



Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Hysbysiad o Gyfarfod

Fe'ch gwahoddir i gyfarfod

Panel Perfformiad Craffu - Gwella Gwasanaethau a Chyllid

Lleoliad: Cyfarfod Aml-Leoliad - Ystafell Gloucester, Neuadd y Ddinas / MS Teams

Dyddiad: Dydd Mawrth, 8 Tachwedd 2022

Amser: 10.00 am

Cynullydd: Y Cynghorydd Chris Holley OBE

Aelodaeth:

Cynghorwyr: P M Black, P R Hood-Williams, L James, J W Jones, M W Locke, H M Morris a/ac B J Rowlands

Agenda

Rhif y Dudalen.

- 1 Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb**
- 2 Datgeliadau o fuddiannau personol a rhagfarnol**
www.abertawe.gov.uk/DatgeliadauBuddiannau
- 3 Gwahardd Pleidleisiau Chwip a Datgan Chwipiau'r Pleidiau**
- 4 Cofnodion** **1 - 3**
Cymeradwyo a llofnodi, fel cofnod cywir, gofnodion y cyfarfod blaenorol.
- 5 Cwestiynau gan y Cyhoedd**
Gellir cyflwyno cwestiynau'n ysgrifenedig i'r adran graffu craffu@abertawe.gov.uk tan ganol dydd ar y diwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod. Cwestiynau ysgrifenedig sy'n cael blaenoriaeth. Gall y cyhoedd ddod i'r cyfarfod a gofyn cwestiynau'n bersonol os oes digon o amser. Mae'n rhaid bod cwestiynau'n berthnasol i eitemau ar ran agored yr agenda a byddwn yn ymdrin â hwy o fewn cyfnod o 10 munud.
- 6 Adolygu'r refeniw wrth gefn** **4 - 31**
Gwahoddyd:
Ben Smith – Cyfarwyddwr Cyllid / Swyddog A151

- 7 Adolygiad Perfformiad Blynyddol 2021/2022** **32 - 194**
Gwahoddwyd:
Richard Rowlands - Rheolwr Cyflwyno Strategol a Pherfformiad
Y Cynghorydd David Hopkins - Aelod y Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Corfforaethol a Pherfformiad
- 8 Safonau Llyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus Cymru - Adroddiad Perfformiad Blynyddol** **195 - 302**
Gwahoddwyd:
Karen Gibbins – Rheolwr y Gwasanaethau Llyfrgelloedd / Karen Davies - Prif Lyfrgellydd
Y Cynghorydd Elliott King - Aelod y Cabinet dros Ddiwylliant a Chydraddoldeb
- 9 Diweddariad Blynyddol Safonau Ansawdd Tai Cymru** **303 - 321**
Gwahoddwyd:
Carol Morgan - Pennaeth Tai ac Iechyd y Cyhoedd
Y Cynghorydd Andrea Lewis, Aelod y Cabinet dros Drawsnewid
- 10 Llythyrau** **322 - 326**
- 11 Cynllun Gwaith 2022/23** **327 - 329**

Cyfarfod nesaf: Dydd Mawrth, 6 Rhagfyr 2022 am 10.00 am



Huw Evans
Pennaeth y Gwasanaethau Democraidd
Dydd Mawrth, 1 Tachwedd 2022

Cyswllt: Swyddog Craffu 01792 636292

Agenda Item 4



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 4 October 2022 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

L James
B J Rowlands

Officer(s)

Ben Smith
Richard Rowlands
Rachel Percival
Liz Jordan
Cllr David Hopkins

Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Corporate Performance Manager
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Officer

Cllr Rob Stewart

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance
Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy (Leader)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): none

9 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

10 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

11 Minutes

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed.

12 Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

13 Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report – 2022/23

The Panel invited the Leader and Ben Smith the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer to give an overview of the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report. They talked through the following issues:

- Four recommendations were presented to Cabinet on 29 September which Cabinet endorsed. One of these was giving instruction to all Directors to minimise spending given the ongoing in year difficulties.
- The current forecast is an overspend of £3m therefore this deficit will be drawn from contingency funds.
- Currently two Directorates are overspent, two are underspent and one is break even. This is before the pay award therefore once this is taken into account it is likely that all 5 directorates will be overspent due to shortfalls in base funding for the pay award.
- Budget was set on assumption of a 3% pay award. The actual award currently in discussions will exceed the budgeted sum by around £12m.
- Rising energy costs will affect us all and are being closely monitored.
- All responsible officers were told they may not overspend otherwise they would not be in compliance with financial procedure rules.
- The budget and forecast outturn position is currently expecting £26 million to be drawn from Reserves. This is not a sustainable position. This year will balance due to the draw on reserves but this leaves uncertainty for future years.
- Every other council will be experiencing similar financial pressures.

The following issues were also raised and discussed:

- The schools pay award, similarly to the local government pay award has no assurance of being covered by Welsh Government.
- Council tax has a deficit of £2m.
- The Council are grateful for financial support given from National and Welsh Governments during the pandemic however the current cost of living crisis is putting households under financial pressure.
- Although some materials have gone up in price, the council have benefited from fixed price deals and early borrowing in some cases.
- Swansea Council has the second best reserves position in Wales however with the scale of issue faced by all local councils, there is not enough for every eventuality.

14 Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22

The Panel invited Cllr David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance and Richard Rowlands Corporate Performance Manager to give an overview of the Annual Performance Monitoring Report. They talked through the following issues:

- The pandemic has had a significant impact on all performance areas.
- Half of comparable indicators improved or stayed the same compared to 20/21.

