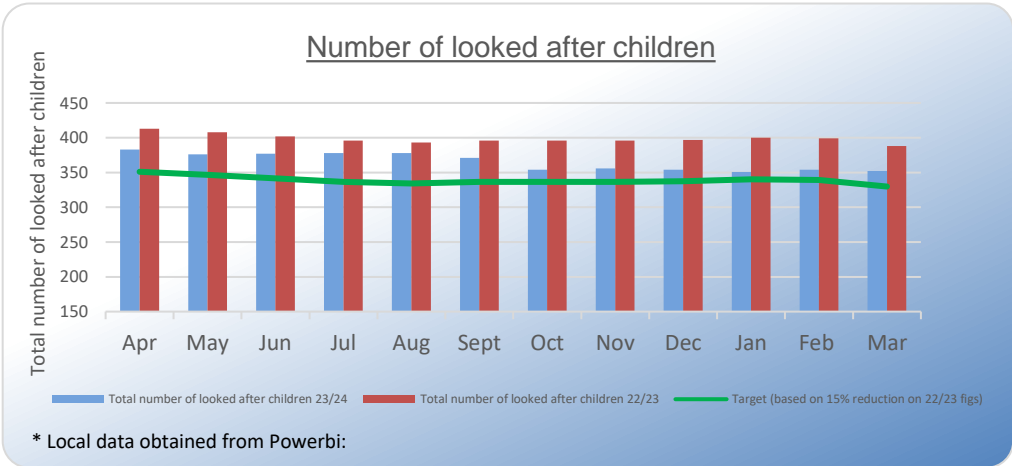
The volume of demand on referrals and contacts through our Children Services Teams continues to rise. A theme in comparison to recent years relates to the number of referrals that are made, which result in no further action. Considerable work continues to be undertaken with partner agencies in order for thresholds to be better understood and taken into account, to ensure that referrals are appropriate, and resources can be targeted, where they are most needed. We are also continuing with our attempts to manage demand with the development of our 'Communities Offer' and approach, to ensure that partner agencies make the right referrals to the right agencies / services and not to social care as a default position. We have been part of a regional piece of work to examine thresholds and referral pathways with our regional footprint partners. The merging of service areas into Children and Families Directorate has however seen more collaborative conversations take place between social care and our schools.

We will continue to monitor and challenge our performance, via regularly quarterly reporting to our Executive Leadership Team and this will continue to be challenged with referring agencies to enable us to have a greater control over demand and in order to ensure that services focus on community development and resilience, that is unless safeguarding responses are required, as a last resort.

We recognise that we have the highest children looked after population per 10,000 (10-17 yr old) in Wales, although through sustained efforts and transformation within the service area, this has reduced consistently, since a peak of 474 in September 2020 to 352 as at 31st March 2023.

Within the last two quarters of the 23/24 financial year, the figures have remained in a somewhat stagnant position. This has caused us concern as we have not fully achieved upon our ambition of a 15% year on year reduction of this cohort. We will therefore continue to monitor this crucial area of performance and challenge the service area in terms of its structure and approach. We will also focus on strength-based decision making throughout the system, whilst ensuring that risk can be managed and moving children out of the looked after system at the earliest opportunity by supporting effective and safe rehabilitation with parents. It should also be worth noting that we have an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers, as part of the national transfer scheme. This is a cohort of children looked after that we are unable to prevent or move out of the system until they are 18, due to their own set of circumstances. We will continue to review service structures and service provision, in order to ensure that we continue to safely reduce our children looked after population.

Within our County Plan Delivery Plan for 23/24, we have set an annual reduction of the **number of children looked after** by 15% on previous year's figures, but despite our target not having been fully realised this year, this needs to be taken in the context of a continued increase of child protection referrals being received by our Children Services Teams.



Further improvements in service delivery, as well as stronger connections to our work across communities and education will increasingly be a priority area for the council.

Throughout 2023, we have also reviewed and developed our accommodation provision for young people and have progressed with the development of our first 'in house' residential provision for children looked after with complex needs. The overall timescales of this development have been impacted upon by a number of variable challenges, which included a significant flood to the property, whilst it was being renovated and a delay in being able to commission a care and support service. This delay has impacted upon our ability to reduce the number of children we have in residential care. This provision will form part of a longer-term strategy to limit the need for us to utilise externally provided high-cost residential homes and ensure that services of the required quality, are delivered. This in-house provision will be operational in 2024/25.

The eliminate agenda which focusses on reducing profit in care has also impacted on supply and cost of placements and it is essential that we move and develop our own in-house provision at pace. The lack of suitable accommodation for children looked after presents a challenge to commissioning processes and is a national issue which has adversely impacted on the use of unregulated placements.

We will however continue to focus on recruitment of our in-house foster carers in acknowledgment that, where possible, children looked after should be accommodated within their communities. Although there is a level of demand that exceeds in house placement availability, we have sustained a high level of in house foster placement usage of 82%.

Expanding our childcare provision....

We recognise that early learning makes a big difference to the way children develop and grow and helps children to have the best start in life.

The Flying Start programme targets families with children under four years of age living in economically disadvantaged areas of Wales. Its comprehensive approach spans from the antenatal period to a child's entry into school, striving to provide the best possible start in life.

In May 2023, we seen a significant expansion of our childcare provision within Torfaen, which set out to benefit more families, as new Flying Start areas were introduced across the borough.

The initiative, funded by the Welsh Government, caters for two-year-olds, providing enhanced support and opportunities, for early childhood development.

It's estimated 251 families, currently access Flying Start childcare within Torfaen, with around 173 more expected to benefit from the expansion and it is hoped funded childcare will be provided to all two- and three-year-olds, across the borough within the next few years.

Tackling anti-social behaviour....

At the beginning of 2023, we launched a new youth outreach scheme to help tackle antisocial behaviour in Cwmbran.



Our youth workers from the Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP) targeted known local problem areas in order to engage with young people and encourage them to attend the centre, instead of congregating in shopping centres and other public areas.

At this facility they are offered free food and have an opportunity to socialise with their friends in a safe environment. The centre receives more than 700 visits from young people each month, with local businesses and the police reporting improvements in antisocial behaviour incidents.

The work is being paid for through the Home Office's Safer Streets fund and we are leading on this work in close partnership with Cwmbran Centre for Young People, Gwent Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

We also continue to work with the Youth Offending Service which provides targeted interventions for individuals who are involved in anti-social behaviour. Throughout 2023/24, they have worked with 12 individuals on acceptable behaviour contracts with two having received anti-social behaviour orders.

Interventions such as this, have allowed us to support 96% of all young people who required intervention for anti-social behaviour to exit the process with a positive outcome, with 51 young people prevented from escalating to injunctions.

Working with our communities & schools to provide play provision for our children and young people....

A record number of our volunteers helped to provide hours of free fun to thousands of children, during the summer of 2023.

More than 20 play sessions were held daily and a total of 163 volunteers - five per cent more than last year - have worked with our 176 Play Service staff to provide a month-long programme of fun activities to 2,831 children. This is 300 more than last year!

The sessions include open access play schemes, specialist respite sessions and 13 Food and Fun camps, which were run in partnership with our Catering Service, who served up to around 28,000 meals over the four-week period.

The children also had chance to take part in activities linked to play, nutrition, physical activity, wellbeing and mindfulness provided by our Play Service.

Families of children who attended Torfaen Council's Food and Fun camps this summer were also given free food boxes, containing a range of essential items for their families.



A total of 1,400 boxes were given out by the Play Service as part of funding received from Welsh Government.

It is also pleasing to note, that in October 2023, our Play Service won the Torfaen Voluntary Alliance 'Heart of the Community award', which recognises groups of volunteers that make a positive impact in the local community.

The Youth Volunteer Programme has been running for 22 years and provides a supportive platform for young people of all abilities and social backgrounds to give up their free time to run community play settings. More than 3,000 young people have been empowered through the project, amounting in over 338,000 hours of volunteering delivered to support every child's right to play.

It helps to give our young people, valuable experiences of working with children and young people, as well as giving them their first taste of the working environment.

The annual TVA Community Volunteer Awards ceremony highlights the contributions made by volunteers and community groups in Torfaen that show remarkable selflessness, devotion, and service.

We recognise and appreciate that our volunteers play a pivotal role in supporting our weekly play and respite sessions, after school clubs, half term and summer provision. They are the driving force behind countless initiatives, and they remind us of the boundless potential within each of us to make a positive impact and create a brighter future for our community.

Recognising and supporting our young carers....

At the beginning of November 2023, a conference was held to celebrate the achievements of our young people who have experienced the care system in Torfaen.

The event was held to mark the end of National Care Leavers Week, which is also aimed to raise awareness of the challenges children in care and care leavers face, and how they can embrace change. In particular, this event is about celebrating these young people and giving them a sense of belonging and, importantly, a voice.

In Torfaen, those in care, aged between 16 and 18, and care leavers, up to the age of 25, are helped by our Torfaen Young People's Support Service (TYPSS).

Working in partnership with other organisations we help our young carers to become independent. We do that by getting to know them and providing them with the support they need that is individual to them.



Within 2023, we've had the greatest number of young people take part in the event, which is thanks to the positive relationships they have developed with our staff and each other. It is also pleasing to host such an event, which acknowledges: the voice of young people who have care experience, the impact of our TYPSS Team and our other partner agencies, in challenging inequalities to enable our young people to achieve and thrive. It is essential that young people help us to shape services, and we continue to look forward to continued participation and engagement.

(TYPSS works with around 200 young people, aged between 16 and 25, including care leavers, homeless young people and young people who are not in education or employment).

Providing Universal Free School Meals for our children....

In response to the cost-of-living pressures on families, we are committed to tackling child poverty and ensuring that no child goes hungry in school. One of the main priorities throughout 2023/24, has been for our School's Catering service to roll out free school meals to all year groups within our primary schools. This is to ensure that no child goes hungry and to promote healthy eating across schools, which also encourages more wider benefits such as improving children's social skills at mealtimes and improving behaviour and attainment.

We are only one of 13 other local authorities within Wales who are offering free school meals to all year groups. To make this happen, we have refurbished 8 kitchens and recruited 60 extra staff within our schools to make it possible to cater for extra children having school meals.

Encouraging and championing our children and young people....

A new food growing project that aims to support young people to progress in and into education; employment and training, was launched in January 2024, by our Inspire Project.

Pupils referred from our secondary schools worked with our Inspire project to help clean up a disused allotment patch in Coed Eva, Cwmbran.

The initial phase of the project runs up until Easter, with the hope that the young people can start growing a variety of crops in readiness for the warmer months.

This initiative will help these young people get the chance to learn valuable life skills, such as gardening, teamwork and problem-solving, whilst working to improve their health and well-being, education and future career prospects.

Some of the produce grown at the new site will be boxed up and sent to local food bank schemes to help people who are affected by the on-going cost of living crisis.

The project also forms part of a wider initiative where food grown in the plot will be used to help shape menus at an Inspire run training café at Pontypool Civic Centre, for our staff, councillors' and visitors.



The Inspire Project has worked with over 500 young people aged 11-20 to date, supporting those most at risk of becoming NEET - not in education, employment or training, by providing them with alternative education and training opportunities.

This project has been supported by the Allotment Association to obtain the plot and we are also hoping to get Keep Wales Tidy support to help with the redevelopment of the plot to help sustain it going forward.

The training cafe is an exciting venture and one that will give more targeted young people new skills and qualifications in cooking and hospitality. We will endeavour to ensure these projects inspire more young people to get involved in growing their own food and help contribute to the healthy diets of people in Torfaen.

(The Inspire project in Torfaen is funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund from UK Government and is part of the Council's Education Service supporting young people's Engagement and Progression and NEET prevention work.)

Our Key Challenges...

Education:

- **Develop a new Youth Offer and Strategy and increase open access and targeted Youth provision.**
- **Continue to increase the uptake of free school meals and reduce food waste within school kitchens.**

Children Services:

- **Safely reduce our children looked after population, at pace.**
- **Develop a broad range of accommodation to meet the needs of children looked after.**
- **Enhance our overall commissioning model, as it relates to accommodation and other commissioned services, so as to have greater control over the market.**
- **Have a greater ability to manage overall demand by enhancing the community offer and developing more effective early intervention and prevention services with clear pathways.**

Community Safety:

- **Develop a stronger suite of impact measures that help us to track the effectiveness of our interventions.**

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3:

Tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives

Maximising independence & well-being....

Community Well-being Strategy:

Maximising independence, early intervention and prevention, partnership working and tackling key drivers of inequality, remain at the heart of all our service delivery and planning.

In early 2023, we created a new Adults & Communities Directorate that would help develop a new “communities’ approach” to service development and delivery. The Directorate’s purpose is to champion and strengthen the vital role that our communities play in improving wellbeing and the vibrancy of their local place, working with partners, community groups, volunteers, the third sector and across Council departments.

To set out our ambition, the Directorate has led on the production of a Community Wellbeing Strategy. This sets out our initial three-year plan, designed with a focus on communities, well-being and prevention, placing them at the core of how our services can be delivered.

In March 2024, we invited our residents to take part in a survey that will help ensure that our new approach in working with communities, is delivered in the most effective and impactful way.

The survey, which could be completed anonymously, was available on the council’s [Get Involved Torfaen website](#), aiming to:

- Understand the needs of our individual communities.
- Focus on well-being and the early identification, and prevention, of issues that impact well-being.
- Better align council services with existing community-based provision.
- Support and develop community-based organisations and services.

The survey identified many things that people liked about their communities which made them more resilient. These included open green spaces, nearby clubs and groups, friendliness of local people. The survey also identified those issues that residents felt would improve resilience or perceptions within the community including highways maintenance, transport accessibility, cleanliness and activities for young people.

The feedback from our consultation and engagement exercise has now been reflected in the final version of our Community Wellbeing Strategy which was approved by Council, in April 2024.

The strategy sets out an ambitious approach for prioritising the community support offer, more effectively targeting our preventative activities, integrating reablement services and improving collective monitoring across the wellbeing system. The approach will support the Council in delivering stronger outcomes and managing demand so that we can help residents access the right support, at the right time, for the right length of time.

Integrated Reablement approach:

There are significant pressures on the horizon facing adult social care. Changes to demographics and

complexity mean that demand for adult social care is projected to increase considerably, between 2023 and 2032.

To maintain high quality outcomes that reflect “what matters” to individuals in Torfaen, we will need to re-consider the way in which we deliver preventative services, so that we are able to support individuals to maintain their independence and live in the way that they wish, for as long as possible.

Reablement is central to this preventative approach. But delivering reablement programmes at scale will require changes to the way our reablement services are designed, structured, and managed.

At the latter part of 2023, we developed a model that proposed to bring all of our three reablement services together, into one single Integrated Reablement service. The 3 services are as follows:

Community Resource Team (CRT): A joint service with Aneurin Bevan University Healthboard (ABUHB). The CRT is a multi-disciplinary intermediate care service led by the Primary Care & Community Services division of ABUHB, comprising RAPID medical, RAPID nursing, Falls Prevention, the integrated Occupational Therapy service and Emergency Care at Home. Reablement interventions are led by the Emergency Care at Home team in CRT which provides 8 days of domiciliary care support following hospital discharge (or at the hospital front door to avoid admission). It is available from 8am to 8pm 7 days per week.

Intake: Our Intake Team provide short-term domiciliary support services. They are one half of the Councils wider domiciliary care provision, sitting alongside the longer-term Dementia support service.

Ty Glas y Dorlan: This team was formalised when the premises opened in 2021, drawing resources from across the social care patch teams to create a centralised wellbeing hub. The Hub is the base for the Council’s ‘Better Care’ service. The building provides 6 long-term ‘Extra Care’ flats, and 13 short stay reablement or respite flats. Telecare services also utilise a flat as a demonstrator for assistive technologies. Domiciliary care support is available for Ty Glas y Dorlan residents from 7am until 11pm, 7 days a week plus waking night and sleep in support. The facility is used to support hospital discharge and avoidance.

Under our new model, a “Front Door” system will triage all new enquiries for support. The front door will provide information, advice & assistance as appropriate, offering packages of universal and community support. Where residents require support beyond universal services, community support or information, advice & assistance, the front door will identify those who would benefit from a programme of reablement support. This process will be undertaken under the supervision of lead practitioners and would be undertaken prior to any involvement of the social care patch teams.

For existing social care customers, any assessment following hospital discharge will be undertaken by the relevant social care patch team but any proposed increase in commissioned care will trigger the involvement of the Integrated Reablement Service, prior to brokerage.

Our new model has since been finalised and consulted upon with staff and our Integrated Services Partnership Board (ISPB) and will be operational from April 2024.

Supporting our carers...

It's estimated there are hundreds of people caring for loved ones within Torfaen, many of whom will have assumed the role over a number of years, without ever receiving awareness training, in areas such as: moving and handling a person, medication administration or stress management.

In recognition of the support unpaid carers provide to their loved ones, we feel it is only right that they also get the help they need.

In June 2023, we offered unpaid carers the opportunity to sign up for a range of courses, such as e-learning courses to help them in their caring roles.

We also set up a Carers Champions Network to help provide advice and support for staff who are unpaid carers within our organisation.



It's estimated there are more than 6.5 million carers in the UK, with 1 in 7 of all employees in Wales juggling work and care for loved ones, equating to 223,000 workers.



Last year, we became the first organisation in Wales to be granted Carer Friendly Employer Accreditation by the Care Collective, the largest charity supporting unpaid carers in Wales.

It came after the council introduced a new Carers Policy, which gives staff with caring responsibilities more flexibility through a personal support plan and additional carers leave, as well as training for managers.

The process of introducing a new policy for unpaid carers has helped the organisation, to better understand and appreciate the work unpaid carers do and how we can all offer more support.

We also launched a new scheme to provide our unpaid carers respite, while someone else looks after their loved one.

The Bridging the Gap Gwent (BTGG) initiative offers people caring for relatives or friends the chance to take a short break from their caring role. This could include attending a personal appointment, an event or socialising with friends, while the person they care for is looked after by someone else.

To access the scheme, carers need to speak with their social worker or professional to discuss their needs and check eligibility, in what's known as a 'What Matters Conversation' or 'Carers Needs Assessment'. Once eligibility criteria are met, carers can choose a care provider of their choice.

Carers can also request services and support for things that they may otherwise not be able to carry out themselves, in or outside the home.

(BTGG is run by NEWCIS, a charity that supports carers across Northeast Wales. The scheme is accessible to unpaid adult carers and young carers (under 16) who reside in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport or Torfaen).

Caring for a loved one can be emotionally and physically exhausting, and it's very common that carers neglect their own wellbeing over time. This is why access to respite care is essential in helping to maintain carers' wellbeing as they undertake their incredible work. Respite care provides the opportunity of a much-needed break for carers to take care of themselves, and hopefully help them feel more able to cope with their responsibilities afterwards.

We are really pleased that we are able to offer this initiative here in Torfaen, and we hope it will make a big difference to those who need it.

Recognising & supporting our Foster Carers....

More than 170 of our foster carers from across Torfaen have been celebrated in May 2023, for their outstanding work in transforming the lives of children in their care.



This event took place during Foster Care Fortnight, which is a nationwide campaign led by the Fostering Network, aimed at raising awareness about fostering and highlighting the remarkable impact foster families have on the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

Throughout 2023/24, we have continued to exceed our target for the number of children placed with our 'in house' foster carers

As at the end of March 2024, 82.2% of children in mainstream foster placements, were placed with 'in house' foster carers.

Building resilience within our communities....

In August 2023, in anticipation of our new Community Wellbeing Strategy, we launched a new fund to help groups and organisations, that support communities, to be more self-sufficient. The aim of this fund is to support third sector and community partners who are best placed to understand the challenges individual communities face.

The Community Resilience Grants scheme offered grants of between £500 and £15,000 for new or existing projects. These could include initiatives that help communities with the cost of living, such as warm hubs and food banks, projects that aim to improve wellbeing and those that enable communities to find their own solutions.

(The Community Resilience Fund received £260,000 in 2024/25 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund).

An event aimed at promoting locally produced food was also held in Blaenavon, in February 2024.

Our Food Summit, organised by our Food Resilience Team was the first of its kind in the borough that brought together producers, suppliers and organisations to help develop local networks and share sustainable practices.