- 18 new safeguarding indicators were introduced as a result of new national Social Services Performance Framework.
- Education and skills – 5 out of 8 indicators improving or staying the same. Continued disruption to schools due to Covid in particular exams, assessments and attendance.
- Progress has been made with ALN priorities which is a key priority along with wellbeing, mental health and the impact of poverty.
- There has been a rise in fixed term exclusions, a 6% rise in NEETS and fewer apprenticeship opportunities, Covid has been a major factor in this.
- Economy and infrastructure – 7 out of 8 indicators saw a decline compared to 20/21.
- Tackling Poverty – 5 out of 13 indicators improved or stayed same. Processing times for council tax and benefits has increased.
- Additional Council housing units improved but numbers from other sources declined.
- The number of welfare appeals and tribunals has reduced and families in temporary accommodation has increased.
- There is an increased number of those gaining employment through employability support and accredited qualifications through local authority support.
- Transformation of Future Council - 3 out of 5 indicators improving. Those declining are staff sickness and drop in number of forms completed online. There was a fall in requests for services like recycling bags as a result of lockdown. Payments made online has increased by 17%.
- Nature and Biodiversity - 3 out of 4 indicators improving, recycling has a slight drop, more black bags were generated. Carbon reduction and trees planted up to 121% increase.
- Sickness needs to be in context to the job roles. The Panel requested that future absence breakdown better define and categorise absence and take into account enforced absences.

15 Work Plan 2022/23

No comments were made on the Work Plan

The meeting ended at 11.09 am

Chair

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Section 151 Officer

Council – 6 October 2022

Review of Revenue Reserves

Purpose:	To undertake a mid-year review of the Revenue Reserves position and to agree any suggested reclassification of reserves based on current requirements.
Policy framework:	Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy
Consultation:	Cabinet Members, Corporate Management Team, Legal and Access to Services.
Recommendations:	That Council approves the recommendations made in this report at Sections 3.10 and 3.11
Report Author:	Ben Smith
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. Local Authorities have a corporate responsibility to operate within available resources and to remain financially sound over the short, medium and longer term.
- 1.2. One of the key tools available to Authorities in managing its affairs is the creation and use of both General and Earmarked reserves to assist in delivering services over a period longer than one financial year.
- 1.3. In terms of guidance on the review and management of reserves, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), via the Local Authority Accounting Panel, issued a bulletin in July 2014 (LAAP 99) intended to give guidance to Local Authorities on the management and review of reserves. This bulletin is considered best practice in terms of Local Authority

financial administration and effectively must be followed. A copy of the bulletin is at Appendix A to this report.

- 1.4. Within the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of Chief Financial Officers to advise Local Authorities about the level of reserves that should be held and to ensure there are clear protocols for their establishment and use. Reserves should not be held without a clear purpose.
- 1.5. It is the duty of the Chief Financial Officer to specifically report on the robustness of estimates and reserves when the Council considers its budget requirement, as such the Revenue Budget approved by Council in March 2021 made specific references to the adequacy of reserves at that time.
- 1.6. Notwithstanding that specific statutory requirement, it is the duty of the Chief Finance Officer to regularly review the position regarding available reserves of the Authority having specific regard to:
 - The original and current need for each category of reserve held
 - An assessment of current and future risks (both operationally and financially) facing the Council
 - The impact of known and predicted funding levels likely to impact on the Council going forward.
- 1.7. Swansea Council's Chief Finance Officer is the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer.
- 1.8. This report considers the position regarding both General and Earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2022 and makes specific recommendations in respect of reclassification of elements of those specific reserves.

2. Position as at 31st March 2022

- 2.1. The draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 will include the following entries in respect of reserves as at 31st March 2022, which are still subject to audit:

Cash-Backed Usable Reserves	£'000	Purpose
1. General Fund Revenue Reserves		
a) General Fund Balance	10,000	Used as an overall contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies and as a means of smoothing out annual budgets where there is significant change
b) Earmarked Revenue Reserves	157,992	Consisting of sums set aside for specific purposes to support Corporate and Service needs
2. General Fund Capital Reserves		(only usable for capital purposes)

a) Capital Receipts Reserve	5,597	Capital monies received by the Council set aside for funding ongoing Capital schemes per the Capital Programme. These sums are committed to current schemes and cannot be used to support Revenue expenditure
b) Capital Grants Unapplied Account	30,427	Relates to committed funding on Capital schemes and cannot be used to support Revenue expenditure
3. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves		(only usable for HRA purposes)
a) Housing Revenue Account	5,239	Exists to support expenditure for Housing Revenue Account purposes only and cannot be used to support General Fund Council Revenue or Capital expenditure
Total Usable Cash Backed Reserves	209,255	

- 2.2. Usable reserves are cash-backed and can be used to support expenditure – albeit occasionally with some specific rules around the type of expenditure that they can be used for. For example the Housing Revenue Account Reserve has been created from rents received, it is a cash reserve, however it is ring-fenced for use within the Housing Revenue Account only; it can only be spent on items relating to Council Housing.
- 2.3. In addition the Council holds unusable reserves arising purely from accounting technicalities (this includes capital financing and pensions liabilities). These reserves are not cash-backed and therefore cannot be spent. They tend to arise from entries that have to be made for accounting purposes, but which are not permitted to affect the taxpayer. A net £102.496m was held as at 31st March 2021, as was flagged by the external auditor last year the authority is carrying out considerable work to restate the split (net nil effect overall) between two of these technical non-useable reserves in future years.
- 2.4. **These cannot be used to support revenue or capital expenditure of the Council in any form and as such are not part of this review.**
- 2.5. The HRA reserve and the Capital reserves detailed above are ring-fenced and are regularly reviewed as part of business planning. As such they are provided for general information only, no further review is proposed at this time.
- 2.6. The General Fund Balance of the Council as detailed above takes account of decisions made by Cabinet based on the 2021/22 Revenue Outturn position considered on 21st July 2022.

- 2.7. Comparisons with other Welsh Councils show that, as a percentage of Gross Revenue Expenditure, the level of the General Fund reserve is below the All Wales average (as at 31st March 2021) and as such no planned use of the balance is recommended. At the end of 2020/21 the opportunity was taken to make a moderate increase to the General Fund Reserve, however it is still deemed to be low both in absolute and proportionate terms both historically and compared to all other Councils in Wales. For Members to achieve that aim of increasing general reserves, whilst trying to maintain services in the face of significant budgetary constraint, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflationary costs, is accepted by the Section 151 to be exceptionally equally difficult to consider.
- 2.8. The draft Statement of Accounts due to be presented to our external Auditors (Wales Audit Office) will include an analysis of earmarked reserves with the proviso that each reserve will be subject to strategic review by the Section 151 Officer based on an analysis of current need and changing Council risks.
- 2.9. This report is the result of that strategic review.

3. Outcomes and recommendations

- 3.1. The Medium Term Financial Plan approved by Council on 3rd March 2022 forecast a cumulative deficit on General Fund Revenue Expenditure of some £38m by 2025/26, based on a 3.5% increase in Government funding for year 1 down to 2% by year 3, with an immediate savings requirement of £4.5m for 2023/24. This is in addition to the current year savings requirement of £4.8m. More recent forecasts indicate an even larger savings requirement will be likely, predominantly as a result of ongoing demographic pressures, issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and most notably the current levels of inflation including pay awards.
- 3.2. Equally, there is clear and compelling evidence that it is unlikely that any Directorate will be able to live within original budget this year primarily due to the latest pay offer from the employers and the ongoing COVID pressures. The pandemic has also limited the ability of departments to achieve savings planned in the 2021/22 budget, which may put future years' savings in jeopardy.
- 3.3. To put it into context, if all planned savings for 2022/23 are achieved it still leaves a minimum gap of £4.5m to be addressed for 2023/24, as per the previous medium term financial plan assumptions. The current levels of inflation are likely to significantly affect this, and whilst still under review and waiting for (for example) pay awards to be agreed, it is more likely that this figure will be in excess of £20m.
- 3.4. The Council's strategy for dealing with ongoing budget reductions and Service reforms – through the Recovery Plan – is ongoing and it is clear that there is likely to be considerable cost in relation to change, together with potential significant investment in digital technology solutions.

- 3.5. Dealing with the cost of future structural change is a significant financial risk facing the given the scale and pace of budget pressures to be addressed by the Council.
- 3.6. In assessing both the level and use of Earmarked and General reserves, the LAAP bulletin sets out some of the factors that should be considered, including:-
- The treatment of demand led pressures
 - The treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains
 - The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships or changes in service delivery
 - The general financial climate to which the Authority is subject.
- 3.7. Having considered the above, and in the context of a medium term financial plan that shows ongoing and sustained budget reductions, it is the opinion of the Section 151 Officer that the Council needs to continue to prepare for significant change in service delivery that will inevitably impact on direct employment levels going forward.
- 3.8. Changes on such a scale will inevitably come with substantial up-front costs and it is important at this time that the Council plans operationally and financially to meet these changes. There is £3m held in the Restructure Reserve for these costs.
- 3.9. It is vitally important that the Restructuring Reserve is protected as much as possible to enable the Council to carry out any necessary restructuring as it continues to transform under the Recovery Plan – Achieving Better Together.
- 3.10. As recommended previously a capital equalisation reserve was created from the underspending on debt charges and the fundamental review by council last year of our approach to the Minimum Revenue Provision calculation. The recommendation continues to be that this reserve is topped up wherever possible, by capital financing underspending in year, to help with any timing issues around the need to fund any City Deal projects in advance of receipt of funding from other bodies. Exceptionally, however, as reported in the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report to Cabinet on 1st September, the S151 Officer has identified that the £4.5m rolled forward contingency fund will be required to fund the IT development fund and the additional cost arising from the latest employers' pay offer, on top of the full use of the in-year contingency fund. This may change significantly if additional UK and Welsh Government support is announced to assist with costs and income losses However at the current time it is not expected that any additional draw from reserves will be required in any scenario.
- 3.11. **To this extent, and following a review of current earmarked reserves, no re-classification of earmarked reserves is recommended at this juncture:-**

Category of Earmarked Reserve	Current Balance 31/03/22 £'000	Proposed Change £'000	Recommended Position £'000
Technical/third party	2,869	0	2,869
Insurance	17,776	0	17,776
Transformation and efficiency	15	0	15
Schools delegated reserves	28,391	0	28,391
Equalisation reserves	14,547	0	14,547
Commuted sums	7,597	0	7,597
Repair and renewal funds	2,212	0	2,212
Profit share on joint ventures	1,614	0	1,614
Service earmarked reserves	36,424	0	36,424
Capital reserves	0	0	0
Restructuring costs reserve	3,000	0	3,000
Contingency	4,479	-2,500	1,979
IT Development Fund	0	2,500	2,500
Recovery Fund	39,068	0	39,068
Total Earmarked Reserves	157,992	0	157,992

- 3.12. It should be noted that there are no changes identified for the Capital Equalisation Reserve or the Recovery Fund as these two reserves are effectively fully committed over the next few years unless they are topped up. The Capital Equalisation reserve is likely to continue to receive top ups if debt charges continue to be underspent in the short term, however the Recovery Fund is less likely to receive top ups in the future.

4. Evaluation of reserve requirements

- 4.1. A number of the reserves highlighted above have been set aside for specific purposes; these include the insurance reserve set aside to meet the potential cost of excess payments should a claim on external insurers materialise or should the Council have to meet claims from its own resources. Repair and renewal funds set aside to meet future major repair and renewal costs on strategic assets (for example Crematorium, Quadrant Bus Station), and reserves set aside for profit share on disposals of assets where reclamation has been funded by the WDA/Welsh Government.
- 4.2. Following the extremely favourable 2020/21 outturn result, a new reserve was created called the Recovery Fund, and £20m was set aside to aid the recovery from COVID-19. The fund has operated successfully during 2021/22 and the 2021/22 outturn report to Cabinet on 21st July recommended a further £24.705m to be added to the fund. At the date of writing this report, in the region of £20m has been approved for schemes.
- 4.3. It is essential that monies set aside for the above purposes are regularly reviewed in order to confirm their accuracy and relevance.

- 4.4. To that extent formal assurance will be sought on the adequacy of these reserve levels as part of the annual budget setting process.
- 4.5. As part of the budget setting process for 2023/24 a review will be carried out again of all service earmarked reserves to test their continued relevance and value.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires each Local Authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer (in our case the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer) has responsibility for those affairs.
- 5.2. Under guidance detailed at Appendix A to this report the Chief Finance Officer is required at all times to monitor the purpose and use of reserves.