Residents also got the opportunity to meet some of the producers, get tips on how to reduce food waste and sample some free food.

Local food producers, suppliers and organisations aiming to tackle food poverty also got the opportunity to take part in a business event aimed at promoting and sharing good sustainable practice.



(The Food Resilience Programme has received £991,426 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The programme aims to increase the amount of locally produced affordable food and find sustainable ways of tackling food poverty through the Sustainable Food Partnership).

Tackling inequality....

Universal Free School Meals were first made available in September 2022, for our younger learners, in reception, years 1 and 2 in Torfaen.

From September 2023, more than 4,000 junior school pupils are now eligible to receive a Universal Primary Free School Meal. Torfaen is one of 14 local authorities in Wales who are offering free school meals to all year groups within our Primary school settings.

Catering facilities in several of our primary schools have been upgraded throughout the summer, to enable this rollout to be possible. Kitchens in ten schools have been transformed, with many receiving larger capacity combination ovens, new serving areas, dishwashers, fridges and freezers.

The completion of these works has ensured that all of our primary school pupils are able to receive a free school meal from the start of the academic year - a year ahead of Welsh Governments implementation target.

Extensive research confirms that a nutritious meal significantly enhances a child's aptitude for learning and while breakfast clubs have already made a positive impact, this new scheme has heralded a transformative leap forward.



In November 2023, our school catering service were the recipients of two national industry awards - Welsh Government's Award for Excellence in the roll out of the Universal Free School Meals programme, and; an award in recognition of their Sustainability Road Map and work that they have undertaken with our primary school pupils who have been recognised as leading the way, in reducing

plate waste in dining halls. The innovative roadmap has helped the team scoop up the title of joint LACA Wales Innovation Award winners at a recent awards ceremony. LACA is the leading professional body representing the school food sector.

Supporting our residents with energy costs....

Hundreds of people have been given free energy support, including advice and energy saving products like LED lightbulbs and radiator heat reflectors, throughout Torfaen.

The home energy advice drop-ins were organised by our Building Resilient Communities' Financial Inclusion Team, which provides a range of support to people struggling with the cost of living.

A total of eight events were held during September and October 2023 at various community venues throughout the borough.

Our Financial Inclusion Service forms part of the wider Building Resilient Communities programme that aims to facilitate early intervention, provide support and build resilience of families, children and adults in Torfaen.

Over the past six months it has helped more than 300 people to improve their financial well-being and quality of life. As well as helping those people in need of crisis support. The service offers:

- Budgeting advice,
- Emergency white goods such as fridges and washing machines,
- Access to affordable credit and savings schemes, and
- Financial education and digital skills training.

It also works closely with organisations such as Citizens Advice, credit unions, local food banks and housing associations to provide wider tailored support to residents.

This service has been making a real positive impact to the lives of our residents in need. Financial inclusion is not only about having access to products and services, but also about having the skills and confidence to use them effectively.

This project aims to empower people to make informed financial decisions and achieve their goals. We are grateful to our funders and partners for their support and collaboration.

(The energy events were funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025).

Reducing homelessness....

Plans for a new centre to support homeless people in Torfaen took a step forward, in November 2023.

The Wallich charity has been awarded a contract to provide 24-hour assistance to people living in flats in Pearl House, in Pontypool town centre, which is being converted.

In October 2023, our Cabinet members approved a plan to spend £449,514 of the £4.6 million Torfaen Council's Welsh Government housing support grant on a new accommodation and assessment hub.

Working in partnership with Melin Homes, which is carrying out the work at the Grade II property, is an important development towards our goal of providing more sustainable and effective support for homeless individuals in Torfaen.

Through this multi-agency approach, and having 24-hour support on hand, we hope to be able to better support people to get back on their feet quicker, enabling them to then move into long-term, sustainable accommodation. Using this more tailored approach, we hope to prevent more individuals from becoming entrenched in homelessness, and to provide better outcomes for their overall wellbeing.

The Wallich already runs services from offices in Pearl House to support people with housing problems to access support and help, including people who might be sleeping rough, so there will be continuity in the support people are currently receiving.

The work to convert Pearl House into 15 one-bedroom flats is expected to be completed in October 2024, with the hub service also opening from this date.

It is expected that tenants will stay at the accommodation for up to six months while they look for alternative accommodation.



In January 2024, our Cabinet also approved our Rapid Rehousing Plan.

The Rapid Rehousing Plan is an ambition from Welsh Government which aims to prevent and mitigate homelessness to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeated.

Our plan outlines some of the current challenges that we face within Torfaen, along with our efforts to engage and deliver on WG's ambition, containing principles that we have been adhering to and working towards, for many years.

Throughout 2023/24, we have been working on several projects, that include:

- Securing an additional 8 units of supported accommodation,
- Sourcing an additional 12 units of temporary accommodation,
- Establishing partnership arrangements for the Accommodation & Support HUB, and
- Revision of working practices, processes and information delivery, in line with changing service delivery model.

Demand for housing and support services continues to be high with the current number of homeless presentations being comparable to previous years. In addition, the waiting list for housing related support services has seen an increase of over 100% with the waiting list exceeding 200 households. Demand for supported housing is also high but the waiting list for supported housing remains relatively static in comparison. This demand clearly shows increasing pressure on the housing and support system as a whole and requires a clear and focused approach.

In part, the Rapid Rehousing Plan seeks to deliver on this, but this should be seen as a wider system change and evolution to how services link across all partners to reduce system waste, service duplication and provide better outcomes for residents. The delivery of our plan will therefore be critical, in determining how we manage our housing services and reduce homelessness, going forward.

2023/24, also saw us launch the Strategic Housing Partnership. This partnership brings together senior leaders from Registered Social Landlords, Housing Support Providers, the Health board and our Council to plan housing support and address issues of housing supply, in a coherent and coordinated way.

The Strategic Housing Partnership will monitor a key suite of performance indicators and will support with any issues impacting upon both supply of suitable housing and demand for suitable housing.

Our Key Challenges....

Education:

Continue to increase the uptake of free school meals.

Housing:

- Develop a revised suite of performance measures that more appropriately reflect the priorities in the Rapid Rehousing approach.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing through new developments and programmes to bring void properties back into use quickly.
- Consider the implications of the Rapid Rehousing approach on commissioned services.

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4:

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

Delivering safe routes to schools/active travel schemes, within our communities....

In 2023, nearly half a million pounds was spent on two key projects to improve active travel within the borough.

We secured £420,000 Welsh Government active travel funding for the Oakfield Active Travel network scheme which includes 400 metres of new walking and cycling routes. This also complements a new 180-metre-long path from Court Farm Road, Oakfield to Llantarnam Community School.

The path forms part of a larger active travel network in Oakfield, Cwmbran, with plans for several other sections to be developed over the next couple of years.

Feedback from both pupils and parents say a new footpath to Llantarnam Community Primary has transformed their journeys to school. Around half of pupils already regularly travelled to school by foot or bike, but the footpath has led to an increase of both pupils and staff using the new footpath.



We have also secured £50,000 Safer Routes in Communities funding to carry out an assessment of roads and streets outside all of our schools. This will aim to identify opportunities to improve road safety, such as restricting vehicle access during school start and finish times.

Additional funding has also been awarded for smaller projects such as dropped kerbs, new bike racks and benches, and the identification and design of future projects.

It comes as last year's work to widen the 600 metres of path along Edlogan Way in Cwmbran has been completed to make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to use the route.

Work along the Cwmbran Drive active travel route took place last year, which included improving the path from Grove Park roundabout to Pontnewydd Working Mens Club (near Aldi roundabout). This involved widening the narrow footpath alongside the main road to become a 3m wide shared use walking and cycling route over a length of 1.2km. Phase 2 of this project will cover Grove Park up to Bevans Lane.

We appreciate that not everyone can actively travel, all of the time, but by cutting down the odd car or bus journey we are really able to make a difference to the environment.

Supporting community groups to encourage well-being....



As part of Armed Forces Week in 2023, we launched our new veterans' support hub in Cwmbran.

Torfaen Veterans Support Hub is located at Woodland Road Sports and Social Club and aims to create a secure and inviting space where veterans can connect with fellow individuals who have shared similar experiences.

The hub offers a wide range of services, including assistance with benefits and housing, access to mental health resources, and opportunities for acquiring new skills.

The launch of this support hub signifies our unwavering commitment to supporting and honouring the sacrifices made by our Armed Forces Community.

Delivering Welsh Governments 20MPH project....

Work to install new road signs began in July 2023, in readiness for the introduction of a new 20mph speed limit.

From 17 September 2023, the default speed limit in built-up areas in Wales reduced from 30mph to 20mph. These include roads where streetlights are placed no more than 200 yards apart.



Welsh Government introduced the legislation to make roads safer, reduce road collisions, encourage more people to walk and cycle, to improve health and wellbeing and to safeguard the environment for future generations.

As a council, we are doing all we can to ensure drivers are aware of the new speed limit and road infrastructure to reflect the new speed limit.

Encouraging Community Cohesion....

Eight community projects across Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent were successful in 2023 acquiring funding to help reduce inequality and bring communities together.

The Community Cohesion Grants, funded by Welsh Government, are designed to support initiatives that promote understanding and respect, between different groups of people and create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to unite.

Our project consisted of receiving £2000 for our Amgueddfa Torfaen Museum, which plans to work with Gypsy Traveller pupils at West Monmouth School to create an Inside/Outside exhibition.

The money will be spent on helping our young people to create a photo and audio exhibition celebrating the history and traditions of the Gypsy, Roma Traveller communities.



This has provided our pupils with an opportunity to celebrate their culture and also gain an accreditation and qualification in photography, as well as providing the non-traveller community to have an insight in the real lives of travellers living within our communities.

Work on the exhibition started in October 2023, with plans to display the exhibition at Pontypool Museum in June 2024, as part of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Awareness Month.

Creating opportunities for our third sector organisations....

In March 2024, we launched a new partnership programme, “Connecting Torfaen,” to increase funding opportunities for our Third Sector organisations.

The aim of this partnership is to bring us together with organisations such as: Torfaen Voluntary Alliance, Bron Afon, Pobl, and Aneurin Bevan Health Board to create a unified approach to administering small grants schemes to community groups and to increase the amount of funding available that helps develop activities in our communities that encourage community ownership, develop independence, and make a lasting difference to people’s lives.

The partners offer a variety of grants, including Community Resilience grants, Food Business grants, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance grants, Bron Afon’s “Pitch4Pounds” scheme, and Pobl Trust grants. These grants are designed to build strength within the community, engage the wider community, and increase engagement.

“Connecting Torfaen” is part of a new community’s approach, focused on community, well-being and prevention, placing them at the core of how services can be delivered. Supporting and developing community-based organisations and services is a key, of which grant support is part of the wider package we can offer to empower our communities.

Our Key Challenges...

Digital:

We need to increase opportunities for our residents to digitally engage with us and provide support for those who are not digitally engaged.

Community Capacity:

We need to work more closely with our community councils to prioritise activity at a Community Council level around what will make the biggest difference to community wellbeing.

We need to research and understand what impact our different activities / decisions will have on wellbeing, at a local level.

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 5:

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

Reducing our waste & increasing our recycling....

We are confident that if we work together with our residents, we can increase our recycling rates from 62 per cent to 70 per cent, which will be better for our environment and future generations.

In April 2023, we made the decision to close a public consultation early on plans to reduce our residual waste collections, in response to suggestions and concerns raised by our residents’. As a result, we were prepared to take alternative action to increase household recycling rates, in line with the Welsh Government’s target of 70 per cent recycling by 2025.

To help us better understand the challenges that our residents face; in reducing their waste we sent out a new survey. The feedback from both the waste consultation and survey helped us to inform our new “Raise

the Rate” campaign, which aims to achieve 70 per cent household recycling, without changing our residual waste collections.

The new Raise the Rate campaign included an extensive public engagement and education campaign, as well as:

- Plans for more stretchy plastic collection points.
- A commitment to working with social landlords to increase recycling facilities at flats.
- Improvements to the quality of the recycling service.
- Investment in recycling facilities at Ty Coch.



Over this time-period, thousands of residents engaged with us on this recycling discussion. At our roadshows we heard from people who are highly motivated by the challenge to reduce waste and the positive impact this will have on the environment. But we also heard from people who were genuinely concerned about the impact of moving to 3 or 4 weekly rubbish collections. Many residents were also unaware of all the items that can already be recycled weekly.

In light of our Raise the Rate approach to improvement, and the ambition to have a sustained and high-quality recycling and waste service, we have created a new governance regime, to help drive forward the change that is required.

Our new governance regime consists of:

- A Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) consisting of cross-party Members and external representation from: Sophie Howe, former Well Being and Future Generations Commissioner, Roger Phillips, CEO, Capital Valleys Plastic, Lauren Morse and Rhiannon Munro from Torfaen Climate Change Ambassadors and Dr Peter Jones, Recycling expert from Eunomia Consulting
- Supporting the SPB and driving this work an Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) has also been formed. This is chaired by our Strategic Director, Economy & Environment, Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Economy & Environment, Chief Executive, Head of Recycling and Environment, Emma Hallett, WRAP Cymru, Kristy Spindler, Local Partnerships, Waste expert and our Head of Communications.

Regular communication and engagement on the outputs/impacts of the above groups and service delivery is going to be critical for the success of the Raise the Rate strategy.

We have already announced an expansion to our kerbside recycling service, with used batteries now being collected in black recycling boxes and from August 2023, we moved to weekly cardboard collections and taking small electrical items at the kerbside.

We have also invested in our recycling vehicles, including new in-cab technology and staff training, to improve the quality of the service.

One of the issues that our residents raised during our “Raise the Rate” campaign was ways to recycle soft plastics and reduce the number of these items going to landfill. In June 2023, we therefore introduced new recycling points for our residents, for plastic bags and wrapping, known as “stretchy plastics”. The first collection point was opened at Civic Centre, in Pontypool, with plans to roll out more collection points, in the near future.

At these collection points residents are able to recycle soft plastics including bread bags, carrier bags, popped bubble wrap, six pack rings, and the outer packaging of drinks cans or cartons by putting items into a compacter and then popping the squashed material into a large blue recycling bin. The plastic will then be recycled by Blaenavon based Capital Valley Plastics, which turns the plastic into a membrane for the building trade – thus adding to our circular economy.

In September 2023, we offered our residents the opportunity to be provided with compost, as part of a trial to reuse green waste, collected from local homes – free of charge. This was an idea which was put forward

at our Climate Ambassador Network, which is a forum for our residents interested in supporting their communities to become net carbon zero by 2050.

Turning green waste into peat-free compost helps offset carbon emissions by locking carbon removed from the atmosphere by plants in the ground. Opting for peat-free compost helps to maintain valuable peatlands, which are important for nature and the environment.

An estimated 3,500 tonnes of our green waste is collected at the kerbside every year and taken to Newport, to be turned into peat-free compost. This is a fantastic initiative for our residents, as not everybody is able to compost in their gardens.

We are hoping this will encourage more people to recycle garden and plant waste rather than putting into their purple-lidded bins because it not only helps to lock emissions away, offsetting carbon and reduce flooding.

Increasing the amount of green waste that is recycled will also help to increase recycling rates in the borough, in line with Welsh Government's target of 70 per cent recycling by 2050.

We have also attempted to involve our schools within our commitment to reduce waste and increase recycling.

In October 2023, our Catering Service organised a competition to monitor and reduce food waste at lunchtimes within schools. Thirteen of our primary schools took part in the competition, resulting in a reduction of around 20% in the amount of food waste generated.

The winners of the competition were pupils at our Woodlands Primary School, in Cwmbran, who reduced their food waste by 29% (27.71 Kg), who were commended for their detailed weighing, measuring and recording skills and for running an innovative campaign, including writing to the catering service to suggest menu changes.

Blenheim Road and Coed Eva Primary School were chosen runners up also because of their detailed monitoring and recording skills, as well as their creative way to celebrate pupils who finished their school dinners leaving no food waste.

Learning about reducing food waste at such an early age is so important and helps us to raise awareness of our commitment.

At the beginning of October 2023, our volunteers who repair small electrical items free of charge also celebrated their first year of operating. The Torfaen Repair Cafe repairs electrical items, preventing items from being thrown away in landfill and by recommending replacement parts. Small items, such as kettles, toasters, and small vacuum cleaners, can be taken to the shop for diagnosis and free repair, if it can be done onsite.

The cafe, in Pontypool Indoor Market, is run by Torfaen Council and Wastesavers Charitable Trust and managed by volunteers.

Repair and reuse is a growing factor in Wales's aim to be net zero carbon by 2030. These Repair Cafés will be an integral part in helping us to achieve this target, over the coming years.

Throughout 2023, we have also been working in partnership with our Bron Afon Community Housing to increase the number of flats with recycling facilities.

In October 2023, 18 flats at Albion Road flats were added to the council's weekly kerbside recycling scheme. We recognise that each set of flats has its own set of challenges to recycle, so we are thrilled that Bron Afon have been able to get another 18 of their flats using our food waste recycling collections scheme. Our waste team will be continuing to work with Bron Afon over the next few years to get more flats recycling.



In January 2024, our Cabinet members approved a plan to improve the waste and recycling service and increase recycling.

Our Recycling Improvement Plan builds upon our recent service improvements, such as weekly card collections and the Raise the Rate public information campaign, which was launched in April 2023. In particular, we are focusing on five key areas of improvement: service quality; the recycling offer; a resilient and sustainable infrastructure; business recycling and education, communication and behaviour change.

It also includes plans for: further working with housing associations to increase recycling facilities in flats and to carry out a public engagement campaign, to increase food waste recycling in the borough.

Our Waste service is also preparing for the introduction of new trade waste regulations from April 6, 2024, which will mean all businesses including schools will need to recycle in a similar way to households.

Tackling litter....

Throughout 2023/24, we have continued to hold Spring Clean events, with both our volunteers and school children to tackle litter hotspots around the borough.

Our Torfaen Spring Clean takes place every year and is an opportunity for residents, businesses, schools and other agencies to carry out litter picks to help clean up the borough and create litter free zones.

Working together helps to create shared pride in the local area, enabling us to make a real difference to the cleanliness of Torfaen and we are incredibly grateful to all the individuals and groups who help us litter pick, throughout the year.

In an effort to further combat litter and promote a cleaner, more sustainable environment, a new Litter Picking Hub was opened at our Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School, in September 2023. We have 10 Litter Picking Hubs throughout Torfaen which offer all of the equipment needed to carry out a safe litter pick within local areas. Their locations are, as follows:

- Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School, Blaenavon
- Circulate Furniture Recycling, Blaenavon
- Costar Partnership, Greenmeadow
- Cwmbran Community Council, Ventnor Road, Cwmbran
- Garnsychan Partnership, Abersychan
- Llandegfedd Lake Visitor & Activity Centre
- Pontypool Market, Pontypool
- The Boat House Café, Cwmbran Boating Lake
- Thornhill Community Centre, Cwmbran
- Zero Waste Torfaen, Southville



Improving our local areas....

Eight green spaces within Torfaen have been awarded Green Flag status within 2023/24, for another year. This involves independent green space experts who volunteer their time to judge applicant sites against eight strict criteria, including biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental management, and community

involvement.

Cwmbran Boating Lake, Pontypool Park and Garn Lakes were also recognised by Keep Wales Tidy for their excellent visitor facilities, high environmental standards, and commitment to delivering great quality green space.



Five community-run sites within the borough, Blaen Bran Community Woodland, Fishpond Park Panteg, Forgeside Rugby Club Community Garden, Henllys Local Nature Reserve and Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden have also been recognised with Green Flag status.

The Green Flag awards are a UK-wide scheme which recognise and reward well-managed parks and green spaces and is delivered in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy, with support from Welsh Government.

Free access to safe, high quality green space has never been more important. Our award-winning sites play a vital role in people’s mental and physical well-being, providing a haven for communities to come together, relax and enjoy nature and we continue to be grateful to our diligent volunteers for their selfless efforts in maintaining our parks to high standards.

Throughout 2023, we also developed plans for a former colliery site in Abersychan to become Torfaen's eighth Local Nature Reserve. Blanserchan Colliery closed in 1985 and since then, the remnants of coal spoil heaps have been transformed into stretches of grassland and heathlands.