6. Integrated Assessment implications

- 6.1. The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English. Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 6.2. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 6.3. Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

- 6.4. As this report is a technical review and reclassification of reserves held by this authority there is no impact on anyone with a protected characteristic. The review is the duty of the Section 151 Officer only, there is no wider involvement. Any consideration of the Well-being of Future Generations Act would take place as part of any proposal to use the reserves, and risks and impacts would be assessed as part of any proposal. An IIA screening form has been attached as Appendix C

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – LAAP Bulletin 99 – Local Authority Reserves and Balances

Appendix B – Glossary of Terms

Appendix C – IIA Screening Form

LAAP BULLETIN 99

Local Authority Reserves and Balances

July 2014

The Local Authority Accounting Panel issues LAAP Bulletins to assist practitioners with the application of the requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, SeRCOP and Prudential Code and to provide advice on emerging or urgent accounting issues. Bulletins provide influential guidance that is intended to be best practice, but are not prescriptive and do not have the formal status of the Code, SeRCOP or Prudential Code.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. LAAP Bulletin 55 (Guidance note on local authority reserves and balances) was issued in February 2003. This was followed by its replacement in 2008 by LAAP Bulletin 77. LAAP Bulletin 77 included a number of events and changes that occurred including the publication of the Prudential Code and the beginnings of the financial downturn. Since the issue of LAAP Bulletin 77, the IFRS-based Code¹ has been published and this bulletin has been updated to reflect the new requirements of that Code. In addition, during a period of financial austerity for the public sector, the Local Authority Accounting Panel considers that it is necessary to update the guidance on local authority reserves and balances.
2. The "New Reporting Framework" described in LAAP Bulletin 55 has now largely been overtaken by statutory requirements, but is included in Appendix A for information.
3. The advice previously provided by LAAP Bulletin 77 which focussed on the financial impact of flooding is included in Appendix B.
4. Further resources and information are provided at Appendix C.
5. Relevant extracts from the IFRS-based Code are provided at Appendix D.

PURPOSE

6. This bulletin provides guidance to local authority chief finance officers in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales on the establishment and maintenance of local authority reserves and balances.

APPLICATION

7. In England, Scotland and Wales the guidance is applicable to local authorities, joint committees and joint boards of principal authorities.
8. In England and Wales the guidance is applicable to Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and fire and rescue authorities.
9. In Northern Ireland the guidance applies to all district councils.
10. The general principles set out in this guidance apply to an authority's General Fund, Council Fund, Police Fund and, where appropriate, to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
11. The advice in this bulletin relates to reserves, not provisions. The Code definitions of provisions and reserves are included in Appendix D to this bulletin for information.
12. This bulletin replaces LAAP Bulletin 77.

¹ *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* (the Code).

LEGISLATIVE / REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

13. The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 31A, 32 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. Section 93 of the 1992 Act requires Scottish authorities, in calculating council tax, to take into account 'any means by which those expenses may otherwise be met or provided for'. This includes reserves.
14. In Scotland there are explicit statutory powers under schedule 3 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 permitting certain local authorities to establish a renewal and repair fund, an insurance fund and a capital fund alongside a requirement, as in England and Wales, to maintain a General Fund (section 93 of Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973). LASAAC has published guidance on reserves which is available from the LASAAC website. In Northern Ireland, Section 9 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 enables councils to maintain other funds in addition to the General Fund. Local authorities may however ' earmark ' specific parts of the General Fund reserve. This earmarking of a proportion of the General Fund is referred to in this Bulletin as Earmarked Reserves.
15. There are also a range of safeguards in place that help to prevent local authorities over-committing themselves financially. These include:
 - the balanced budget requirement:
 - England, sections 31A, 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended
 - Wales, sections 32 and 43 and Scotland, 93 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and
 - section 85 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999
 - chief finance officers' duty to report on robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003) when the authority is considering its budget requirement (England and Wales)
 - chief finance officers' duty to report on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves (under sections 4 and 6 of the Local Government and Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
 - the legislative requirement for each local authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the chief finance officer / proper officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and section 1 of the Local Government and Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
 - the requirements of the Prudential Code.
16. These requirements are reinforced by section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which requires the chief finance officer in England and Wales to report to all the authority's councillors if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the authority will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. The issue of a section 114 notice cannot be taken lightly and has serious operational implications. Indeed, the authority's full council must meet within 21 days to consider the s114 notice and

during that period the authority is prohibited from entering into new agreements involving the incurring of expenditure.

17. Whilst it is primarily the responsibility of the local authority and its chief financial officer to maintain a sound financial position, external auditors will confirm that there are no material uncertainties about going concern. Even where as part of their wider role auditors have to report on an authority's financial position, it is not their responsibility to prescribe the optimum or minimum level of reserves for individual authorities or authorities in general.
18. CIPFA's Prudential Code requires chief finance officers in local authorities to have full regard to affordability when making recommendations about the local authority's future capital programme. Such consideration includes the level of long term revenue commitments. Indeed, in considering the affordability of its capital plans, the authority is required to consider all of the resources available to it/estimated for the future, together with the totality of its capital plans and revenue forecasts for the forthcoming year and the following two years.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (PROPER OFFICER IN SCOTLAND)

19. Within the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of chief finance officers (proper officer in Scotland) to advise local authorities about the level of reserves that they should hold and to ensure that there are clear protocols for their establishment and use. Reserves should not be held without a clear purpose.
20. CIPFA and the Local Authority Accounting Panel consider that local authorities should establish reserves including the level of those reserves based on the advice of their chief finance officers. Authorities should make their own judgements on such matters taking into account all the relevant local circumstances. Such circumstances vary. A well-managed authority, for example, with a prudent approach to budgeting should be able to operate with a level of general reserves appropriate for the risks (both internal and external) to which it is exposed. In assessing the appropriate level of reserves, a well-managed authority will ensure that the reserves are not only adequate but are also necessary. There is a broad range within which authorities might reasonably operate depending on their particular circumstances.
21. Section 26 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives Ministers in England and Wales a general power to set a minimum level of reserves for local authorities. However, the government has undertaken to apply this only to individual authorities in the circumstances where an authority does not act prudently, disregards the advice of its chief finance officer and is heading for serious financial difficulty. This accords with CIPFA's view that a generally applicable minimum level is inappropriate, as a minimum level of reserve will only be imposed where an authority is not following best financial practice (including the guidance in this bulletin).

TYPES OF RESERVE

22. When reviewing their medium term financial plans and preparing their annual budgets local authorities should consider the establishment and maintenance of reserves. These can be held for three main purposes:
 - a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing – this forms part of general reserves;
 - a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this also forms part of general reserves;

- a means of building up funds, often referred to as earmarked reserves (or earmarked portion of the general fund in Scotland - see below), to meet known or predicted requirements; earmarked reserves are accounted for separately but remain legally part of the General Fund.

Category of Earmarked Reserve	Rationale
Sums set aside for major schemes, such as capital developments or asset purchases, or to fund major reorganisations	Where expenditure is planned in future accounting periods, it is prudent to set aside resources in advance.
Insurance reserves (note that the Insurance Fund is a statutory fund in Scotland)	Self-insurance is a mechanism used by a number of local authorities. In the absence of any statutory basis (other than in Scotland) sums held to meet potential and contingent liabilities are reported as earmarked reserves where these liabilities do not meet the definition of a provision under the requirements of the Code's adoption of IAS 37 <i>Provisions, Contingent Assets and Liabilities</i>).
Reserves of trading and business units	Surpluses arising from in-house trading may be retained to cover potential losses in future years, or to finance capital expenditure.
Reserves retained for service departmental use	Authorities may have internal protocols that permit year-end underspendings at departmental level to be carried forward.
Reserves for unspent revenue grants	Where revenue grants have no conditions or where the conditions are met and expenditure has yet to take place. The Code Guidance Notes recommend that these sums are held in earmarked reserves (see paragraph 29 below).
Schools balances	These are unspent balances of budgets delegated to individual schools.

FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR RESERVES

23. The IFRS-based *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* (the Code) introduced the Movement in Reserves Statement to local authority financial statements in the 2010/11 financial year. This Statement presents the movement in the year of the reserves of the authority analysed into usable reserves, (eg General Fund, HRA Balances and earmarked reserves) and unusable reserves (see paragraph 24 below).
24. Unusable reserves arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practice either to store revaluation gains or as adjustment accounts to reconcile accounting requirements driven by reporting standards to statutory requirements.

These reserves², which are not resource-backed and cannot be used for any other purpose, are described below:

Revaluation Reserves

- The Revaluation Reserve - this is a reserve that records unrealised gains in the value of property, plant and equipment. The reserve increases when assets are revalued upwards, and decreases as assets are depreciated or when assets are revalued downwards or disposed of. Local authorities might benefit from these gains in the future from the continued use of the assets or from their sale. The Reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the Reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.
- The Available-for-Sale Financial Instruments Reserve – this is a reserve that records unrealised revaluation gains arising from holding available-for-sale investments, plus any unrealised losses that have not arisen from impairment of the assets. Local authorities might benefit in the future from the gains when the investments mature or are sold or they might be lost in falls in value.

Adjustment Accounts

- The Pensions Reserve – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the payments made for the year to various statutory pension schemes in accordance with those schemes' requirements and the net change in the authority's recognised liability under the Code's adoption of IAS 19 – *Employee Benefits*, for the same period. A transfer is made to or from the pensions reserve to ensure that the charge to the General Fund reflects the amount required to be raised in taxation. For example, the debit balance on the Reserve shows that an authority has made commitments to fund pensions that the Government has permitted it to fund from contributions to be made in future years.
- The Capital Adjustment Account - this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which assets are depreciated under proper accounting practice and are financed through the capital controls system. Statute requires that the charge to the General Fund is determined by the capital controls system. For example, the credit balance on the Account shows that an authority has generally financed capital investment in advance of receiving the benefits of that investment. The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.
- The Financial Instruments Adjustment Account – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which gains and losses (such as premiums on the early repayment of debt) are recognised under proper accounting practice and are required by statute to be met from the General Fund. For example, the debit balance on the Account shows that an authority has incurred expenses on borrowings that the Government has permitted it to spread over future years.

² In addition to the Reserves included in this list authorities may hold the deferred capital receipts reserve and the accumulated absences account. Further details on these reserves are included in the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom Guidance Notes for Practitioners 2013/14 Accounts*.

- The Unequal Pay Back Pay Account - this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which payments in relation to compensation for previous unequal pay are recognised under proper accounting practice and are required by statute to be met from the General Fund. This account is not applicable to Scotland.
 - Collection Fund Adjustment Account – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the differences arising from the recognition of council tax and non-domestic rates income (England) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to those amounts required to be charged by statute to the General Fund. For example, the credit balance on the Account shows that more tax has been collected on behalf of the authority and the precepting bodies (and central government in England for non-domestic rates income) than an authority is permitted to transfer out of the Collection Fund by 31 March. This account is not applicable to Scotland.
25. Other such reserves may be created in future where developments in local authority accounting result in timing differences between the recognition of income and expenditure under proper accounting practice and under statute or regulation.
26. In addition authorities will hold the following two usable reserves:
- a Major Repairs Reserve (England and Wales), where relevant – in England this reserve records the unspent amount of HRA balances for capital financing purposes in accordance with statutory requirements for the Reserve. In Wales this represents the amounts unspent from the Major Repairs Allowance capital grant.
 - a Capital Receipts Reserve (Capital Fund in Scotland³) – this reserve holds the proceeds from the sale of assets, and can only be used for those purposes specified in the capital finance and accounting regulations⁴ in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and for capital purposes in Scotland.
27. The Code recommends that earmarked reserves are reported on the face of the Movement in Reserves Statement. Particularly significant movements might need to be reported individually on the face of the Statement to ensure key messages are presented clearly to users. However, effective reporting may either as an alternative or as a supplementary report necessitate similar disclosures in the notes to the financial statements (see paragraphs 3.4.2.41 and 3.4.2.42 of the Code which are also included in Appendix D for ease of reference).
28. When establishing reserves, local authorities need to ensure that they are complying with the Code and in particular the need to distinguish between reserves and provisions. Definitions of reserves and provisions are included in Appendix D of this Bulletin.
29. The introduction of the IFRS-based Code on 1 April 2010 has meant that grant income should be recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (and therefore against the General (Council) Fund or HRA Balances for

³ *The Statutory Basis for Accounting and Disclosing Reserves in Local Authorities in Scotland* [LASAAC, 2005] states "Useable capital receipts reserves are considered to be allowable under the power contained within Schedule 3, para 22 of the 1975 Act. Such a reserve effectively acts as a subset of the capital reserve specifically permitted by legislation."