Several notable plant species have been recorded at the site, including the Bee Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Green-winged Orchid, Knotted Pearlwort, Rough Clover, Small Cudweed, and Moonwort.

There are now plans in place to designate this area as a Local Nature Reserve, which will mean it is a protected green space and offers the opportunity for local education, community engagement and volunteering.

There are currently seven Local Nature Reserves in Torfaen at Garn Lakes, Cwmavon Corridor (the cycleway linking Garndiffaith and Blaenavon), Tirpentwys, Cwmyrnyscoy Quarry, Springvale Ponds, Henllys and Llwyncllyn.



Encouraging biodiversity....



In March 2024, a floating island at our Cwmbran Boating Lake was restored to attract nesting birds.

Working in partnership, our Environment Team along with volunteers from Crow Valley Angling Club towed the island, which had broken apart, alongside the slipway, so it could be repaired and replanted with native plants, including Cyperus sedge, Sweet Reed grass, Yellow Flag Iris, Purple Loosestrife and Water Mint, in time for the bird nesting season.

This project is just one of the ways that we are working with our local communities to support local wildlife and increase biodiversity, which helps to tackle climate change.

Since 2020, the council has reduced its spring and summer grass cutting programme in nearly 200 areas to allow grass and flowers to reseed and to provide habitats for insects, birds and small mammals.

Encouraging sustainability....

In a further attempt to address our climate and nature emergency and enrich the Torfaen landscape we have provided our residents with the opportunity to work with us to identify the location of hundreds of new trees to be planted, as part of a new exciting partnership approach called “Branching Out” project, supported by both our organisation and Bron Afon Community Housing.

This initiative aims to enhance green spaces and biodiversity by planting a diverse array of native broadleaf and orchard trees across suitable sites within the borough. Thirty sites around the borough were identified and an assessment carried out to determine the optimal number and species of trees suitable. This project is currently on-going.

By working together, the project hopes that the tree planting initiative resonates with the aspirations of the community, while safeguarding these trees for the benefit of future generations.



Our approach to sustainable grassland management has also allowed species to move in response to climate change. Around 120 grassland areas are part of our sustainable grassland management programme, where routine mowing has been reduced throughout 2023 to allow plants to continue flowering over spring and summer.



This has provided habitats for insects and pollinators and allows plants to develop longer roots which means they can store more carbon in the soil – a key contributor to tackling global warming. As a result, wasp spiders have been discovered in two areas of Torfaen, where grassland has been allowed to flower over the summer.

These species, which are more commonly found in southern England, have been spotted on a verge in Pontnewynydd and at Henllys Local Nature Reserve - the furthest north they have been recorded.

The changes to mowing practices across the county borough have shown that, even in small spaces, we can make a difference for wildlife and for wellbeing. In seeing an increase in wildflowers, insects and other species within our borough we are planning to expand our “No mow May” programme each year, to maximise the benefits already seen and help to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Our School Cleaning Team have also been crowned winners of a national award, at a ceremony in September 2023.

The team was recognised for their exceptional dedication to making a positive impact both within their organisation and the local community – particularly their commitment to environmental sustainability.

Inspired by the international climate change conference in Glasgow in 2021, the team decided to look into environmentally friendly cleaning products.

They visited local environmental entrepreneurs and collaborated with suppliers to find sustainable, more environmentally friendly alternatives. These products have been successfully piloted within our local primary schools, with a view to further roll out across school sites.

Reducing our carbon emissions....

In July 2023, we appointed two new officers to provide help and advice to our residents, communities, and businesses, in order to help us meet WG’s 2050 net zero target. These posts have received funding from the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund, for the next two years.

We are well on our way to reducing and offsetting our own carbon emissions by introducing new electric vehicles, installing renewable energy sources and making buildings, including schools, more energy efficient but we appreciate that we cannot do this on our own.

To help us deliver upon our commitment in achieving net zero by 2050, in February 2024 we also appealed to all our staff to *Switch Off and Save* to help make Torfaen a cleaner, greener place and at the same time save the council money!

We asked everyone within our organisation to treat the council energy like their own and *Switch off and Save* when equipment or lights are not in use.



Reducing energy costs across our organisation was also one of our Apollo projects identified to make internal savings and reduce the financial gap in the 2024/25 budget. The energy savings also contribute to tackling our declared climate emergency.

Over the past year our Energy Management Team have been busy helping site managers in schools and facilities managers in council buildings drive down our carbon footprint and reduce bills. The target across the estate is a 10% reduction in electricity and a 15% reduction in gas.

Whether it has been by making existing buildings more efficient by putting additives in the system to make radiators more effective or giving advice on different carbon saving techniques, our Energy Team are always “on hand” to help reduce our utility bills. So far this year, we have:

- collectively saved over £240,000 on electricity and gas.
- spent £49,000 less on energy in November 2023, compared against November 2022. Electricity bills have also been as much as £17,000 lower in September and November 2023 compared to previous years.
- Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw has spent £29,000 less this financial year compared to previous years.

Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions....

Around one third of all food produced for human consumption contributes to around eight per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

Our School Catering team is aiming to reduce at least some of these emissions by transforming the way school dinners are planned, sourced and produced, by developing a new interactive Sustainability Road Map which sets out their plans for the next two years, with progress updated regularly so schools and pupils can track the progress.

One initiative that was rolled out was our Waste Warriors competition for primary schools to encourage pupils to monitor and reduce food waste at dinner time.

This work our team has undertaken to develop the map was shortlisted for a national award by LACA, the leading professional body representing the school food sector.

The award nomination is for individuals or teams that stand out by achieving something different, showcasing innovative ideas, collaboration, and partnerships that have not only met business objectives but also elevated the school catering service's visibility.

Addressing climate change....

Over the last year, solar panels have been installed within 14 of our schools across the borough, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in electricity.

The solar panels have been installed at Coed Eva Primary; Cwmbran High School; Garnteg Primary; George Street Primary; Greenmeadow Primary; New Inn Primary; Nant Celyn Primary; Padre Pio Primary; Penygarn Primary; Pontnewydd Primary; West Monmouth School, Woodlands Primary, Abersychan School and Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw.

Our schools are already seeing a reduction in their energy bills for the systems installed and it is anticipated

that they will eventually lead to annual savings of £150,000 - £200,000 in electricity costs, 500,000 kWh energy and avoid the release of 117 tonnes of carbon dioxide – a lead contributor of global warming.

Reducing our impact on the environment is high on our organisation's agenda and over the next few years we are hoping to roll this work out to another 19 schools, who may also be suitable for solar panels.

In February 2024, our Cabinet Members approved our Flood Risk Management Strategy and agreed that it should be submitted to Welsh Government for approval. As required under the Flood and Water Management Act, this strategy will set out our strategic direction on how we will manage flood risk across Torfaen, over the next six years.

Over the last 40 years, Torfaen has experienced several flooding events. The last major flood occurred in May 2014, in the Cwmbran area which was the result of a localised extreme rainfall event. This has been assessed as a greater than a 1 in 1000-year event. The impact of the event caused internal flooding to 198 properties, as well as two supermarkets.

Our strategy considers how susceptible all areas of Torfaen are to flooding and how this will be further influenced by Climate Change. The strategy contains a Plan which details the direction of the strategy as well as setting out the actions we will be taking and working towards.

Our Key Challenges...

Education:

Continue to reduce food waste within our school kitchens.

Waste & Recycling:

Our objective remains to achieve 70 percent recycling rate. If we fail to reach 70 percent by 2025, we face fines of £100,000 for every 1 percent we fall short and that could have a financial impact on all of our council services. If we cannot raise the rate by changing behaviours, we will be left with little choice but to reconsider systemic changes.

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 6:

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

Encouraging new businesses....

At the beginning of 2023, we launched a new service to support new and aspiring businesses who were looking to set up their business, in Blaenavon or Pontypool town centres.

Both Blaenavon and Pontypool town centres have been affected by changing shopping habits in recent years, but we hope that by supporting businesses to move back into the high street will help reduce the number of vacant properties and bring customers back.

Our Foundational Economy Project Team is focused on helping businesses that provide goods and services that people need on a daily basis, such as retail, food outlets or health and beauty treatments. They aim to work with around 40 entrepreneurs and five new businesses in Blaenavon and Pontypool over the next two years, with plans to expand to Cwmbran, at a later date.

The support on offer includes:

- 1-2-1 mentoring to develop business ideas
- Training and skill development opportunities.
- Grant funding

Our new service builds upon a Foundational Economy that we piloted in 2020 and last year's Pontypool and Blaenavon Small Business Support Project, which provided financial and practical advice.



A new programme for anyone thinking about setting up their own business also started in February 2024. The fully funded Startup Club provides entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge they need to set up and run their own businesses, including weekly expert-led workshops and support.

The six-week programme was held at the Hyb, in Pontypool Indoor Market and run by small business experts - Town Square Spaces Ltd (TownSq) on behalf of our Council.

(Funded through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, the programme covered a range of different core topics each week including sales and marketing, business planning, admin, legal and HR, finance, networking and pitching).

We are hoping that this Startup Club is the type of programme that can have a huge impact on local people looking to explore the prospect of running their own businesses. Starting a business can be a huge step, but the experienced team at TownSq have been able to take people through the process, one small step at a time, equipping them with everything they need to know.

This initiative will also help grow a supportive business community in Pontypool that will enable startups to survive and thrive.

Encouraging women within business....



We recognise that there aren't many events that are focussed on bringing businesswomen together to build connections and meet people they wouldn't normally come into contact with so, in November 2023, we held an event aimed at celebrating our female business leaders and entrepreneurs providing a fantastic opportunity for them for them to network.

We funded this event through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund which has encountered a four-year gap since the last Torfaen Women in Business was held, due to Covid.

There has been a real appetite among businesswomen to see this event return - the women who attended demonstrated an incredible enthusiasm and energy for their businesses, as well as those of others.

Encouraging our young entrepreneurs....

In December 2023, our Business Engagement Team organised an event which brought together a group of entrepreneurs to take part in a new initiative, dedicated to supporting young business people, within Torfaen.

Aged between 18 and 30 years old, our young entrepreneurs took part in an eight-week programme covering topics such as sales and marketing, finance and pitching ideas.

As part of this event, our young entrepreneurs were provided with an opportunity to showcase their ideas to business representatives, at a special event which was held at the Parkway Hotel in Cwmbran.

These young people will be the business owners and employers of the future and as a Council we look forward to supporting them as their businesses take off.

In March 2024, a new café on level 4 of the Civic Centre was officially opened.

The Inspire Café was made possible through funding from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, (which is also part of the Shared Prosperity Fund), where our staff kitchen area has not been transformed into a vibrant café and canteen.

This project has enabled our Inspire Team, who support young people aged between 11-20, who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), to create a space that serves multiple purposes.

Primarily, the café provides a food and drink service to officers, members and visitors, offering a place to relax, refuel, and connect.

It also serves as a training opportunity for targeted young people, both those in secondary school and those who are unemployed. These young people will have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and access qualifications in a variety of areas, including Food Safety, Barista Training, Customer Service, First Aid, and money management.



To support our local businesses and provide fresh, quality food, our Inspire Team will look to source all of its food supplies locally, further supporting Torfaen's foundational economy.

Fruit and vegetables will also be sourced from Inspires successful allotment projects, with excess produce being donated to local food bank schemes.

Working With Partners....

With the support of Shared Prosperity Funding, our Torfaen Strategic Economic Forum (TSEF) has been working with the top 60 businesses (based upon profitability, turnover and employment numbers) over the past 12 months to discover the common strategic issues that could potentially impact upon their future business and investment plans.

The prevalent strategic issue that has emerged is around work-related skills, including the training and recruitment of apprentices. To further explore the issues and find potential solutions, TSEF are convening a dedicated Skills Expo/Forum, which will be attended by key stakeholders and industry/training partners later in 2024. This work will be of key importance in informing the design of future business support programmes.

In December 2023, a new business model was also created and implemented with our Torfaen Business Voice (TBV), Torfaen's thriving business club which has been in existence for over 22 years. The new model will empower the independent committee to make a sustainable contribution to Torfaen's economy. To date, the club has 59 members (both annual and associate members), and this year has held 4 events of networking and inspirational speakers, attracting over 200 attendees.

Encouraging Innovation and Growth....

Since December 2023, seventeen Tech Grants totalling £44,833 have been delivered by our Strategic Economic Development Team with the aim of supporting investment into 'new company' technologies. The Tech Grants have generated over £180,000 of co-investment within local businesses. Seven new jobs have been created so far, three new research and development programmes created, and four of Torfaen's supported businesses have created new or improved systems.

Our Food Resilience Team has also been busy throughout the year developing and implementing plans to create a robust local food supply chain that can support demand for healthy local produce. One of the key objectives of the Food Resilience Programme is to create and diversify local food producers, both growers and manufacturers, to satisfy this local demand. Progress has been significantly accelerated since

December 2023 through the award of thirteen grants totalling £238,991. Eleven jobs and three research and development programmes have been created and twelve businesses have implemented upskilling programmes for their staff.

Creating an Innovation Environment....

Since January 2024, our Springboard Business Innovation Centre has started the delivery of its refreshed business plan, as approved by Council in December 2023. Our aim is to breathe new life into the Centre through the delivery of new products and services and by working in close liaison with a business incubation specialist partner Oxford Innovation. The Centre's revitalisation and modernisation is designed to create flagship 'innovation hub' within the Borough, supporting a wider network of innovation spaces across the Capital Region.

Work is taking place in parallel with private sector partners elsewhere in the County Borough to create 'grow on' space for businesses graduating from Springboard. We are also in the process of creating an alumni programme to ensure continued support is given to these graduates.

Our Springboard Business Innovation Centre was adversely impacted by the changes in working habits/practices that arose from the Covid pandemic. Current occupation levels are behind expectations at 62% of lettable space, but this is an improvement from January 2024 where the occupancy figure stood at 49%. Targets of significantly enhanced occupancy have been set within our Business Plan and are expected to be achieved on an incremental basis over the coming three years, upon completion of the modernisation works.

October 2024 will see the launch of 'Spring Online', an online business incubation support programme aimed at supporting entrepreneurs who are working from home and encouraging some of them to join the community of growth businesses within Springboard Innovation Centre. The Spring Online programme will enable entrepreneurs to access 'matched mentors' who best align with their business/growth objectives. Research shows that no other Welsh Council is delivering innovation services in quite the same way.

Our partnership work with the Torfaen Strategic Economic Forum has indicated that businesses may potentially find it difficult to engage with us, due to its size and the broad diversity of the services that we deliver. Consistency of the standard of delivery has also been cited as an issue especially if the enquiry needs more than one team to give a complete solution. Our Torfaen Business Direct Service was created in 2022 to address these issues and since January 2024 has dealt with 850 enquiries addressing numerous types of enquiries. Thus far, this has generally been a 'reactive' service, but during 2024 work has been developed to deliver a more proactive service through a 'Business Enquiry Framework'. This Framework is due to be fully delivered by the end of March 2025.

Our Key Challenges...

Economy:

Currently the UK inflation rate is 2.2%, the Bank Base Rate is 5% and, due to various unforeseen events, there has been global economic volatility throughout 2023-2024. Future economic performance within Torfaen and the wider Region will continue to some extent to be influenced by how the UK economy performs across the next 12 months. A further sustained period of volatility will inevitably present ongoing challenges to business growth/expansion although progress is being made through the measures set out above to provide a degree of support and resilience to our local economy.

Recent analysis of the UK Competitiveness Index (UKCI) indicates that all Local Authorities within the Northern Valleys area had improved their ranking positions with the exception of Torfaen, which fell from 336th to 346th between 2019 and 2023. Key improvement areas noted for Torfaen, and therefore priority challenges for the Council's future economic development and skills programmes are to improve our relatively lower levels of technology based new business start-ups and to deliver enhanced levels of skills development opportunities at NVQ Levels 4 and above.

The UK Government Levelling Up Programme, which includes the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), is currently due to come to an end in March 2025 and many economic growth/business support projects and programmes across the Region are currently funded from these sources. There is currently no indication that a replacement programme of National/Regional funding will be in place by April 2025. It is also uncertain as to what extent any new funding programme/s will be delivered via Local Authorities.

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 7:

Promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical well-being

Encouraging healthy lifestyles ...

In May 2023, a scheme to build a new floodlit all-weather community sports pitch for the north of the borough was given the green light, in an attempt to encourage more people to get active and help improve their health, across north Torfaen.

The scheme includes new floodlit all-weather community sports pitch and an upgrade to tennis and netball courts with the playing surface replaced, at Abersychan Comprehensive School.

The new pitch will be suitable for competitive football and rugby and will include dug out, floodlights, and improved changing facilities.



The council has now allocated £2.3 million in Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) to this project and construction work is due to start during the summer holidays of 2024 - expected to last 26 weeks.

As part of our wider investment programme into sports facilities within the borough, the construction of other 3G pitches are also taking place at our Welsh medium secondary school - Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw and on former school fields in Llantarnam. A separate programme of work is also due to start on replacing many existing sports facilities within our other schools shortly.

At the end of September 2023, we also opened a £30 million multi-functional facility at Croesyceiliog Comprehensive School, as part of our

21st Century Schools Programme.

This development 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. The new well-being centre also completes the development of the school and will be critical to ensuring students get the very best from their learning and experiences at school.

Ensuring our food establishments are safe....

We continue to inspect our businesses in Torfaen and provide help and advice in ensuring high levels of hygiene standards are maintained. More than half of our food businesses in Torfaen have achieved the highest level of cleanliness, according to the Food Hygiene Ratings scheme.

Fifty-nine per cent of our businesses have a hygiene rating of 5, with 95 per cent having a rating of three or above.

It comes as we mark 10 years since the display of Food Hygiene Ratings became a legal requirement, in Wales.

(Wales led the way as the first country in the UK to legally require the display of food hygiene ratings in prominent places such as front doors, entrances or windows, aiming to enable consumers to make informed choices and to encourage food businesses to prioritise excellent hygiene standards).

Encouraging fitness and well-being....

A report commissioned by the Gwent Public Service Board showed healthy life expectancy for both women and men in Torfaen is lower than the Welsh average. Moreover, women in Torfaen typically enjoy 55 years of good health, whereas men have an average of 61 years.

During 2023/24, we have developed further projects that build upon the successful #ifyougoigo programme for women, which was established in 2017, and saw over more than 200 women supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

We also continue to deliver our support programme for dads that we launched in January 2022, aimed at helping and supporting new and expectant dads with children, up to the age of 18 months.

A new type of fitness class aimed at mothers and daughters has also been expanded from the north (Blaenavon Active Living Centre) to the south of the borough (Cwmbran Stadium).



The free exercise classes include a range of spin, Pilates, circuits and exercise to music, as well as providing advice on nutrition and self-care. These sessions have been set up to encourage mums to be positive role models for their daughters through exercise, whilst also aiding mums to overcome their own health concerns.

Sessions are organised by our Sports Development Team, in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, and forms part of a wider 'Mind the Gap' initiative to improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls in Gwent.

We are delighted to see the positive impact these classes are having on the health and happiness of women and girls in Torfaen. This is a great example of how we are working with our partners to address the health inequalities in our area and empower our residents to take charge of their own wellbeing. They are not only a fun and effective way to stay fit, but also a wonderful opportunity for mothers and daughters to strengthen their relationship and support each other.

Classes are open to all mothers and daughters aged eight and above in Torfaen and are funded by Blaenavon Town Council & Cwmbran Community Council.

Our Key Challenges...

Education:

Complete the school and community 3G facilities in Trevethin, Llantarnam and Abersychan.

Sport & Leisure:

- **Developing a clearer strategic framework for our investment in sport & leisure in Torfaen.**
- **Consider our approach to commissioning sport and leisure services.**

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 8:

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

Making Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live & visit....

Regenerating our Town Centres

In 2023, we were fortunate to receive £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.

Our Pontypool Cultural Hub Project includes a new park-side café with public toilets, improved parking facilities at Glantorvaen Road Car Park and a new cultural hub at St James' Church.

Building work is expected to begin on the new café and Glantorvaen Road Car Park, in January 2024.

Once complete, there will be two new fully accessible public toilets on Hanbury Road, as well as toilet facilities in the café, for customers. There will also be new toilet facilities at Glantorvaen Road Car Park, as well as new disabled spaces and electric vehicle charging points.