⁴ The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting)(England) Regulations 2003, as amended, The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003, as amended and the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011.

revenue grants) where grant payment is unconditional or grant conditions have been satisfied⁵. The Code Guidance Notes recommend⁶ that where these grants have been received prior to the expenditure having taken place authorities should consider establishing earmarked reserves. This will ensure that amounts are set aside from the General (or Council) Fund and HRA balances in earmarked reserves to provide financing to meet the requirements of the grant. The amounts set aside will be posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund and HRA expenditure in future years. It is likely therefore that since the introduction of the IFRS-based Code there is an increased tendency to hold earmarked reserves.

30. The statutory reporting regime described earlier and effective financial management underpin the need for clear, transparent reporting arrangements for reserves and therefore in addition to the financial reporting requirements above, LAAP recommends that for each earmarked reserve (earmarked portion of the general fund in Scotland) held by a local authority there should be a clear protocol setting out:
- the reason for / purpose of the reserve;
 - how and when the reserve can be used;
 - procedures for the reserve's management and control; and
 - a process and timescale for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy.

PRINCIPLES TO ASSESS THE ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

31. In order to assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves when setting the budget, chief finance officers should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority. Where authorities are being reorganised, this assessment should be conducted on the basis that the services will continue to be provided, and adequate reserves will therefore be required by successor authorities. The assessment of risks should include external risks, such as flooding, as well as internal risks, for example, the ability to deliver planned efficiency savings. In England and Wales, statutory provisions require authorities to review at least once in a year the effectiveness of their system of internal control, which will include risk management. The CIPFA/SOLACE framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* details an approach to giving assurance that risk, control and governance matters are being addressed in accordance with best practice.
32. The Codes of Audit Practice in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland make it clear that it is the responsibility of the audited body to identify and address its operational and financial risks, and to develop and implement proper arrangements to manage them, including adequate and effective systems of internal control. The financial risks should be assessed in the context of the authority's overall approach to risk management.

Budget Assumptions	Financial standing and management assessment/impact
The treatment of inflation and interest rates	The overall financial standing of the authority (level of borrowing, debt outstanding, council tax collection rates)

⁵ See Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom Section 2.3.

⁶ See *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom Guidance Notes for Practitioners 2013/14 Accounts*, paragraphs C39 and C40.

	<p>etc.). Rises in the prices of some commodities, eg fuel, highlight the relevance of using a number of inflation rates in the budget and financial strategy, and considering whether general reserves are adequate to deal with unexpected increases. Volatility in the financial markets also points to the need to consider investment and borrowing risks and their impact on income.</p>
<p>Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts</p>	<p>The authority's track record in budget and financial management including the robustness of the medium term plans. Authorities will also need to take into account changes in the property market, and adjust estimates and assumptions for reserves accordingly.</p>
<p>The treatment of demand led pressures</p>	<p>The authority's capacity to manage in-year budget pressures, and its strategy for managing both demand and service delivery in the longer term.</p>
<p>The treatment of planned efficiency savings/ productivity gains</p>	<p>The strength of the financial information and reporting arrangements. The authority should also be in a position to activate contingency plans should the reporting arrangements identify that planned savings or gains will either not be achieved or be delayed.</p>
<p>The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments</p>	<p>The authority's virement and end of year procedures in relation to budget under/overspends at authority and department/directorate level. Risk management measures in relation to partnerships, including consideration of risk allocation. Contract provisions designed to safeguard the authority's position in the event of problems arising from outsourcing arrangements.</p>
<p>The availability of reserves, government grants and other funds to deal with major contingencies and the adequacy of provisions</p>	<p>The adequacy of the authority's insurance arrangements to cover major unforeseen risks. When considering insurance cover, the structure of the cover as well as the overall level of risk should be taken into account. Risk assessments should be used when balancing the levels of insurance premiums and reserves.</p>
<p>The general financial climate to which the authority is subject</p>	<p>External factors, such as future funding levels expected to be included in Spending Reviews and expected referenda principles and limits, will influence an authority's ability to replenish reserves once they have been used. Any plans for using reserves will</p>

	need to consider the need and ability of the authority to replenish the reserves, and the risks to which the authority will be exposed whilst replenishing the reserves.
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Whilst many of these factors relate to setting the annual budget, the level of risk and uncertainty associated with these factors will be relevant in determining an appropriate level of reserves.

33. Authorities have been faced by increasing financial pressures since 2008. This has been followed by a period of significant reduction in government funding which is anticipated to continue for some time, ie the spending review 2013 announced that the government will reduce total spending in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 in real terms at the same rate as during the spending review 2010 period. Demands on local government services continue to increase. In addition to reduction in government funding other pressures include:
- councils striving to constrain council tax increases,
 - reductions of income,
 - new service demands and responsibilities such as:
 - the transfer of public health functions
 - the localisation of non-domestic rates retention, council tax freezes and council tax benefits/support
 - severe weather and floods.

Furthermore, events such as the losses in Icelandic banks and the problems in global financial markets are likely to mean that Councils will focus on cautious investment strategies. Council budgets and reserves have remained under pressure and are likely to continue to do so for some time.

34. The many factors involved when considering appropriate levels of reserves can only be assessed properly at a local level. A considerable degree of professional judgement is required. The chief finance officer may choose to express advice on the level of balances in cash and/or as a percentage of budget (to aid understanding) so long as that advice is tailored to the circumstances of the authority. The Audit Commission Report (December 2012) *Striking a Balance* makes a number of recommendations to both Chief Finance Officers and elected members to better assist councils in their decision making. Similarly the Accounts Commission in its report *An overview of local government in Scotland 2014*⁷ commented that more needs to be done to provide information on why reserves are held, how this fits with the councils financial strategy and how they will be used. The principles and financial reporting established in this and the previous LAAP bulletins on reserves will provide for the information requirements and an appropriate framework for this.
35. The advice should be set in the context of the authority's risk register and medium term plans and should not focus exclusively on short-term considerations. Balancing the annual budget by drawing on general reserves may be viewed as a legitimate short-term option. However, it is not normally prudent for reserves to be deployed

⁷ Issued by the Accounts Commission in March 2014

to finance recurrent expenditure. CIPFA has commented⁸ that Councils should be particularly wary about using one off reserves to deal with shortfalls in current funding. Where such action is to be taken, this should be made explicit, and an explanation given as to how such expenditure will be funded in the medium to long term. Advice should be given on the adequacy of reserves over the lifetime of the medium term financial plan, and should also take account of the expected need for reserves in the longer term.