More than £1m is also being invested in transforming three derelict buildings within Blaenavon Town Centre, as follows:

- Work to renovate the old Market Tavern pub and a former bookmaker, on Broad Street, has already started, with both to become home to new commercial properties and flats.



- Work has started on a former butcher, next to Bethlehem Chapel, which is to become a takeaway. All three projects are due to be completed by the beginning of next year.

- The projects have been made possible thanks to £704,000 from the Blaenavon Townscape Heritage Programme (THP) and the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant, as well as £430,000 private investment.



The recent grant awards for the Market Tavern and the former butchers follow previous Blaenavon THP investment into the nearby HM Stores and The Hwb. THP projects were identified as high priority in the original submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2018.

The Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant affords property owners or leaseholders the opportunity to apply for funding to support a range of interventions including bringing vacant town centre buildings back into beneficial use.

There is an expectation that private investment is secured as a pre-requisite to securing Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant. We currently have a plan of projects which will take us up until March 2025, following receipt of expressions of interest advertised in August 2022 and will be inviting future expressions of interest when funding becomes available.

This, along with the other projects, will enhance our town centres, improve their appeal, and hopefully attract more business and vitality to our towns.

The British

Residents were invited during 2023 to comment on plans for a new drainage scheme at our British site, prior to it being submitted for planning permission.

We purchased 1,300 acres of the British site, in late 2016. The site is largest remaining site of industrial dereliction in Southeast Wales, situated in Talywain and it is now part of a major regeneration project.



The British Ironworks Drainage Scheme forms part of the Phase 1 Works. This phase is essential to improve the safety of the site and is the first piece in The British Masterplan jigsaw in helping us to make the area a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.

The proposals for the British Ironworks Drainage Scheme, follow extensive site surveys and investigative work that was carried out during 2022 and 2023, and include plans for:

- * Redirecting the Blaengafog stream and Castle Wood watercourse south of Farm Road and the creation of a reservoir and pond to store water. This will allow a more controlled discharge of surface waters from the site into the existing culvert network.
- * Reprofiling of the land and associated landscaping.

Greenmeadow Farm

In September 2023, our councillors agreed to invest an additional £1.64 million in redeveloping Greenmeadow Community Farm.

The Farm was a working farm for more than 250 years before it was converted into a community farm in the 1980s.



The additional investment is now expected to turn the Farm into a flagship regional visitor attraction, bringing in increased visitor numbers to generate sustained profits.

The investment will deliver:

- a revamped Haybarn suitable for community events including weddings and parties
- a new all-weather indoor play barn with adventure play area a new animal barn,

hard play equipment and a replacement outdoor

- new and extended cafés with soft play
- an improved shop to promote local produce and suppliers
- attractive landscaping with woodland and pollination trails and sensory paths
- a new dairy and education area
- improvements to the farm's entrance and site accessibility.

The farm will remain closed whilst work takes place and will reopen, no later than April 2025.

Maintaining and protecting our canals....

In November 2022, 1,200 people took part in a survey about the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal - 93 per cent said they valued it for its wildlife and connection to nature, 72 per cent said the canal's history was important and 65 per cent said they felt the canal was part of the character of Torfaen.

In November 2023, our Councillors approved a new 10-year plan to protect and improve the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal in Torfaen.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is widely regarded as one of the most scenic waterways in the UK. It's hugely valued by local residents who use it for exercise, leisure and travel and it also attracts thousands of visitors to the borough every year.



The strategy, which has been developed in partnership with canal groups and in consultation with the public, focuses on five key areas: sustainable maintenance and management; leisure and travel; community and partnership; resilient heritage and restoration and navigation to Cwmbran Town Centre by 2034.

The new strategy is set out in three phases, with the first focusing on establishing a sustainable water source to enable the navigable section to be extended.

Each phase has its own action plan, including establishing a volunteer programme to support our existing canal groups, a heritage asset register to prioritise remedial work and an annual programme of community events within the first year.

This strategy will help to achieve the council's aims to connect communities, protect the local environment and heritage, support local businesses, as well as protect and develop the canal's potential for future generations.

A Canal Management Plan has also been drawn up, to focus on what needs to be done to maintain the canal in the short-term.

Our Key Challenges...

Town Centre Regeneration:

Progressing the Levelling Up Fund projects to delivery stage and ensuring that they deliver the intended benefits for Pontypool.

The British:

Developing a viable scheme to planning stage.

The Canal:

- **Producing a Masterplan for 5 locks basin alongside implementing the wider volunteer programmes.**
- **Finding suitable grant funding to enable designs to be developed for the 5 locks road crossing.**

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 9:

Provide efficient customer focussed services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services

Digital Transformation....

As part of our on-going commitment towards digital transformation, at the latter part of 2022 and beginning of 2023, we began the rollout of Microsoft SharePoint.

As an organisation, we have already implemented Office 365, therefore Microsoft SharePoint is the next step in our journey in providing us with a new way to create, store, and access files for our day-to-day work.

SharePoint is a cloud-based system that replaces our current network drives, streamlining our file management processes and improve collaboration across teams and directorates by greatly enhancing our organisation productivity and efficiency.

In May 2023, the Council's Cabinet Members approved of our Digital First Customer Strategy and associated 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan. This strategy is the first of its kind for the Council and sets out how we will use Digital, Data and Technology to improve the customer experience and our operational efficiency. (Digital First does not mean digital only and the strategy sets out how traditional channels will be retained with resources prioritised on supporting more vulnerable customers or those with more complex cases).

We have secured £5 million research investment aiming to tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes for our residents. The Department of Health and Social Care, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is making this investment through the Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) over the next 5 years.

The strategy covers a three-year period, acknowledging the speed at which the digital landscape evolves. An annual delivery plan has also been developed, which outlines key activity planned throughout the year, aligned to the ambitions, as set out within the strategy. This approach will allow flexibility in responding to opportunities and emerging trends and support the delivery of our County Plan and other strategic priorities, such as the response to the cost-of-living crisis, Net Zero target and financial challenges.

Public Participation....

Throughout 2023/24, we have continued to encourage and invite 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.



In January 2024, we took the decision to open the meeting up to anyone who wanted to attend, rather than requiring them to sign up as a regular member. The agenda included presentations on changes to voting procedures, a new approach to working with communities and the Replacement Local Development Plan.

We plan to continue to hold open Torfaen People's Panel meetings as a way of giving residents who are not members of citizen groups the opportunity to have their say on issues that matter to them. We will publicise the agenda in advance and give residents the chance to submit questions in advance. In September 2024, we plan to stream the meeting online to enable residents who cannot make the meeting in person to listen to the discussion, make comments and ask questions.

There are eight citizen panels in Torfaen including the Torfaen Young People's Forum, three over 50s groups, a disabled access forum, and the Climate Ambassadors Network.

In February 2024, we also relaunched our Torfaen Youth Forum, which is a group that enables young people to talk to us, about issues that affect them.

Seventeen young people from six secondary schools attended the first new-look Torfaen Youth Forum

meeting at our Council Chamber. It was the first time the youth forum has been comprised of school council representatives from each secondary school - Abersychan School, Croesyceiliog School, and Cwmbran High School, St Alban's Roman Catholic High School, Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw and West Monmouth School

During the meeting, our Chief Executive invited the Forum to become part of “Rebel Torfaen” to help to tackle some of the challenges facing our local authority and to become part of our decision-making process. The aim is to increase the diversity of people who get to have a say in the decisions we make.

In May, the Youth Forum was given the chance to “take over” the running of the council for the day. They applied to take on several key strategic roles, like Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Children and Families, attended meetings and were asked to contribute to decisions. They made several recommendations and will return to the council in 6 months' time to find out what progress has been made.



The forum meetings once a month during the academic year. In October 2024, a Junior Youth Forum for primary school pupils will meet for the first time, and in November the first Torfaen Youth Alliance will meet bringing together representatives of all children and young peoples' groups to discuss common themes and issues.

In February 2024, we began holding public engagement workshops to help advise teams on best practice when engaging and consulting the public. We have held three workshops to date.

Our Key Challenges...

Digital Transformation:

Investment will be required to deliver upon our strategy, typically either on an invest to save basis or through the realisation and re-distribution of efficiencies realised, via our annual delivery plan. Individual business cases will therefore need to be developed, as required in line with our project management governance approach.

Opportunities to secure further grant funding to support our ambitions will also be explored.

Moving forward with a programme of digital-led service transformation, at pace.

Our priorities and challenges for the year ahead

Throughout this section of our report, 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 use our service planning monitoring approach 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.

b. Torfaen: Becoming an Outstanding Council

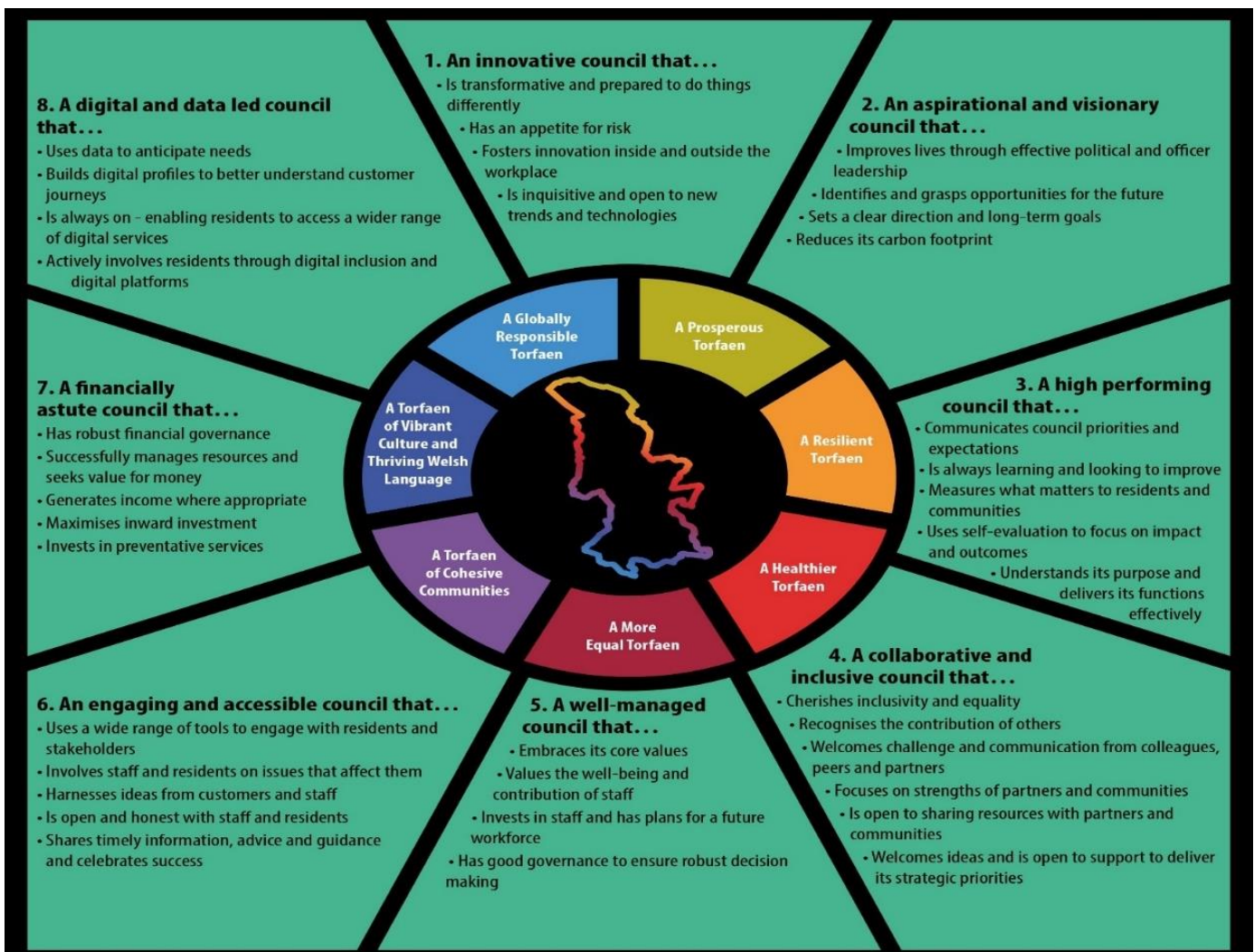
It is important to the organisation, to not just review the services we are delivering to our residents and businesses, and the impact they are having, but we must also ensure that our own internal processes and systems are working well, ensuring we are using the resources available to us as efficiently and effectively as possible, with robust controls, systems and processes supporting every aspect of the Council's activity.

The development of our County Plan is important in setting our priorities and commitments, but without specific organisational conditions defined, we will never be as effective as we can be in delivering upon all of the outcomes we are seeking to achieve.

During 2021-22, we went through a process of developing a framework - a set of 8 characteristics, which we use to define what an outstanding Council looks like to assess our performance against (*see diagram below*). This framework provides a structure which we have used, alongside our County Plan, to develop our annual self-assessment. This is the third year of reporting, against our Characteristics of an Outstanding Council.

In developing our framework for an Outstanding Council, we have not just considered what is important from our own perspective, but we have also embraced the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015, giving consideration to the sustainability principle and the 7 defined areas of corporate governance. These characteristics, along with our organisational values will help us create the right conditions to apply the five ways of working in a consistent and meaningful way.

Each characteristic is further defined by a set of supporting statements, further explaining what the characteristics mean, enabling us to assess the extent to which we are operating, as an outstanding council.



Throughout the year, we have carried out various monitoring exercises against the activities we deemed areas for improvement or development within last year's self-assessment report. These activities are reflected in the appropriate Service Plans and are monitored on a quarterly basis by the Directorates and reported to our Leadership Team on a six-monthly basis. Where there are areas, we feel haven't improved as intended we will continue to monitor closely in the year ahead, to help achieve our ambition in becoming an outstanding Council.

Whilst reviewing the process taken to produce our first annual self-assessment report, it was felt on reflection, too much emphasis was given to operational service-based activities rather than on our corporate strategic activities. Our development as a Council over the past 2 years has been evident of late with changes to the leadership structure to correspond to a more corporate/strategic approach. This has led to us ensuring that this year's report will take a more strategic approach.

In May 2023, we held a senior managers event. One of the topics on the agenda was to seek views on how staff felt about our Characteristics, if they felt they were being embedded or if more work was needed. Overall, the feedback on this was positive with general agreement that we were working towards the right set of Characteristics.

Work was undertaken to better define our characteristics which has resulted in a set of descriptors for each characteristic. These descriptors can be viewed [here](#). This exercise further helped us to explain what we believe outstanding looks like and to help us evaluate what areas we need to be concentrating on to help us get there.

Following review, we have used our framework to undertake an organisational self-assessment, drawing conclusions and setting out the actions that need to be taken, going forward. Progress against our commitments is monitored each year and our key findings have been reported within the following section of this report.

Our Governance Arrangements

The Council's Governance arrangements are integral to the Council's ability to deliver its key services whilst effectively and economically deploying its resources.

Each year, we produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to outline the governance processes and arrangements that operate within the Council. The AGS is prepared by the officers across the Council whose remit it is to ensure the Council is achieving and maintaining good corporate governance.

The Governance and Audit Committee also has oversight of the process for producing the **Annual Governance Statement (AGS)**, providing a mechanism for review prior to adoption by full Council. The AGS is integral to the Council's Self-Assessment process and is a key source of evidence when considering the progress made against our 'Characteristics of an Outstanding Council'.

Our Governance and Audit Committee is firmly embedded within our governance arrangements. The committee is made up of 5 local authority elected members and 3 lay members - one of which holds the role of the Chair. A mix of both local authority members and lay members further strengthens the level of independent challenge within the committee. In addition to its role reviewing our AGS, the committee has a key oversight and assurance role in areas such as business risk management (including monitoring of individual directorate risk registers), financial management, our Council's Management Framework and our Complaints process. Another critical role of the committee is to provide assurance that the Council is responding appropriately and effectively to reports from our external regulators.

Any recommendations made by Audit Wales and our other external regulators, are received by our **Governance and Audit Committee** and added to the Council's "Action Plan for Governance and Improvement". This is the Council's key document to demonstrate how accepted proposals for improvement / agreed recommendations received, are being addressed.

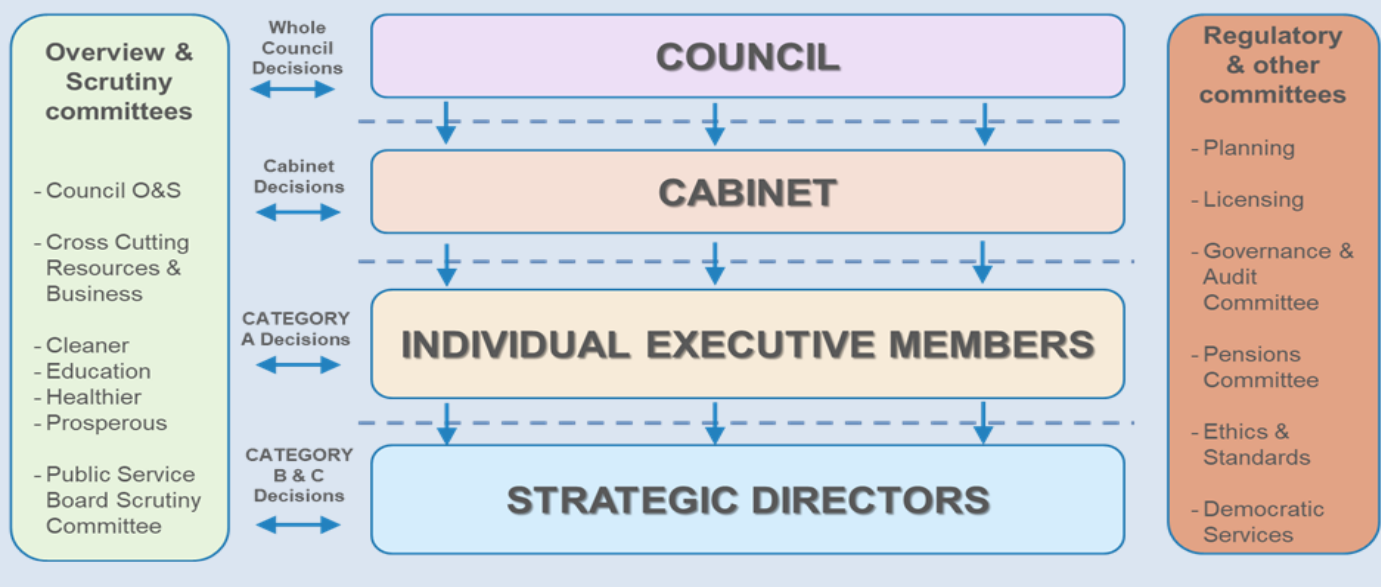
Our Action Plan is updated and reported on a regular basis to provide assurance to the Governance and Audit Committee. Monitoring of service specific recommendations is the responsibility of the Council's

overview and scrutiny committees, with annual progress updates being prepared for the Governance and Audit Committee for assurance purposes. Any concerns relating to progress identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and / or the Governance and Audit Committee are highlighted in a report for consideration by the Council's Cabinet.

Over the past year, we have strengthened overall political leadership with the introduction of effective cross-party scrutiny and cross-party focus groups. This has led to smoother planning, functioning and delivery of projects and services that are of priority and matter greatly to our communities. Cross-party work has involved elected Members from various geographical and political backgrounds collaborating to make decisions that benefit constituents and the county as a whole. It's recognised that Members may have different ideologies and priorities, but this approach demonstrates progressive working in Torfaen where the interests of constituents and the well-being of the local communities are prioritised above partisan considerations.

Strong democratic governance is a key element to us being a well-managed organisation and is therefore critical to meeting our performance requirements. (An overview of our governance arrangements has been set out, as below and further information is available within our [Councils Constitution](#), which is our formal framework setting out how we as a council must operate and make decisions with efficiency, transparency and accountability.