36. Events such as the floods and severe weather that occurred earlier this year (2014) and previously in the floods during the summers of 2007 and 2008 have emphasised the need for authorities to be prepared for major unforeseen events. Adequate insurance cover combined with appropriate levels of reserves will enable authorities to manage the demands placed on them in such circumstances. However, these arrangements need to take account of all possible scenarios. An example quoted in the Audit Commission report *Staying Afloat* is that the total cost of the flooding was reduced where authorities had specifically considered the impact of a wide scale, serious event affecting many assets, and had taken appropriate action, for example, negotiating insurance policies that capped the total excesses linked to one event.
37. Part of the risk management process involves taking appropriate action to mitigate or remove risks, where this is possible. This in turn may lead to a lower level of reserves being required, and it would be appropriate to consider reducing the level of balances held where appropriate action to mitigate or remove risks has been successfully undertaken. A balance will need to be found between maintaining adequate levels of reserves and investing in risk reduction measures. This balance should form part of the risk management process and be considered as part of the annual budget process.
38. Emergency financial assistance from central government may be available to assist authorities in dealing with the immediate consequences of major unforeseen events, normally under the Emergency Financial Assistance to Local Authorities scheme (commonly known as the 'Bellwin' scheme). However, there is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance, and where financial assistance is given, it will not cover all of the costs even in exceptional circumstances. Further details of the scheme are available on the relevant government web sites (links can be found in Appendix C of this bulletin). Authorities should plan to have access to sufficient resources (through reserves, insurance or a combination of both) to cover the costs of recovering from events that are likely to be unavoidable.
39. When considering the level of reserves, it would be appropriate for authorities to take into account the likely level of Government support that would be available, and to consider how the balance would be funded in the event of an unforeseen event occurring.
40. Flooding, the effects of severe weather and the impact of the problems experienced by the global financial markets are examples of external risks which local authorities may need to take into account in setting levels of reserves and wider financial planning. An assessment of external risks should not be limited to those issues, but should range more widely, to take account of all significant external risks identified through the authority's risk management processes.

⁸ See comments by CIPFA Chief Executive *Building up council reserves to protect the public from future financial problems is good financial management* – CIPFA
<http://www.cipfa.org/about-cipfa/press-office/latest-press-releases/building-up-council-reserves>

EXTRACT FROM LAAP BULLETIN 55

7 A New Reporting Framework

7.1 The finance director has a fiduciary duty to local taxpayers, and must be satisfied that the decisions taken on balances and reserves represent proper stewardship of public funds.

7.2 The level and utilisation of reserves will be determined formally by the Council, informed by the advice and judgement of the finance director⁹. To enable the Council to reach its decision, the finance director should report the factors that influenced his or her judgement, and ensure that the advice given is recorded formally. Where the finance director's advice is not accepted this should be recorded formally in the minutes of the council meeting.

7.3 It is recommended that:

- the budget report to the Council should include a statement showing the estimated opening general reserve fund balance for the year ahead, the addition to/withdrawal from balances, and the estimated end of year balance. Reference should be made as to the extent to which such reserves are to be used to finance recurrent expenditure
- this should be accompanied by a statement from the finance director on the adequacy of the general reserves and provisions in respect of the forthcoming financial year and the authority's medium term financial strategy
- a statement reporting on the annual review of earmarked reserves (including schools' reserves) should also be made at the same time to the Council. The review itself should be undertaken as part of the budget preparation process. The statement should list the various earmarked reserves, the purposes for which they are held and provide advice on the appropriate levels. It should also show the estimated opening balances for the year, planned additions/withdrawals and the estimated closing balances.

⁹ LAAP Bulletin 99 normally refers to Chief Finance Officers – previous editions of this Bulletin referred to Finance Directors.

EXTRACT FROM LAAP BULLETIN 77

27. "...Alternative arrangements, for example mutual aid agreements, may help to reduce the reliance on reserves or insurance. The Pitt Review into the 2007 floods, although specifically focused on England, will be of relevance to all local authorities. This recommended that "Local authorities should continue to make arrangements to bear the cost of recovery for all but the most exceptional emergencies, and should revisit their reserves and insurance arrangements in light of last summer's floods." The Government's position remains that it is primarily the local authority's responsibility to bear such costs, and authorities should note this position when considering the appropriate level of reserves."

28 "... However, both the Pitt Review and Staying Afloat noted that most central government assistance provided to local authorities in relation to the 2007 floods was ad hoc in nature. The government has been keen to stress that they should not be seen as setting a precedent and should not be relied on in the future. Authorities will therefore need to make their own assessments of the likely level of support. "

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Pitt Review can be downloaded from:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807034701/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pittreview/thepittreview/final_report.html

Staying Afloat can be downloaded from:

http://archive.audit-commission.gov.uk/auditcommission/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/StayingAfloat_REP14Dec07.pdf

Both reports provide additional advice to local authorities on planning for and managing the financial impacts of exceptional events.

LASAAC Guidance on Reserves in Scotland can be downloaded from:

<http://www.cipfa.org/regions/scotland/policy-and-technical/local-authority-scotland-accounts-advisory-committee/guidance-and-publications/accounting-for-interest-on-reserves>

Details of the Emergency Financial Assistance (Bellwin) Scheme can be downloaded from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210953/The_Bellwin_Scheme_of_Emergency_Financial_Assistance_to_Local_Authorities.pdf

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/17999/Bellwin>

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/finandfunding/emergency/publications/efas-guidance-notes-14-15/?lang=en>

The Audit Commission Report *Striking a Balance* can be downloaded from:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/2012/12/striking-a-balance-improving-councils-decision-making-on-reserves/>

Accounts Commission *An overview of local government in Scotland 2014* (March 2014) can be accessed at:

http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2014/nr_140327_local_government_overview.pdf

CODE OF PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
DEFINITIONS (AND RELEVANT EXTRACTS OF) RESERVES AND PROVISIONS

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

2.1.2.25 Reserves – the residual interest in the assets of the authority after deducting all its liabilities. The Movement in Reserves Statement shows the true economic cost of providing the authority's services, represented by the line 'Surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services'. Some income and expenditure is required to be recognised on a different basis or in a different accounting period (ie in accordance with legislation) in the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. These differences are shown in the line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'. Voluntary transfers to or from the General Fund Balance and Housing Revenue Account Balance also affect the amount to be funded from council tax or council dwelling rents; these are shown in the line 'Transfers to or from reserves available to fund services'. The Movement in Reserves Statement also shows Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure, for example revaluation gains.