OUR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE



Key Learning from Self-Assessing our Characteristics of an Outstanding Council

Our self-assessment has been developed using the extensive information we have available to us, in order to produce a rounded picture of our Council. An overview of the key learning and findings are set out below:

1. An innovative Council that...

- Is transformative and prepared to do things differently
- Has an appetite for risk
- Fosters innovation inside and outside the workplace
- Is inquisitive and open to new trends and technologies

Key Developments

Our focus has developed over the last year, in line with our characteristics and many changes have taken place to help us become more innovative, as a Council. Importantly, we have continued to adjust quickly and respond positively to new challenges and initiatives, demonstrating that there is a willingness to adapt and deliver in ever changing circumstances. However, as we move forward, we must match our willingness to take risks and deliver new innovative projects, with the pragmatism required to bring projects to an end when it is clear we are unable to take them forward or they will not deliver intended benefits.

At the end of 2023, we set out a new way of working, which we branded as 'Rebel Torfaen'. This new way of working 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. The aim being to offer a broader and more diverse view and response to the challenges that we are facing.

We have also asked our staff whether they are part of a rebel group or not:

- what their rebel ideas are, for making our organisation better?
- what they think we should change, improve, or innovate?
- what are the opportunities and challenges that they see in their area of work?
- how can we collaborate more effectively across teams and departments?
- how can we serve our residents and communities better?

We have now created a platform where ideas can be shared with the Council's Leadership and with each other. The Chief Executive has written to all staff encouraging them to be bold, creative, and constructive in their suggestions.

Within the platform, staff can submit their own ideas, comment on other people's ideas, and see how they are progressing. This is a way for staff having their voice heard and to influence the direction and strategy of our organisation.

In reviewing our progress, last year we identified the need to be more joined up internally when we plan the delivery of our services. As such, in 2024/25 we amended our service planning framework/template to promote more conversations between teams around planned service developments. Plans were also actively shared with key corporate services to ensure a greater level of integration was achieved. Though this has helped improve the situation, further changes to the service planning process will be implemented for 2025/26.

We continue to consider how best to take forward work related to our appetite for risk. Our current processes are well regarded and provide a robust framework for identifying and managing our risks. During 2023/24 our processes were subject to internal audit further validating our approach. Conversations have taken place with Blaenau Gwent about our respective approaches to risk management as we begin to work more closely together. However, the focus of this work in the year ahead will likely focus on aligning our processes as closely as possible, rather than expanding upon our existing risk management arrangements.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- **C1.1 - Explore and understand our appetite for risk by:**
 - Exploring how we define risk
 - Understanding what our appetite for risk is
 - Being able to look at risk through multiple lens or perspectives
- **C1.2 - Understand and Reduce Silo Working by:**
 - Providing access to Service Plans across our Directorates, at an early stage, which allows for proactive planning and reduces the risk of planning, in isolation
 - Introducing an 'ideas culture', enabling our staff to feel empowered to put their ideas forward for improving services, through a variety of staff led groups

- **C1.3 - Encourage more agility throughout the Council by:**
 - Being prepared to do things differently and to stop sooner if projects aren't working
 - Being open to more challenge linked to development of an 'ideas culture' (see C1.2).
- **C1.4 – (New measure for 24/25) Developing the skills, knowledge and experience of all our staff so they are able to meet changing demands in service delivery and priorities, by:**
 - Developing and implementing an online recruitment and onboarding process
 - Introduce a Learning and Development platform that has accessible training and development information to meet the needs of individuals and services
- **C1.5 - (New measure for 24/25) Review processes currently undertaken in our Administration Business Support (ABS)Team to:**
 - explore effective use of technology and implementing "do differently" ensuring the best use of resources to deliver the service

2. An aspirational and visionary council that...

- Improves lives through effective political and officer leadership
- Identifies and grasps opportunities for the future
- Sets a clear direction and long-term goals
- Reduces its carbon footprint

Key Developments

We have set a clear direction within our organisation and share our long-term goals for improving Well-Being across Torfaen. Our County Plan aims to do this by setting out clearly the outcomes/objectives/activities that we are aiming to achieve and is well understood and supported politically and organisationally.

The introduction of an annual Delivery Plan for each financial year continues to be used to monitor and report our progress against our aspirations for the lifespan of the County Plan. We also continue to work alongside our partners in the Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) by working together to become a 'Marmot' region with the intent of taking evidence-based action to reduce inequalities and address key challenges to current and long-term well-being across the region, to reduce the inequities that affect the wider determinants of health (see **section 8**).

At the end of March 2024, we held a 'Future Torfaen' event, focused on embedding the Marmot principles throughout the organisation and into service delivery for all areas of the Council. Initially, our Leadership Team and Heads of Service were the first to be fully engaged in the process, followed on by engagement with our wider staff network, to enable all parts of the organisation to understand how they connect and contribute to the County Plan's well-being objectives and Marmot principles.

Most recently, each service area is supporting the development of our 'Torfaen Master Plan' through drafting a suite of measures that will be included in their service plans. Each service area is therefore gaining a better understanding of how they are having a direct impact on delivering the Marmot principles.

Our master plan, based on the Marmot Principles, will provide Torfaen's future leaders, a clear vision for the county. It will help us stay focused and will inform our actions and decisions for our future. This Long-term planning will be like setting the 'sat nav' for our journey. It will help us know where we want to go and the best way to get there. Our current and future County Plans will continue to be important milestones along the way, but together with our Master Plan, this will allow us to foresee challenges, prepare for them and make sure that our daily actions match our ultimate goals.

We have secured £5 million research investment aiming to tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes for our residents. The Department of Health and Social Care, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is making this investment through the Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) over the next 5 years.

These partnerships are being set up across the UK with the aim of boosting research capacity and capability in some of the UK's most deprived communities.

As a council, we have finite resources to bring to bear the support the people of Torfaen need. By creating an HDRC, and working alongside our communities, together we can identify the most important issues concerning health inequity that affect our community. We can work on improving the way we understand the evidence base that already exists and carry out research which will enable us to design effective interventions and test them out with certainty that the impact is monitored and evaluated. We can then make good evidence-based decisions on our investment choices that will be effective in reducing health inequity in our communities.

We have an ambitious vision to create a culture of curiosity putting people, data and intelligence at the centre of decision making by understanding the life-course of the citizen and how health inequalities impact on their lives and well-being outcomes. We pride ourselves on being a caring and citizen focused local authority with its values being fair, effective, supportive, and innovative. We will co-create with partners to put research into action. Using public involvement and research evidence to enhance decision making that will tackle the wider determinants of health that mean the people of Torfaen can have the best opportunities in life.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- C2.1 - Support the organisation to embed the Marmot principles into everything we do, by:

- Developing and communicating a consistent narrative throughout the organisation to enable each part of the organisation to understand how they can connect and contribute to both: our organisation's well-being objectives and Marmot Principles
- Continuing to embed the Marmot Principles into Service Planning and Governance arrangements, via the new County Plan/Marmot Performance Indicators Performance Management Framework

- C2.2 – (New measure for 24/25) Develop a Health Determinants Research Collaboration Unit:

- to create a research-active and evidence-based Council

3. A high performing council that...

- Communicates council priorities and expectations
- Is always learning and looking to improve
- Measures what matters to residents and communities
- Uses self-evaluation to focus on impact and outcomes
- Understands its purpose and delivers its functions effectively

Key Developments

Positive building blocks continue to be put into place to help us achieve our ambition of becoming a high performing council. This has been enabled and supported by a number of factors such as, our County Plan and delivery plan; a new Performance Management Framework and approach, a new leadership structure and regular review of our service planning processes. All these factors have resulted in positive improvements being realised with regards to improving service delivery, particularly within our Education service.

Our Performance Management Framework (PMF) helps to outline and capture our developing approach to monitoring, reporting and improving performance in Torfaen. Our Service Planning process for 2023-24 has provided a more consistent approach across the organisation, for updating and monitoring performance. Activities comprising the County Plan Delivery Plan are embedded within our team plans, enabling us to better monitor the delivery of our ambitions.

To take our aspiration of becoming a high performing Council to the next level we need to become more

data and intelligence driven going forward. Throughout 2023/24, there has been varying levels of progress among our teams, in reviewing their data, so that we as an organisation are able to better understand what data we hold and identify where there are gaps. A key area for development and priority for in 2024/25 will therefore be completion of this data mapping exercise. Our focus will also continue to be on pursuing and developing the Power BI system into our performance monitoring and reporting arrangements.

We have begun taking advantage of the reintroduced local authority benchmarking, in our self-assessment work. A new tool has been developed by Data Cymru to support local authorities with benchmarking within the Self-Assessment process and we will continue to seek to get greater use from this tool and make best use of the data that is available through it, helping us to compare our performance with other Local Authorities.

Throughout 2023/24, we have also reviewed the way in which we capture the views of our residents as well as other feedback from our customers - to ensure the feedback we are receiving is being properly disseminated, understood and actioned.

As a result of this review, a corporate calendar of public engagement has been developed which provides a single view of when our directorates engage with the public and undertake surveys to capture service user perspectives. A Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Working Group has also been established to develop a national residents survey for Wales, working alongside Data Cymru. Officers from within our organisation have been heavily involved in this work and it is anticipated that the new resident's survey will be finalised the latter part of 2024/25.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- **C3.1 - Explore ways of receiving better intelligence from residents by:**
 - Reviewing the way in which we carry out our Residents Survey and capture any other feedback from our customers - to ensure we receive the right feedback from the right customers at the right time
- **C3.2 - Identify gaps in our data by:**
 - Reviewing all the data we collect across our organisation and determining where there are gaps in our knowledge.
 - *Also linked to work with our Staff Focus Group (C1.2) covered under Characteristic 1*
- **C3.3 – (New measure for 24/25) Improving our data capability:**
 - Introduction of Power BI - to support our aspiration to become a more data and intelligence driven organisation, through improving the accessibility and visibility of data
- **C3.4 – (New measure for 24/25) Exploring a range of mechanisms to improve public engagement**
 - Working with groups, such as the Climate Champions to explore involvement into the scrutiny process
- **C3.5 - (New measure for 24/25) Reviewing our estate to ensure we are utilising our buildings efficiently and appropriately by:**
 - Preparing a new comprehensive and integrated Five Year Asset Management Strategy and Implementation/Investment Plan

4. A collaborative and inclusive council that...

- Cherishes inclusivity and equality
- Recognises the contribution of others
- Welcomes challenge and communication from colleagues, peers and partners
- Focuses on strengths of partners and communities
- Is open to sharing resources with partners and communities
- Welcomes ideas and is open to support to deliver its strategic priorities

Key Developments

We cherish and embrace inclusivity and equalities within the organisation. Many of the plans that have been introduced within the last year such as the Gwent Well-being Plan and Strategic Equalities Plan (both developed through strong partnership and collaboration), continue to demonstrate our commitment to this.

Our County Plan promises that we will do things differently in Torfaen. We adopted our 'Community Wellbeing Strategy' in April 2024, setting out a new vision and mission for the Council to put 'communities' and 'wellbeing & prevention' as genuine cornerstones in the way we design our services.

The first line of prevention comes directly from our communities. Communities take many forms and are essential in helping us to stay resilient. Community leaders, volunteers, community groups, charities, clubs and hubs, open spaces, churches, shops and cafes all offer invaluable help and support to keep us well.

They are most powerful when all organisations are connected and pulling in the same direction: a single 'system' made up of lots of different actors working in each local place. Our Town & Community Councils have a crucial role to play in leading the strategy for their community. And alongside them, the Council, along with our NHS, Police and Voluntary Sector partners, all have a role to play in creating the conditions for effective community planning so that together we can tackle early, and head on, the issues that make the biggest difference to wellbeing and resilience in communities across the Borough.

By 2027, the Council will have radically changed the way that we operate, putting 'communities' and 'wellbeing & prevention' as genuine cornerstones in the way we design our services so that we can empower our communities to be healthier, better connected and more equal.

Our communities are central to supporting the wellbeing and independence of residents. We will embrace the passion and knowledge that our communities and community organisations have about their local area and will work together to jointly design solutions with each local community at the centre. Together, we will tackle early, and head-on, the issues that make the biggest difference to wellbeing, resilience, and independence.

During 2023/24, we have continued to ensure that all our Directorates within our organisation embed the requirements of our Participation Strategy, which will provide our residents with appropriate opportunities to have their say on: the way in which we work and the decisions that we need to take that may affect them.

Information captured will also be fed into the work we are doing on a corporate calendar of public engagement discussed in the previous section, to ensure we are making best use of what residents and other stakeholders are telling us.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- C4.1 - Take forward the Communities Strategy Approach by:

- Improving the planning of priorities at a local level, ensuring that community delivery is a key principle in service design, increasing the number of volunteers in the community, and matching volunteers and community groups to service delivery

- C4.2 - Embed the new Participation Strategy across the Council by:

- Ensuring all Directorates within our organisation embed the requirements of our Participation Strategy, which will provide our residents with appropriate opportunities to have their say on the way in which we work and the decisions that we need to take that may affect them

- C4.3 – (New measure for 24/25) Developing our knowledge of our workforce by:

- Improving the collection of workforce data to enable us to eliminate any inequalities
- Developing our staff induction process, to ensure that the values detailed in "The Way We Work" (including fair behaviour) are embedded in supervision and annual work appraisals

- C4.4 – (New measure for 24/25) Closer Working in Blaenau Gwent:

- Explore collaborative opportunities across Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent to improve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability
- Set out options for both councils to decide on ways forward over short, medium and longer terms

5. A well-managed council that...

- Embraces its core values
- Values the well-being and contribution of staff
- Invests in staff and has plans for a future workforce
- Has good governance to ensure robust decision making

Key Developments

The well-being and contribution of our staff is valued and is fundamental to the delivery of high-quality services. During the last year, we have undertaken significant work to further strengthening our approach around our Workforce Strategy. Our strategy sets out how through our workforce we will achieve the strategic aims of our County Plan, key legal duties and provides information of how the Council will take forward our characteristics of an outstanding council. Our strategy focuses on staff wellbeing and development, this is starting to be implemented through workstreams such as working with staff in the year ahead to review our current performance appraisal programme, in a way that benefits all staff. The new approach will go live in 2024/25.

At the end of 2023/24, we launched a new career development programme to help encourage people to pursue a career within our organisation.

Apprentices and trainees are now provided with an opportunity to earn while they learn - gaining valuable on-the-job experience, as well as working towards a nationally recognised qualification. This will help us to build a skilled and adaptable workforce within our organisation and it is hoped that 40 Apprentices and Trainees will join our Programme over the next 12 months.

Existing employees will also have the opportunity to access fully funded qualifications from the Welsh Government Apprenticeship Framework to help develop their skills and to support their professional development.

Work has been undertaken reviewing the Council's scheme of delegation, in particular to ensure lower-level decisions can be made at an appropriate level to ensure we remove unnecessary blockages in the decision-making process. It has been determined that although the scheme of delegation is fit for purpose as it already provides provision for the delegation of decisions to the officers needed to make them, further work is needed to simplify the process. We are therefore currently working to put in place a more streamlined online template for completion by officers taking lower-level Category C decisions. This will be implemented in the year ahead.

Governance arrangements continue to remain strong within our organisation - the annual governance statement (AGS) confirms that our approach remains robust, and audit feedback in relation to governance is largely positive. Evidence we have obtained, including largely positive feedback from audit demonstrates there is good governance structures and processes in place, that supports robust decision making.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- **C5.1 - Review the current arrangements for Performance Appraisals by:**
 - Working with our Staff Focus group to ensure ideas are provided by a range of staff on issues that affect them and imbedded into our appraisal system.
- **C5.2 - Review our current scheme of delegation by:**
 - Ensuring staff are empowered to take lower-level decisions.
- **C5.3 - Identify gaps in our data by:**

- Reviewing all data collected across our organisation to determine gaps in our intelligence and monitoring. (*As per Characteristic 3*)
- **C5.4 – (New measure for 24/25) Strengthening our workforce effectively by:**
 - Agreeing and developing a delivery plan for the workforce strategy
 - Establishing apprenticeship roles within the public sector, preferably on a shared basis
 - Developing a Wellbeing Programme for all staff
 - Reviewing the current Worksmart process linking it to the management of performance and workforce development plans
- **C5.5 – (New measure for 24/25) Support the delivery of the Council's statutory Panel Performance Assessment** (required once every electoral cycle under the Local Government and Elections Act 2021).

6. An engaging and accessible council that...

- Uses a wide range of tools to engage with residents and stakeholders
- Involves staff and residents on issues that affect them
- Harnesses ideas come from customers and staff
- Is open and honest with staff and residents
- Shares timely information, advice and guidance and celebrates success

Key Developments

There are important benefits of engaging with our staff, residents and stakeholders and we continue to work with as many groups and forums as possible, to ensure they are involved in the issues that affect them. We have good and well-established forums and networks (Citizens Panel, Youth Forum etc) who are largely engaged on the decisions and developments we are making. We also have a number of Member Champions split between cabinet members and back bench members who are also engaged on decisions relevant to the areas they represent. Some of our Member Champions include our Equalities & Diversity Champion, Carers Champion, Sustainability Champion and Mental Health Champion.

We communicate openly and honestly with residents and Members. This communication is frequent and through variety of mediums, which has proven to be highly productive, with large amounts of interactions and feedback. We celebrate our successes well and are open and honest in areas where our plans have not been delivered, as intended.

The challenges we face are complex. They involve multiple factors, inter-dependencies, and a variety of uncertainties, and our success in tackling them, will require more than just our individual hard work, motivation, or even talent.

As a result, at the end of 2023, we set out a new way of working, which we branded as 'Rebel Torfaen'. This new way of working 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. The aim being to offer a broader and more diverse view and response to the challenges that we are facing.

Our 'Rebel Torfaen' approach will not provide a single solution to our challenges, but it will help to adjust our mindset, and way of doing things that will ensure our workplace is a cauldron of ideas, where diverse perspectives and approaches are encouraged and celebrated.



It's a culture where we can be increasingly creative in our thinking, our experimentation, our learning, and our ability to adapt, so we can drive innovation in a way that has not been done before.

The 'Rebel' groups made up of volunteers from across the organisation will help harness the potential of the 'cognitive diversity' within our workforce. Cognitive diversity focuses on the differences in how each of us thinks, how

we process information, and we approach solving problems. These differences arise from a variety of factors, including our education, our life experiences, the culture in which we grew up and now live, and our individual personalities.

Solving complex problems, can best be achieved by bringing together diverse teams of people and by creating a 'think lab' environment, where we can capture a wider range of perspectives and experiences, leading to more creative and innovative solutions, for our organisation.

They will help us an organisation to challenge our assumptions, explore new possibilities, and generate novel solutions for the complex problems we face as a county. The rebel groups will also bring in more diverse perspectives from different stakeholders, ensuring our decisions are inclusive and responsive to the needs and expectations of the people we serve.

The rebel groups will be a place where we can experiment with new ideas, test them, and learn from them, creating a culture of continuous improvement and learning. By harnessing the power of cognitive diversity, the rebel groups will enable us to make better decisions, deliver better outcomes, and become a more agile and resilient organisation.

We feel that this is a great opportunity for our employees to develop their leadership and communication skills, as well as being able to contribute to organisational change and innovation. To encourage these discussions, we have created a platform where rebel ideas can be posted and shared throughout the organisation. The platform is where employees can submit their ideas, comment on other people's ideas, and to see how these ideas are progressing.

Our Leadership value the input of our employees and we want to make the most of the collective intelligence and diversity that we have within our organisation. We look forward to taking this approach forward in the year ahead as well as developing a 'Rebel Youth' group that will enable us to better involve young people in the decision-making processes of the Council. We believe that by listening to each other and working together, we can create a positive change and achieve our vision and mission.

As well as our key pieces of work as outlined within Well-being Objective 9 of this report, in November 2023, our Communication Team won Silver in the Public Sector Communication Campaign category at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Cymru awards for a communications campaign that they run. 'Are You Registered to Vote?' campaign encouraged 14 to 18-year-olds to register to vote in the run up to last year's local elections.

This campaign, led to a 30 per cent increase in voter registration among the target age group, and a two per cent increase in overall registration, from 90 to 92 per cent.

Not only were we the only local authority shortlisted for this year's Public Sector Campaign award, but we were also competing against all the major Public Relation (PR) agencies in Wales.

We have also adopted and developed our Public Participation Strategy, to better involve our residents and encourage more to work with us. We are now at the implementation stage which involves staff training and raising awareness across all of our service areas, so that we are providing people with opportunities to have a say in the way in which we work and are able to impact on the decisions that may affect them.

As already mentioned under an 'Innovative Council', we are working to foster an organisational culture that empowers staff to have the confidence and ability to come forward with their ideas, something that it will be important for us to build upon in the years ahead.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- C6.1 - Embed the new Participation Strategy across the Council by:

- Ensuring all Directorates within our organisation embed the requirements of our Participation Strategy, providing people with opportunities to have a say on the way we work and the decisions we make that affect them

(Also linked to the Staff Focus Group (C1.2) covered under Characteristic 1)

- **C6.2 – (New measure for 24/25) Develop and implement a public speaking at scrutiny protocol**
- **C6.3 – (New measure for 24/25) Implement a new mechanism for performance reporting at scrutiny**
- **C6.4 – (New measure for 24/25) Rebel Torfaen**
- **Rebel Torfaen will align all activity to Torfaen's overall vision and values.**
 - Ensure that Rebel Torfaen Board activity is fully integrated into Torfaen's culture and decision making
 - A communication program will be established to inform stakeholders about the benefits of the work of Rebel Torfaen. This includes establishing a feedback mechanism to gather input from stakeholders about effectiveness and areas for improvement
 - Training and support will be offered to all Rebel Board members to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities
 - Continuously measure the impact of Rebel Torfaen and report on progress to Leadership Team and other stakeholders
 - Keep the momentum going by celebrating successes and learning from challenges. We will then make adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances
- **C6.5 – (New measure for 24/25) Rebel Youth**
 - **Expand to incorporate the decision making of younger groups through Rebel Youth**

7. A financially astute Council that...

- Has robust financial governance
- Successfully manages resources and seeks value for money
- Generates income where appropriate
- Maximises inward investment
- Invests in preventative services

Key Developments

We are a financially well governed organisation, and resources are generally well managed with good financial processes; sound budgets; good systems, alive to financial challenges which is positively viewed by our regulators.

Audit Wales recently reviewed the 'Financial Sustainability' of the Council. The review concluded positively with no recommendations and overall conclusion that the *'Council has appropriate arrangements in place to support its financial sustainability and is focused on developing and implementing actions that will generate sufficient savings to address its identified budget funding gap in a timely and sustainable way'*.

We have an effective framework of financial accountability which can be demonstrated by our robust arrangements for financial control, through the Authority's accounting procedures and Financial Regulations. We ensure, through our Annual Governance Statement (AGS), that our Council's business is conducted, in accordance with the law and to proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

Our arrangements include established capital and revenue budget planning procedures. Our Councillors are provided with regular financial reports comparing actual revenue and capital expenditure / income to annual budgets, whilst the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan outlines the financial forecasts and any levels of estimated shortfall.

We supported our financial processes by devolving responsibility to individuals within our organisation, making them totally responsible and accountable for their budgets and the financial processes (including adherence to corporate financial processes), which are used within the provision of the service. However,

staff are supported by effective, well respected Lead Finance Officers who are relied upon for expert advice and guidance.

During the last year, our Leadership Team have developed 'Project Apollo' which is our council-wide approach to addressing the shortfall in our medium-term financial plan, developed under 8 separate workstreams. Part of this programme is to develop the council's wider approach to commercialisation, which has led to the resulting delay in our timescales for this project. Our wider approach to commercialisation will then be reviewed to determine necessity or benefit of a specific strategy - in light of other Project Apollo themes of service redesign and digital transformation, which aims to drive down cost and increase efficiency.

Over the last 2 years, the Council has set up a Portfolio Management Office. The PMO is working with teams across the Council to support the planning, initiation and delivery of strategic and larger scale programmes, projects, service improvements and transformation, ensuring we invest in the right things and deliver high quality services to maximise outcomes for the people and communities of Torfaen. We have recently introduced a pipeline / project mandate process. The new process will establish an approved and prioritised project pipeline, including those that require capital investment to deliver. The process will therefore improve the way we are prioritising Capital investment and securing value for money from that spend.

We have added greater resilience and stability to our procurement function, as a result of our collaboration agreement with Cardiff City Council. We are working on developing a contract forward plan and once completed we will be able to identify future procurements and create a pilot on incorporating social value/community benefits. Guidance and risk assessment processes are being developed by Welsh Government/Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) which will assist in using procurement spend to influence the decarbonisation agenda.

We remain strong at attracting inward investment, including successful bids for Levelling Up Funding and Shared Prosperity Funding, resulting in new grant funding that will bring investment into our communities. There is a need to do more to seek value for money and as such this will be one of our areas for improvement in the year ahead.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- C7.1 – (New measure for 24/25) Planning and implementing our Project Apollo savings targets, associated with the redesign of specific services

8. A digital and data led Council that...

- Uses data to anticipate needs
- Builds digital profiles to better understand customer journeys
- Is always on – enabling residents to access a wide range of digital services
- Actively involves residents through digital inclusion and digital platforms

Key Developments

Although we have developed significantly in the past year, we are aware, that we have still have a great deal of work to do to achieve our ambition of being a digital and data led council. We have put in place a Digital and Data Team to strengthen our approach and hope to further build on the capacity of our team through a funding bid to the Health Determinant Research Collaboration (HDRC). Should we be successful in our bid, we will be the first in Wales to receive this funding.

Our Digital and Data Team has led the development of our Digital First Customer Strategy. Our strategy is helping us on our journey to becoming digital and data-led and we now have a clear strategic vision. Our draft Digital First Customer Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan was adopted by Cabinet in May 2023, following a period of public consultation. Implementation of our delivery plan through a variety of workstreams has begun and will take place in the year ahead.

We have appointed an external supplier for our Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS). Progress is well on track with a target completion date of December 2024.

We have continued to introduce Power BI supporting our aspiration to become a more data and intelligence driven organisation, through improving the accessibility and visibility of data. Work has already proved the concept that data can be more visible, accessible and usable, with far less manual input.

We have developed digital profiles to understand our customers and as a result of this have started to roll out Robotic Process Automation. Further work is required to embed our customer personas and journey mapping within our service delivery approach. Numerous other projects aimed at delivering digital efficiency, such as the Torfaen BOT and our Employee Self Service Project are also being taken forward.

We need to do more to understand what digital solutions are available to us and how they can be best utilised by our diverse services across our organisation. We also need to understand and make better use of our data, analysing what data we hold and what data we need so that we have a better understanding of our services and the needs of our communities. These will be our priority areas of improvement, in the year ahead.

Improvement Activities for 2024/25

- **C8.1 - Explore ways of taking staff and residents with us on our digital journey by:**
 - Understanding and assessing what technology is already available to us and what is required
 - Work with our Staff Focus Group to ensure the right culture is in place to improve digitally and ensure the right training and engagement is provided to our staff
- **C8.2 - Identify gaps in our data by:**
 - Reviewing all data collected across our organisation and determining where there are gaps in our intelligence. (As per C3.2)
- **C8.3 – (New Measure for 24/25) Increase the percentage of transactions completed online, using customer feedback to drive improvements**
- **C8.4 – (New Measure for 24/25) Creating a new digital workspace for staff to further enhance and streamline internal business processes by:**
 - Undertaking Sharepoint migration for all directorates within our organisation
 - Ensuring all data and information is cleansed prior to migration
 - Creating an intelligent folder structure within Sharepoint.
- **C8.5 – (New Measure for 24/25) Designing and agreeing a digital skills programme to increase capabilities of our workforce targeting:**
 - Skills all staff should have,
 - The Minimum Viable Capabilities we need at an organisational and service area level in order to deliver digital transformation, and
 - Skills our managers and leaders need to better understand digital possibilities and apply to business problems/opportunities
- **C8.6 - Use solutions available to us to automate and streamline business processes contributing to increased productivity and improved outcomes for our customers**

5. Joining up our legislative requirements

Provisions outlined within both the Well-Being of Future Generation Act (2015) and Local Government Elections Act (2021) also aligns with other duties placed on councils, such as the Equality Act (2010), Welsh Language (Wales) Measure (2011) and Environment (Wales) Act (2016).

This next section of this report will therefore provide details of how we have been working towards these other legislative requirements.

Equality and diversity

The Welsh Language Strategy, was approved by Council on 27 February 2024, outlining our strategic direction during 2024 – 2029, that will assist the growth of the Welsh language within the Borough, support the Welsh Government’s vision of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and the Councils Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Our progress against this strategy is reported each year, within our Welsh Language Standards Annual Report.



During 2023/24 we have:

- **5 Year Promotion Strategy** - The Council’s 5-year strategy came to an end in March 2022. The Council’s new 5-year strategy (2024 – 2029) was approved by Council on 27 February 2024, which will aim to increase the percentage of Welsh speakers within Torfaen from 8.24% in 2021 (2021 Census) to 17% by 2029. It is also closely aligned to our Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Welsh Government Strategy – Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers.
- **Staff Skill Audit** - We have many of our staff who have gone through Welsh medium education in the borough, but we know that often skills are forgotten, and confidence lost. We would like to support our staff to continue to use those extremely valuable life skills. This will also allow us to understand where we have skills gaps so we can look to fill these by recruiting and/or training in the future. The Council currently records the Welsh language skills of staff on its main employee platform (iFOR) using the ALTE scale of measuring the skill levels in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding Welsh. In order to align the skills with other public sector organisations, we aim to move to the CEFR levels of recording. The 7 skill levels ranging from ‘no skills’ (A0) to ‘fluent’ (C2) are also linked to recognised qualifications and other assessment frameworks. The new survey to encourage staff to record their language skills will be conducted during the Summer.
- **Removing Barriers** - From April 2024, the internal charging of directorates for Welsh translations will be eliminated, removing the barriers faced by managers in balancing budget pressures. This will allow for increased promotion of the language and our Welsh language offer to residents. The increased use of technology will also assist the team to increase capacity and mitigate any increased demands on the translation service.
- **Cultural Events** - To celebrate St Davids Day, in partnership with Menter Iaith Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen a Mynwy, the Council continued to support the ‘Torf-hwyl’ festival. The Council also raised awareness of St Davids Day, Santes Dwynwen and the various Eisteddfodau events throughout the year.
- **Policy Development** – Our Welsh Language Unit continues to be part of the Integrated Well Being Assessment on policy decisions. However, the need to assess these impacts earlier in the policy development process has been recognised. During the latter part of the year, the unit has worked closely with colleagues to inform Directorates of the requirements of the Standards and to assist in advising managers of the positive and adverse effects of the policy, both directly and in-directly. A new training module will be launched in July 2024, aimed at managers who are involved in making policy decisions.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a cross-cutting theme for local government with strong links to all other sustainable development issues. There is a range of legislation including the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which places a duty on all local authority departments to have regard for biodiversity. We are committed to ensuring we meet our obligations to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within Torfaen.



Torfaen is characterised by high quality natural habitats and contains areas of national and local conservation importance. There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest, approximately 200 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and seven Local Nature Reserves. The Afon Llwyd is an important ecological corridor in Torfaen alongside the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal.

Key habitats include ancient deciduous woodland, wetlands, species rich grassland and heather dominated upland heath. Woodlands in general comprise approximately 5% of the total area in Torfaen with many examples of ancient woodlands in Cwmbran that are over 400 years old.

The Torfaen Local Biodiversity Action Plan sets out how we will retain and enhance the borough's rich and varied biodiversity. The plan, facilitated by the Torfaen Biodiversity Partnership, includes separate action plans to ensure we meet our specific statutory obligations.

During 2023/24 we have

- Adopted Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- Managed 7 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) for the benefit of nature and people. These are strategically located throughout Torfaen and are biodiversity hubs within our green infrastructure
- Worked with the Police and South Wales Fire & Rescue Services to tackle illegal off-roading and wildfires in the uplands
- Supported volunteers in managing the rights of way network and local nature reserves in Torfaen
- Secured agreement to increase the amount of Council land managed for biodiversity and climate adaptation with ongoing management and monitoring.
- Worked with Bron Afon Community Housing to identify alternative more sustainable grassland management regimes and await completion of an updated mapping project.
- Through the Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Local Nature Partnership (LNP) completed work on a Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) that is available on the LNP website.
- Mapped our Urban Green Infrastructure Assets and identified corridors which need protecting and enhancing to ensure ecological connectivity through the urban area.
- Completed staff training subjects such as Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), the Torfaen Tree Strategy and the s6 public bodies biodiversity duty.
- Through the WG funded Resilient Greater Gwent and Local Places for Nature projects, worked in partnership to deliver community-based biodiversity enhancement and well-being projects – including new ponds, tree planting, grassland restoration and community orchards and gardens.
- Progressed the designation of a new Local Nature Reserve at Blaensychan.
- Commenced the implementation of the management plan for the Bloreng Site of Special Scientific Interest.(SSSI)
- Supported the delivery of the Torfaen Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.
- Planted over 7277 trees, throughout the borough.
- In partnership with Greenmeadow Community Farm introduced conservation grazing to several council owned sites.
- Organised public events to celebrate Wales Nature Week.
- Provided on-going advice to the land use planning process in terms of its statutory requirement to protect and enhance biodiversity through planning decisions.
- Commenced work on a review of the Torfaen Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Plan.

6. The Cost of our Services (our 2022/23 budget)

Our Revenue Budget

Our financial performance for 2022-23 is contained within our draft [Statement of Accounts | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

The 2023/24 budget was approved in February 2023 with a £319.6 million gross revenue budget that was financed from £96.8 million of service specific government grants, fees and charges for services and other

funding & contributions.

The net budget of £223 million was funded by £172.4 million of unhyponthecated funding from Welsh Government and £50.6 million by Council Tax.

The 2023/24 revenue outturn produced a net favourable position, after contributions to specific reserves, of £234,000 against its £223 million budget. Whilst also not drawing down contributions from its General Fund Balance to support various initiatives, including the budgeted use of the Fund that was scheduled to be used to fund the anticipated spike in energy costs in 2023/24.



In providing its day-to-day services the Council (including its schools) incurred a gross actual spend of £337.1 million, comprising employee costs of £164.6 million, running costs of £162.3 million and capital costs of £10.2 million

The primary favourable reasons for the out-turn position are summarised as follows:

- Favourable saving from staff vacancies / turnover across all Service Areas.
- Receipt of additional grant funding over that budgeted.
- Receipt of additional fees and charges income above that budgeted and receipts of additional unexpected one-off income receipts.
- An underspend on change management costs associated with schools.
- Refunds from the Welsh Government Non-Domestic Rates Pool.
- Additional Council Tax receipts to initial estimates.
- An underspend against the 2023/24 pay contingency budget.
- A delayed start of the school leaver initiative.
- Resource re-alignment to recognise work undertaken in readiness for the construction of the 2024/25 budget.
- Completion of a review of the balance sheet and write back of appropriate entries.

These favourable points were however offset by pressures relating to:

- Children's Social Care placement support availability, and the associated costs with resolving.
- Absorption of the closure costs of Cwmbran Farm during its refurbishment.
- Additional costs associated with the Waste and Recycling service.
- Pressure on the Housing Benefits subsidy income budget arising from the use of temporary B&B accommodation to support homelessness cases.
- Funding of the termination costs associated with the reviews undertaken to support the delivery of the 2024/25 budget.

Our Capital Budget

In addition to the revenue spending the Council also spent £23 million on its assets through its 2023/24 capital programme which included spending on our land and buildings including:

- implementing the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme through:
 - extending the Crownbridge school, and
 - planning the building of the new Maendy primary school.
- continued advancements to the park and ride facility at Pontypool & New Inn train station.
- continued with the development of the British site.
- continued investment in the highway and building estate infrastructure.
- continued to invest in disabled facility grants to support our vulnerable citizens.

The 2023/24 capital programme experienced £7.8 million slippage into 2024/25, the primary reasons being:

- Sustainable Communities for Learning – slippage due to contractor payments less than anticipated.

- Economy & Environment – the main areas of slippage were AMP and school asset maintenance of £854,000, highways maintenance £325,000, low carbon heat pumps £311,000, bulking and baling £245,000. The balance of the slippage was on smaller grant funded schemes that have moved into 2024/25.
- Adults and Communities – slippage is mainly on the grant funded schemes, such as, Levelling Up Fund £1.5 million, Transforming Towns £151,000, the remaining £353,000 slippage is mainly on the Council funded schemes of Greenmeadow Farm and Disabled Facilities Grants
- Corporate – the main slippage is on the Council's contribution to City Deal. The programme was funded by £2.67 million Government approved borrowing, £19.33 million specific grants/contributions received, £0.31 million from reserve contributions, and funding from a Salix loan of £1.13 million.

7. Consulting on our Performance

Public Participation

In response to the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales), we adopted the Council's first Public Participation Strategy in October 2022.

The strategy went out to public consultation between May 2022 and August 2022 and face-to-face workshops were conducted with various citizen panels, including the Torfaen Youth Forum and Torfaen Access Forum. Their feedback was used to revise the strategy. A Participation Framework for Staff was developed, and a participation section was added to our Intranet, Swoop.

A key principle of the strategy is a commitment to telling people who have taken part in consultations how their comments and feedback have been used. One of the ways we achieve this is through our online consultation platform, 'Get Involved Torfaen', which allows people to register as participants and receive regular newsletters updating them on current and completed consultations. The platform also allows project officers to update timelines to tell people the next stages in the project.

The English-language platform had 670 registered participants as of the end of March 2024. During 2023/2024, the site had 18,215 visits, 5,140 contributions and an engagement rate of 32.5%. The Welsh language site had 49 registrations, 848 visits, 8 contributions and an engagement rate of 1.1%.

We ran 15 consultations during 2023/2024, the most popular of which was a survey about the council's waste and recycling service (1,550 contributions), a review of community council boundaries (two surveys which had an average of 412 contributions) and a consultation about our cemetery service, which had 242 contributions.

Every consultation was hosted on the platform but included face-to-face consultation as well, which we promoted via the consultation and corporate websites, on social media, and in press releases. Project teams also engaged stakeholder groups directly and held workshops with citizen panel groups and community councils.

We did not conduct a residents' survey during 2023/4 because we have been part of the WGLA working group exploring the advantages of a Wales-wide residents survey that will provide local responses alongside Wales-wide averages. We plan to run this survey in October or November 2024.

The corporate website is a valuable source of important information for residents, and we upload details of how the council has performed against its annual delivery plans each summer.

We are currently reviewing our website content to ensure information is presented in a clear, user-focused way. This is aimed at helping residents to access information quickly and effectively, to access our services digitally if they want, and to improve their perception of our services.

As part of that ongoing review, we have improved the process for signing up to our digital press releases, Weekly News email bulletin, and urgent notifications regarding disruption to services, to make it easier for residents to get information.

During 2023/4, our digital subscribers increased by 301 to 25,239 and the number of subscriptions increased by 2,342 to 75,675. We sent 380 bulletins, which had an average open rate was 38.2% and an average of 18 link clicks per bulletin.

Social media remains the primary way in which we engage directly with residents. We have:

- Over 41,000 followers on our 3 of our main social media sites – Facebook, 22k, Twitter 16.2k, Instagram 2.8k (70% female / 30% male).
- Our posts got 983.6k impressions and 232.1k reach. They were shared 957 times and received 849 comments, which was an increase on the previous year.
- Set up a council WhatsApp channel which we will be increasing our use of 2024/5.

Our press releases regularly make it into the local newspapers (South Wales Argus and Pontypool Free Press) and occasionally BBC Wales and ITV Wales which helps to communicate examples of our performance to a wider audience.

We produced two editions of Torfaen Talks during 2023/4 which is very popular with older residents and those who do not follow us online.

Responding to Complaints

We will always aim to provide a first-class service to the residents and businesses operating in Torfaen but sometimes we may not always get it right. When this is not the case, we encourage people to tell us through a complaint and to let us know if they feel we have let them down in any way. If we have been unable to informally resolve a complaint at the point that it is expressed, a formal complaint for investigation can be lodged. Our complaints process is designed to help us:

- Put things right for the complainant.
- Make sure we don't make the mistake again, and
- Improve our services for everyone.

We regularly review, monitor and report on our complaints process throughout the year. This review includes looking at the number of complaints received across our services and reviewing how efficiently and effectively they are resolved. We constantly assess this information and use the outcomes of complaints to look where improvements could be made to our policies and procedures.

Each year, an annual complaints report is received and reviewed by the Council's [Governance and Audit Committee](#) prior to being endorsed by Cabinet. The Governance and Audit Committee play a vital statutory role in challenging the effectiveness of the Council's complaints process ensuring it is delivering the intended outcomes.

An overview of our performance is set out below:

Complaints received and responded to								
Financial Year	Stage 1	Late Reply	% on time	Stage 2	Late reply	% on time	PSO W*	PSOW Investigation
2021/22	71	3	95.7%	3	1	66.6%	18	0
2022/23	135	4	97.04%	3	0	100%	18	0

2023/24	224	6	97.3%	10	3	70%	14	0
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The number of complaints has risen significantly over the last 2 years, but this is not a bad thing. We have been working closely with the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) office to actively classify more contacts as complaints. The number of complaints received by the PSOW remains very low in comparison to other local authorities and this gives us confidence that our own internal processes are fair and robust. More information on the performance of our complaints process is set out within our latest [annual complaints report](#).

8. Delivering and Monitoring Progress

a. Our Long-Term Master Plan....

Regional Context... Building a Fairer Gwent

The latest Well-being Assessment showed that although our communities are strong with many people feeling connected to their neighbourhoods and proud of their surroundings, the inequalities that exist in our communities have the potential to impact on all aspects of well-being both at a personal and community level. There are also a range of challenges that could potentially widen these inequalities in the future and impact negatively on well-being. People who live in more deprived communities have fewer years of life that are free from ill health and are more likely to have shorter lives. Children from deprived households get poorer school results; limiting their opportunities and increasing the risk that poverty will be passed from one generation to the next. Some people in our communities are experiencing in-work poverty with the amount of spare money they have after paying their bills making it difficult to afford food, transport, energy and to be digitally connected – especially as costs increase.

Many people still feel unsafe, lonely or alone. Widening economic, health, well-being and other inequalities have affected community cohesion, safety and empowerment. The assessment tells us that home ownership is already unaffordable for many low-income households, and as house prices rise more pressure is put on our social housing stock. Future Gwent will also need more housing stock that meets the needs of an ageing population and changing family structures and is resilient to a changing climate.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, the UK's exit from the EU, the war in Ukraine, and the increasing impacts of climate change, make the lives, livelihoods, health, safety and well-being of the people of Gwent even more challenging. If action isn't taken, this will lead to poorer health and well-being because of increased deprivation, substance misuse, mental health problems, civil disorder and crime, and antisocial behaviour. Evidence is already showing this will impact the health and well-being of already disadvantaged people and communities the most, who will need additional focus and support.

In recognising the inequality that exists within our communities, the Gwent Public Services Board committed to creating a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all. The agreed mechanism for doing this was set up as a 'Marmot region', with each partner within the PSB signed up to working together to reduce inequalities in Gwent.

The Gwent PSB is committed to tackling inequity through action on the social determinants of health. People's health and well-being is affected by many things, clean air, water, and food, being able to get decent work, a suitable home, having local shops, access to culture and leisure activities, a quality education, good transport and social networks as well as health information and care. Where someone lives and how much money they have impacts on their health and happiness, it can lead to poorer health and less opportunity to thrive in life.

The Gwent PSB agreed to use the framework of the eight Marmot Principles, developed by Professor Sir Michael Marmot and his team at the Institute of Health Equity, which focus on the central issues that affect fairness, health and well-being. This approach will help to identify how to address the root causes of poor health and inequity across Gwent. The eight Marmot Principles are:

1. Give every child the best start in life
2. Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
3. Create fair employment and good work for all
4. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention
7. Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes
8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

Action will be targeted at the social and economic conditions which shape our health defined through these eight principles that collectively will enable the best response to the challenges faced across Gwent. Becoming a Marmot Region demonstrates that we want to work together as a region at a senior level to improve equity across Gwent, and to improve the lives of all our communities. This approach will re-focus and accelerate progress towards reducing the root causes of health and related inequalities across Gwent.

The PSB has been supported by the Institute of Health Equity who has written a report, using the evidence from the PSB's Well-being Assessment, the consultation responses, and their experience of working in other areas across the UK and made recommendations on how the Gwent PSB and other regional partnerships, can take action to reduce inequities across Gwent. This report and its recommendations will be used by the PSB and partners in the development of future delivery plans.

Developing and Delivering a Local Approach

The specific commitment within the Gwent PSB's regional plan to become a Marmot region, represents the next phase of our County Planning. It is important that we don't just consider this ambition as a regional endeavour, but as something that we must live and breathe as a Council, in the way in which we deliver services to our local communities.

In common with other regions of Gwent, it's an unfortunate fact that communities in Torfaen face some of the worst health disparities in Wales. Addressing generational inequality across the county, demands that we take a longer-term perspective. Being a Marmot council, offers us a chance to focus, and to use our council's resources and wide-ranging influence to tackle sources of inequality.

We therefore began the development of our own 15-year plan (**Appendix 1 - Future Torfaen: A 15 Year Masterplan**). However, this does not represent the development of a new or replacement County Plan but rather it builds upon and dovetails our existing County Plan. It recognises a need to plan over a longer period of time, in the knowledge that this work will take us well beyond the current County Plan for 2027. Our County Plan continues to remain active and relevant, representing the first 5 years of our journey towards our longer-term aspiration to reduce inequity in Torfaen. Furthermore, our own 15-year plan, also signals we are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot council, over future generations.

We must therefore not forget that our County Plan and each supporting single year delivery plan represents a contribution to a much longer-term endeavour. Therefore, when considering lines of activity in our delivery plan such as, the development of a new school, a childcare setting or a leisure facility, increasing participation and achievement in adult education courses, improving uptake of benefits and grants, increasing the use of assistive technology, installing new photovoltaic installations or raising the recycling rate - it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these milestones are not just part of a single year plan but are vital stepping stones taking us towards a longer term ambition. Furthermore, these aspirations go well beyond the end of our current County Plan in 2027 and are part of a longer-term journey, as we aim to meet the needs of future generations.

Future Developments....

The measures listed in our Masterplan will continue to be refined and improved over time as new datasets become available or are developed internally. In doing so we will ensure that the plan is always being supported with the best possible data to evidence the impacts of our actions including those associated with the recommendations made in the 'Building a Fairer Gwent' report.

Importantly, the adoption of the Marmot principles and the development of the outcomes and measures represent only a small part of the work we must do to become a Marmot council. In order for Torfaen and our partners to have any meaningful impact on the wider determinants of health the approach must penetrate all parts of the organisation and run far beyond reporting against a list of outcome measures.

Through our planning processes, we are therefore questioning how we do things, adjusting as necessary to ensure we are maximising the impact on sources of inequality and inequity in Torfaen. We are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot Council, but this must be matched by our actions. Therefore, reviewing what we do and how we measure its impact will be under constant review in the years to come, as we develop stronger delivery mechanisms to reach our outcomes.

Without doing so, we will never be able to address the social determinants of health, which for the residents of Torfaen will inevitably mean they are far less likely to reach their full potential and far more likely in the future to be the recipient of Council and wider public service support or interventions.

b. Monitoring Progress....

The Council has been through a process of change over the last 2 years, significantly developing its approach to Performance Management, Service Planning and Risk Management, aimed at supporting the delivery of the Council's new County Plan.

Our revised approach to performance has also been in response to the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 and new Leadership within the Council, which has placed greater prominence on the Council's performance structures, processes and culture.

The Act regards effective self-assessment as fundamental to enabling Councils to understand how they're performing and where they could do better. Our performance reporting arrangements are therefore critical to the Council's response to the Act.

Aligned with the ethos of the LGE Act 2021, our Performance Management Framework is as much about implementing changes to processes, as it is about fostering a new culture of continuous self-assessment and improvement in the Council, by placing a much greater prominence on service-planning and the importance of routine performance monitoring.

Our new service plans have been developed to ensure that there is a clear linkage between directorate's plans, the County Plan and key corporate strategies. Routine monitoring of service plans will therefore enable the Council to monitor key actions associated with the Council's County Plan and strategic delivery plans. Our approach therefore continues to be carefully nurtured, supported and challenged, as it develops, ensuring it is working as expected, across the Council.

We have begun making use of available data that is on the Data Cymru hub, to benchmark our performance and more recently we have been working with other local authorities and Data Cymru, in order to further develop this system and the availability of comparative information. Further comparative information will be available going forward, through a common resident's survey that will be rolled out across Wales in the year ahead.

Our Leadership Team will also continue to focus on performance, through an agreed twelve weekly performance schedule. This provides a specific focus on each directorate's performance, relating to risks, progress against our County Plan well-being objectives and many other "deep dive" investigations into areas of performance which is a cause of concern.

The Council's Policy Development Forum (Cabinet and Leadership Team) will also continue to receive quarterly progress updates against the County Plan Delivery Plan. These are now supplemented with a quarterly update on the Council's budget position. Work on enhancing, reporting and monitoring of performance will continue, which will bring an opportunity to further strengthen and align our plans and processes, taking a more integrated approach to the consideration of the challenges, aspirations and resources available to the Council in the year ahead, thus leading to more effective planning of our services.

Our County Plan Delivery Plan update reports are received by full Council every 6 months, one half yearly and another at the end of the financial year, ensuring the Council is as transparent and accountable as possible.

In the coming months we will start to give early consideration to both the challenges and the areas we will prioritise in the forthcoming year, alongside how we can strengthen our process for service planning. This forms part of our ongoing drive to further strengthen the ties between our Corporate, Service and Financial planning processes, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for the residents of Torfaen.

9. The Year Ahead and Beyond

Throughout our report we have already outlined many of the key challenges we face as an organisation as well as the key developments we plan to deliver. However there are a small number of central concepts, fundamental to our approach to ensuring future generations are able to meet their needs.

Our recently adopted our Community Well-Being Strategy, provides a focus on us delivering greater resilience to our communities and residents, to meet their own needs, resulting in much greater independence and less chance of individuals needing costly Council interventions in their lives. By 2027, our aim is to radically change the way we operate, 'communities' and 'wellbeing & prevention' will be genuine cornerstones in the way we design our services so that we can empower our communities to be healthier, better connected and more equal.

Our communities are central to supporting the well-being and independence of residents. We will embrace the passion and knowledge that our communities and community organisations have about their local area and will work together to jointly design solutions with each local community at the centre. Together, we will tackle early, and head-on, the issues that make the biggest difference to wellbeing, resilience, and independence.

Our communities' approach will sit alongside our commitment to become a Marmot Council, complementing our endeavour to improve the way we plan over the longer term. The development of our Marmot / Masterplan approach will put a focus on thinking about the longer term in order to tackle intergenerational challenges, providing focus and continuity beyond existing political cycles.

There is a common theme to all of our work, which is to sustainably reduce in inequality and inequity in Torfaen. As well as improving well-being, our approach is clearly linked to the council's financial strategy. Early intervention and prevention, improving the resilience and well-being of individuals and communities and tackling the wider determinants of health are all part of the council's medium term financial plan. The approach is a better way to understand and undertake service and financial planning and a more sustainable alternative to continually cutting away our services.

Most recently, we have worked with Blaenau Gwent to develop arrangements to share a chief executive. Our initial focussed mandate is to explore the potential for efficiencies, resources that can work at scale, and potential for increasing innovation and creativity across both authorities. The initial discovery phase will for 9 months and through it we will jointly explore how our shared arrangements can bring about improvement such as greater cost efficiency, improved service delivery across councils, increased scale, enhanced innovation and knowledge sharing, stronger strategic planning, increased resilience and flexibility, greater public perception and trust, better staff development and career pathways and a greater influence regionally and nationally.

We know that our plans are ambitious and that our approach is different to other Council's across Wales. It is therefore important to continually test whether our actions are delivering the intended benefits. As we have already mentioned this will be undertaken through ongoing and continuous self-assessment and review, as well as through acting on the feedback we receive through close working with the public, partners and our regulators. We also look forward to a Council wide peer review in the year ahead (known as a Panel Performance Assessment), to provide a useful stock check on the progress we have made in delivering our ambitions, as well as giving us invaluable insights on next stages of our journey.

Future Torfaen: A 15 Year Masterplan

Wellbeing, resilience and health equity are the cornerstones of successful and vibrant communities. This is why they are central to the Fairer Gwent (Marmot) report and are at the heart of our 9 Wellbeing Objectives. As a Council we are proud to be incorporating these principles into our annual Service Plans.

Our annual Service Plans show **what** we are doing to improve wellbeing, resilience and health equity across the Borough. We will use these plans to report progress and make judgements on whether or not we have done what we said we were going to do.

But we also need to understand whether what we did has actually made the difference that we intended it to make. We recognise that sustainable change in the ways as set out in the Fairer Gwent report will not always happen overnight. This is why we've produced this 15-year Masterplan. The Masterplan will allow us to monitor the **impact** that our activities are having over the course of a generation.

We cannot wait until the end of the 15 years to see if our activity is having an impact. So, we will monitor impacts over three distinct periods of time.

1. **By the end of each year.** We can monitor these indicators monthly/quarterly, report on them at the end of each year, and adjust the target for the year ahead.
2. **By the end of this Council term (5 years).** On top of the monthly or quarterly indicators, this also allows us to present data that is only collected annually.
3. **By the end of the Masterplan.** As well as monthly, quarterly & annual indicators, this allows us to monitor truly long-term statistics from a variety of sources such as national studies that will give a definitive view on whether the Council is improving well-being and reducing inequality.

Our Future Torfaen Masterplan will measure our success against the 8 Marmot Principles that underpin the Council's own Wellbeing Objectives. The relationship between these complementary goals is set out on the next page.

Each Marmot Principle contains several parts (outcomes) shown in different colours on each page. The indicators relating to those parts are shown in the same colour. We will continue to keep these measures under review to ensure we are always measuring against the best possible indicators to assess the progress we have made. Where we know data development is required, we have identified these areas within the plan

<p>Our Well-Being Objectives</p>	<p>1. Raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives</p>	<p>2. Encourage and champion children, young people and families so they can thrive</p>	<p>3. Tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives</p>	<p>4. Make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally and physically</p>
<p>5. Respond to the climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment</p>	<p>6. Make Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups & entrepreneurial activities</p>	<p>7. Promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical well-being</p>	<p>8. Support our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit</p>	<p>9. Provide efficient customer focused services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services</p>

The Marmot Principles

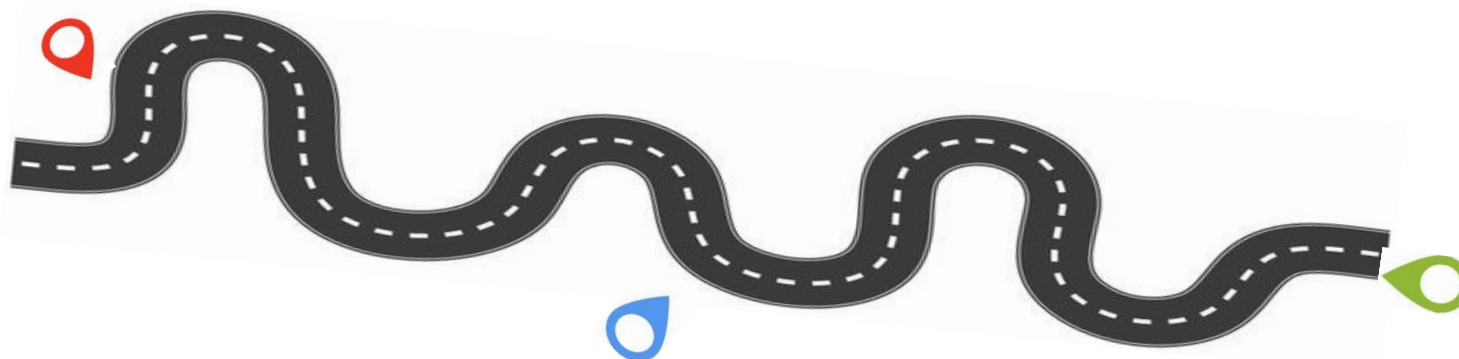
<p>1. Give every child the best start in life.</p>	
<p>2. Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.</p>	
<p>3. Create fair employment and good work for all.</p>	
<p>4. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.</p>	
<p>5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.</p>	
<p>6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.</p>	
<p>7. Tackle racism discrimination and their outcomes.</p>	
<p>8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.</p>	

Marmot Principle 1: Give every child the best start in life

- Children are prepared for school readiness and lifelong learning
- Children, including vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, lead healthy lives and reach their full potential.
- Children in Torfaen live free from the negative impacts of poverty
- Schools are welcoming environments focussed on well-being, driving up attendance and enabling children to feel happy, safe and ready to learn
- Children are safe in their own homes, free from harm and neglect

By the End of the Year

- Primary school attendance will have increased.
- Secondary school attendance will have increased
- The number of children on the child protection register will have reduced
- The no. of children looked after will have reduced
- The no. of days lost per child due to fixed term exclusions will have decreased
- We will have set a baseline for the % of children on track or better for:
 - Social & emotional development
 - Physical development
 - Speech, language and communication
 - Mathematical development



By the End of the Council Term

- The % of pupils taking part in 60 minutes or more of exercise will have increased
- The % of pupils reporting that there is support at school for pupils who feel unhappy or worried will have increased
- The % of pupils who have smoked at least once/week will have reduced
- The number of children accessing the flying start programme will increase
- The % of pupils reporting that their teachers care about them as a person will have risen
- The % of pupils eating one or more portion of fruit or veg a day will have increased.
- The % of pupils bullied will have decreased
- The % of pupils who have tried an e-cigarette will have decreased
- We will have increased the number of in-house foster carers
- We will have supported more unaccompanied asylum seeking children to settle in Torfaen

By the end of the Masterplan

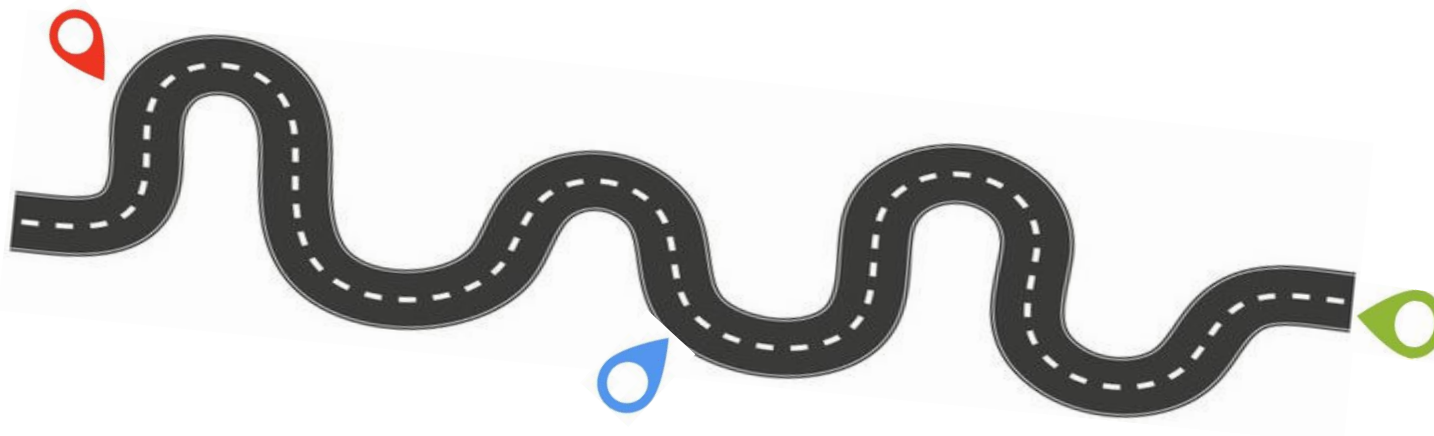
- The % of children living in relative low-income families will have fallen
- The % of pupils satisfied with their life in will have risen
- The % of seven-year-olds achieving the expected level at the end of the foundation phase will have risen
- The % of low birthweight full-term live births will have reduced

Marmot Principle 2: Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives

- Opportunities for learners across all ages, abilities and backgrounds is improved
- Learners thrive benefitting from quality education and training opportunities that are accessible to all
- Local initiatives are community led and driven by strong partnerships with community organisations and businesses
- Parents and carers can balance work and family life, enabling access to education, training, and employment opportunities

By the End of the Year

- The % of young people supported to transition into education, employment or training will have increased
- The % of children who are accessing the childcare offer will have increased
- The % of customers who take up a community support offer at the front door will have increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The % of adults qualified to NQF level 2 (GCSE A* - C) will have increased
- The % difference in attainment at Key Stage 4 between students who receive free school and those who do not will have reduced for:
 - Science
 - English
 - Maths
- The no. of new apprentice starts in Level 2 and Level 3 will have increased
- The % of people who cannot find a nursery placement will have reduced
-

By the End of the Council Term

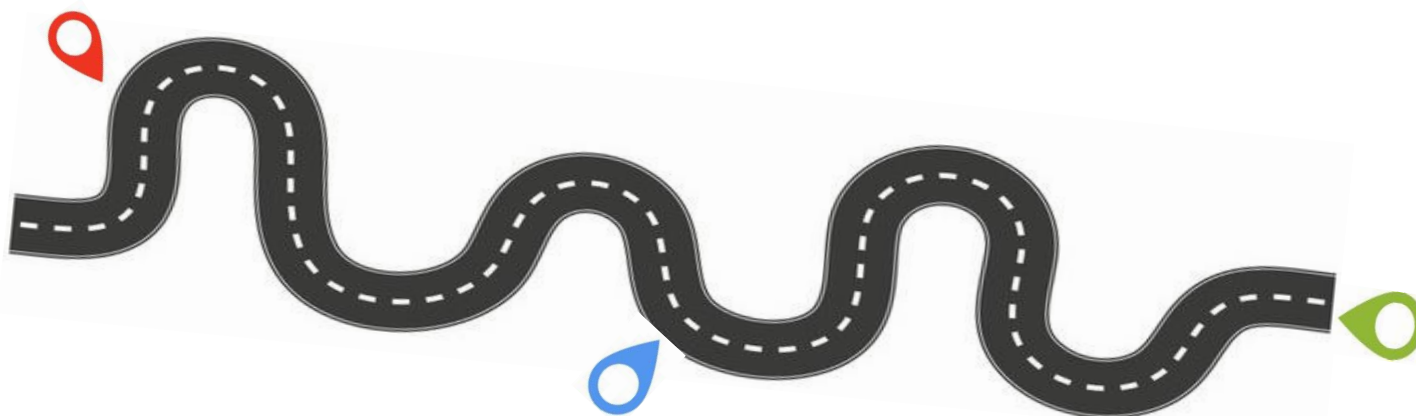
- The number of children receiving childcare and education through the Welsh language will increase
- The % of community groups sustained 6 months after the involvement of capacity builders will have grown.
- The % of customers who supported by a Front Door who are still attending their community support offer will have risen
- The % of known community groups who are registered on the connect Torfaen platform will have increased from
- The % of enquiries referred on in error when a community support offer should have been provided will have fallen

Marmot Principle 3: Create fair employment and good work for all

- Torfaen's businesses take an active role in regional priority sector supply chains and supporting business innovation in public priorities like climate change, healthcare & manufacturing productivity delivering a competitive, innovative economy
- High skilled employment opportunities are available to residents to undertake fair work for a strong, sustainable, local economy.
- Vulnerable groups are employed encouraging a socially inclusive resilient economy

By the End of the Year

- * Increase the number of residents supported into employment across all priority sectors
 - Digital skills
 - Green skills
 - Creative Industry
 - Construction and Adv Manufacturing
- * Increase the number of young people leaving school supported into employment
- * Increase the number of young people needing mental health support, supported into employment
- * Increase in the number of active enterprises in Torfaen (Annual measure)
- * The number of new businesses created as a result of Foundational Economy support will increase
- * The number of employability participants in sustained employment for 6 months is increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The % of working age adults who are economically inactive due to ill health will have reduced
- The % of working age adults who are qualified to NQF Level 5 (degree) or higher will have increased
- The % of employed adults earning below the Living Wage Foundation Rate will be reduced
- The % of residents with a disability who are in employment will have increased
- The % of employees reporting opportunities for career progression will have increased
- The three-year survival rate of businesses will have increased

By the End of the Council Term

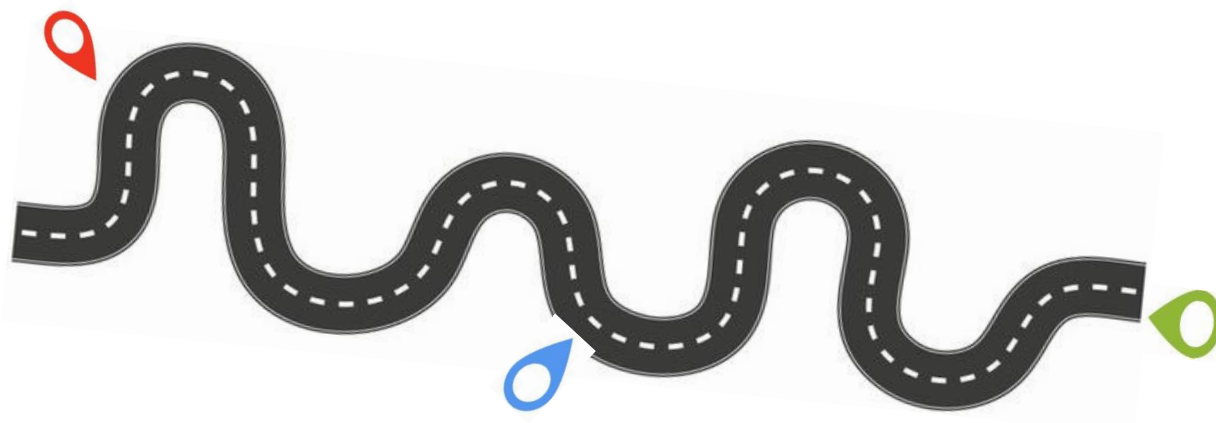
- The % of working age people employed in priority sectors (advanced manufacturing, digital, and life science) will have increased
- The % of working age adults who are employed will have increased
- The % of companies operating in priority sectors (advanced manufacturing, digital, life science) will have increased
- The number of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), micro-enterprises and business start-ups will increase.

Marmot Principle 4: Ensure a healthy standard of living for all

- Quality sustainable houses that are affordable or in the social sector
- Communities are engaged, cohesive safe and free from crime and anti-social behaviour
- Residents have equal opportunities to access digital technologies, services and support
- Resident disproportionately affected by low income, fuel, food or hygiene poverty are financially resilient
- Residents are physically and mentally healthy and able to live in good health for longer
- Residents are prevented from becoming homeless and are rapidly rehoused when homelessness does occur

By the End of the Year

- The % of those at risk of homelessness who are supported into housing will have increased
- The no. of people in temporary accommodation will have reduced
- The % of young people exiting Anti-Social Behaviour targeted prevention programmes will have increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The no. of people on the common housing register will have reduced
- Increase the number of new affordable homes constructed
- The number of fly tipping incidents will have reduced
- Healthy life expectancy at birth will have increased
- The gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived wards in Torfaen will have reduced
- The no. of pathway of care delays will have reduced
- The % of Torfaen LSOAs in the bottom 10% will have reduced
- The % of Torfaen LSOAs in the bottom 30% will have reduced
- The % of children in poverty after housing costs will have reduced
- The no. of young people cautioned/sentenced each year will have decreased

By the End of the Council Term

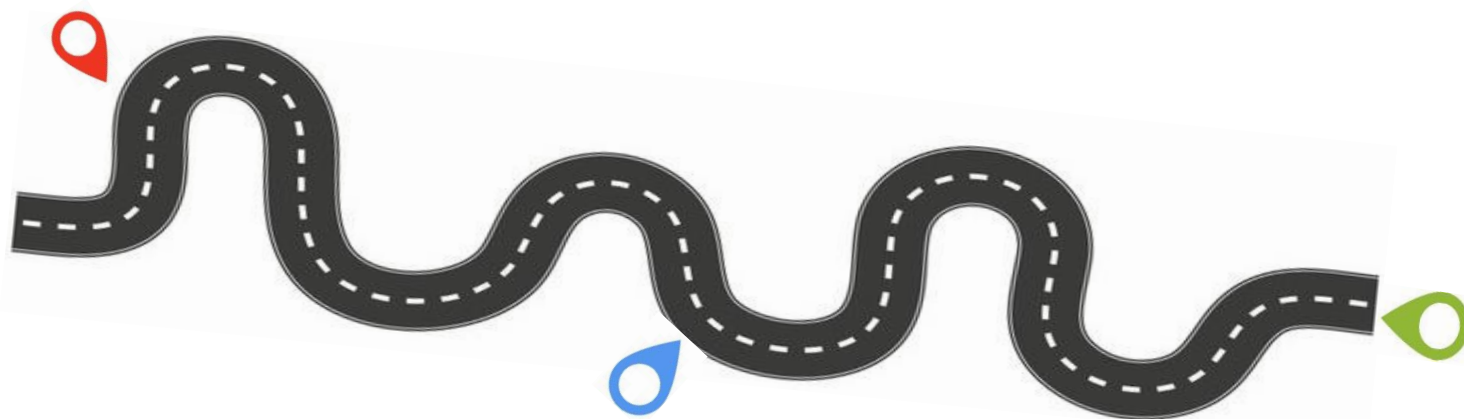
- The % of shops visited by public protection officers who comply with laws on the sale of age-related goods will have increased
- The % of enquiries received by the Council online will have increased
- The % of adult social care enquiries at the front door who receive a community support offer will have increased
- The % of digital inclusion programme participants who continue to meet the essential digital skills after 12 months will have increased
- The average move-on time from temporary accommodation will have reduced

Marmot Principle 5: Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities

- Effective waste management practices are implemented, including recycling, composting and waste reduction initiatives
- Sustainable urban design combines access to local residential, commercial and recreational spaces prioritising biodiversity and the local environment
- Communities are involved in decision making and offer a strong community support offer that helps their residents stay well

By the End of the Year

- The average speed of placement by a community connector into a community support offer will have increased
- The tonnage of household waste collected per household will have decreased
- The % of waste recycled will have increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The no. of dwellings constructed per year will increase
- The no. of new employment sites given consent will have risen
- The % of residents who feel able to influence local decisions will have increased
- The % monetary increase in average monthly rents for new lets will have fallen
- The % of people who find it easy to walk to a local green space will have remained above 90% (IHE)

By the End of the Council Term

- The no. of people volunteering will have grown
- The % of customers referred into a community support offer by a community connector who continue to attend the support offer after 6 months will have increased
- A greater number of children and young people will be directly involved in council decisions and shaping council services
- The % of s106 funding allocated to leisure and recreation will have increased
- The area of council owned land managed for biodiversity will be increased
- Visitor numbers to the revitalised Greenmeadow Community Farm will be increased

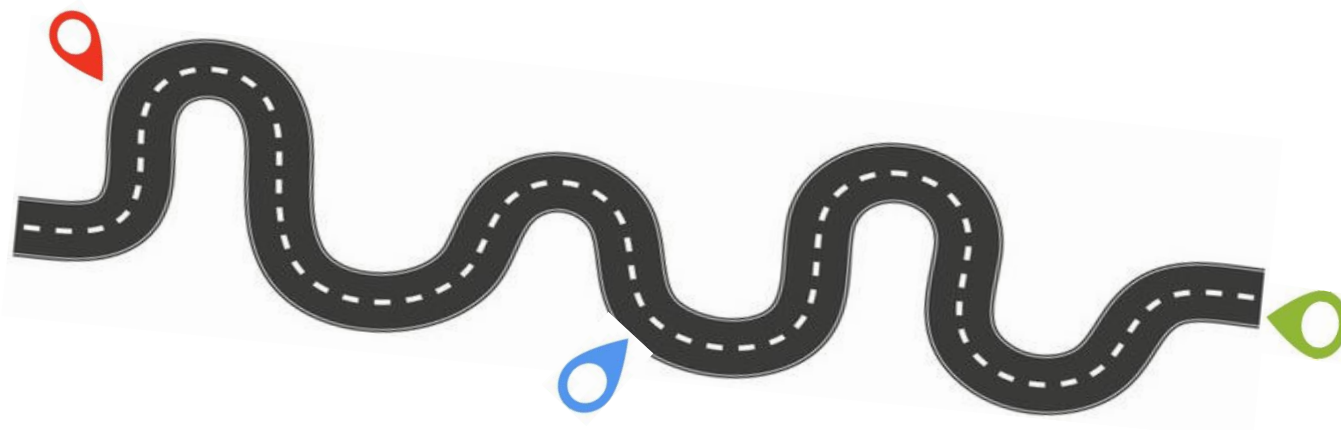
Marmot Principle 6: Strengthen the role of ill health prevention

- People lead healthier lives through the early detection of health issues
- Environmental factors that contribute to ill-health such as poor air and water quality are addressed
- Communities are resilient through the support of volunteers and community organisations reducing loneliness and isolation
- Targeted prevention is meeting the needs of those residents who need extra support, preventing further escalation or the need for statutory services

By the End of the Year

- The % of food businesses assessed as 'broadly compliant' with standards will have increased
- The % of environmentally permitted processes like petrol stations assessed as compliant with permit conditions will be maintained
- The % of residents requiring 'ongoing' targeted prevention as a proportion of those who need any form of prevention will have reduced

N.B. Further data development needed linked with the completion of the Council's current Early Intervention and Prevention project.



By the end of the Masterplan

- The average patient caseload in GP practices will have decreased
- The % of patients whose blood pressure is within an acceptable range will have decreased
- The % of patients whose IFCC HbA1c (diabetes) is within an acceptable range will have increased
- The % of people who smoke in Torfaen will have reduced
- The rate of drug misuse per 100,000 of population will have fallen
- The % of adults who feel lonely will have reduced
- The % of adults who report a good level of satisfaction with life will have increased

By the End of the Council Term

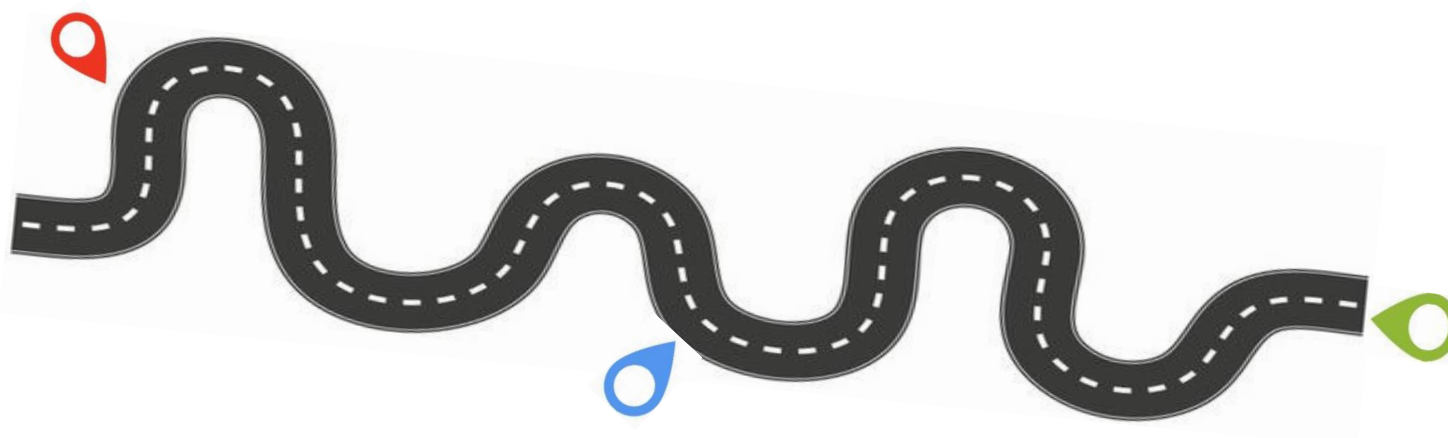
- The % of people with long-term care and support needs who are supported to remain in their own home will have increased
- The % of s106 funding allocated to leisure and recreation will have increased
- The average size of a domiciliary care package will have fallen

Marmot Principle 7: Tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes

- All individuals including marginalised communities have equal access to employment
- People live free from hate, exploitation and extremism in the community
- Torfaen Council is free from discrimination, promoting an inclusive environment that values diversity and inclusion
- Diversity, culture, language and heritage is celebrated creating cohesive and welcoming communities

By the End of the Year

- The no. of engagement events that promote community cohesion will have increased
- % staff who agree or strongly agree that they have been bullied/harassed and/or discriminated against in the last 12 months (employee survey)
- The number of complaints or grievances received by the Council with an accusation of racism (and the % upheld)
- % staff who agree or strongly agree that they have felt able to raise bullying, harassment and discrimination issues with a manager or HR in the last 12 months (employee survey) will have increased
- % staff who have undertaken equality and diversity training will have increased
- % managers who have undertaken the recruitment and selection training course will have increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The % of people who agree that there is good community cohesion in their local area will have increased

N.B. Further measures to be included following analysis of data relating to the diversity of our workforce representation.

By the End of the Council Term

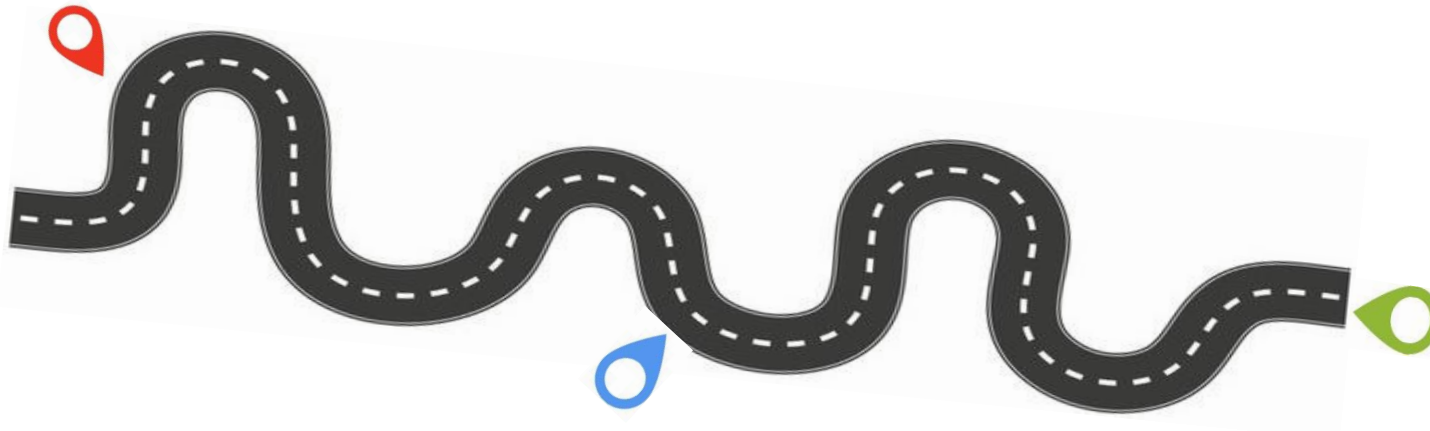
- The % of families who have successfully re-settled under the UK Resettlement schemes and require no additional support after 12 months will have increased
- The % of residents who have successfully re-settled under the UK Resettlement schemes who are in employment will have increased
- The % of children who have successfully re-settled under the UK Resettlement schemes who are in full time education will have increased

Marmot Principle 8: Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

- Fossil fuel dependence is reduced, accelerating the transition to clean energy sources to minimise air pollution
- Homes and buildings are energy efficient and climate resilient, supporting healthy living and progress towards net zero carbon
- Public transport and active travel systems are developed and improved alongside our partners to strengthen our carbon footprint and health outcomes
- Local health and food chains reduce the carbon footprint of food production

By the End of the Year

- The no. of EV charging points in Torfaen will have increased
- The no. of units of electricity supplied to EV chargers on Council land will have increased.
- The % of fleet vehicles that are ultra-low emissions will have increased



By the end of the Masterplan

- The greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Torfaen will have fallen

By the End of the Council Term

- The length of active travel routes will have increased
- The number of users of active travel routes will have increased
- The number of people travelling via rail will have increased
- The % of Torfaen Council buildings that have eliminated fossil fuel heating will have increased
- The quantum of CO2 emitted by Council buildings will have reduced



Produced by Torfaen County Borough Council

October 2024

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