CHAPTER THREE: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

3.4.2.41 The classification of reserves presented in the Movement in Reserves Statement shall include the following items; authorities may choose to present additional items on the face of the statement:

- a) General Fund Balance (in Scotland, includes earmarked portion of General Fund Balance)
- b) Earmarked General Fund Reserves (not Scotland) (recommended but not mandatory)
- c) Housing Revenue Account Balance (in Scotland, includes earmarked portion of Housing Revenue Account Balance)
- d) Earmarked Housing Revenue Account Reserves (not Scotland) (recommended but not mandatory)
- e) Major Repairs Reserve (England and Wales)
- f) Revenue statutory funds (Scotland)
- g) Capital Receipts Reserve (England and Wales); Capital statutory funds (Scotland)
- h) Capital Grants Unapplied Account
- i) Total usable reserves
- j) Unusable reserves
- k) Total reserves of the authority
- l) Authority's share of the reserves of subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures (Group Accounts only)
- m) Total reserves (Group Accounts only).

3.4.2.42 A local authority shall present, either in the Movement in Reserves Statement or in the notes, an analysis of the amounts included in each item of the classification of reserves required by paragraph 3.4.2.41. This analysis shall present amounts held for capital purposes separately from those held for revenue purposes, and shall separately identify the total reserves held by schools.

CHAPTER EIGHT: LIABILITIES

8.2.2.9 A **provision** is a liability of uncertain timing or amount.

8.2.2.12 A provision shall be recognised when:

- an authority has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event
- it is probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits or service potential will be required to settle the obligation, and
- a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

8.2.2.13 If the above conditions are not met, no provision shall be recognised.

8.2.2.14 In some cases it is not clear whether there is a present obligation. In these cases, a past event is deemed to give rise to a present obligation if, taking account of all available evidence, it is more likely than not that a present obligation exists at the reporting date. A past event that leads to a present obligation is called an obligating event.

Glossary of Terms	
Reserves	A sum or sums of money held by the Council for future use or application
General Reserves	A sum of money set aside by the Council for general use in an emergency. Should not be considered for everyday use.
Earmarked Reserves	Sums of money set aside by the Council for use in specific instances. Some of these may be legally enforceable (such as commuted sums), others are just an indication of what the Council wishes to set monies aside for.
Commutated Sums	Monies given to the Council to carry out specific works as per Section 106 agreements - as an example a developer may wish to give the Council a sum of money to maintain open spaces on new housing estates. These monies must be used for the purpose for which they were given, or returned under the terms of the agreement.
Chief Finance Officer	The Officer of the Council with ultimate responsibility for all things financial. Also referred to as 'The Section 151 Officer' as this is the legislation awarding the powers.
Usable/Unusable Reserves	Reserves can be usable or unusable - to be usable they must be cash backed ie there must be cash available to support the reserve. Unusable reserves are those created through technical accounting entries and will have no cash to support the reserve.
Gross Revenue Expenditure	A particular calculation of a Council's gross spend, this can be used to compare across Councils
Medium Term Financial Plan	The Council's three year forecast of budget pressures and savings
Minimum Revenue Provision	The minimum amount of money the Council needs to set aside each year to repay debt.

Appendix C - Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Accountancy

Directorate: Finance

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

Annual mid-year review of revenue reserves to suggest and agree any reclassifications of those reserves.

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further investigation
	+	-	+	-	+	-	
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix C - Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

- Q3** What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches?
Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement

There is no consultation undertaken on the review of reserves – this is a task for the Section 151 officer only, as it is just a technical reclassification of the reserves. Use of the reserves is decided as part of the budget process, which follows all requirements for consultation

- Q4** Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan's Well-being Objectives when considered together?
Yes No
- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
Yes No
- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
Yes No
- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
Yes No

-
- Q5** What is the potential risk of the initiative? (*Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...*)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk

-
- Q6** Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes No If yes, please provide details below

-
- Q7** What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?

(You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups/ communities more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making. For example, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.)

There is no cumulative impact on people and/or communities. This is a technical review and reclassification of reserves. Any use of reserves to fund initiatives would be subject to assessment as part of that proposal.

Appendix C - Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Outcome of Screening

Q8 Please describe the outcome of your screening below:

- Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)
- Summary of involvement (Q3)
- WFG considerations (Q4)
- Any risks identified (Q5)
- Cumulative impact (Q7)

As this report is a technical review and reclassification of reserves held by this authority there is no impact on anyone with a protected characteristic. The review is the duty of the Section 151 Officer only, there is no wider involvement.

Any consideration of the Well-being of Future Generations Act would take place as part of any proposal to use the reserves, and risks and impacts would be assessed as part of any proposal.

As this is a technical report then no full IIA needs to be completed.

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the relevant section of corporate report)

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: Sarah Willis
Job title: Principal Finance Partner
Date: 12/07/22
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Ben Smith
Position: Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer
Date: 12/07/2022

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Head of Communications & Marketing

Scrutiny Performance Panel: Service Improvement & Finance – 8th November 2022

Annual Review of Performance 2021/22

Purpose:	To make a draft of the Council's Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 available to the Scrutiny panel for review and comment. The Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 meets the statutory requirements to publish an annual self-assessment report and annual well-being report under Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 respectively.
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan 2021/22 <i>Delivering a Successful and Sustainable Swansea</i> .
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the panel: 1) reviews the draft report to provide comment.
Report Author:	Richard Rowlands
Finance Officer:	Paul Roach.
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith.
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is subject to two pieces of legislation that guide how Councils in Wales approach performance in Wales: Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 1.2 The Council must publish an annual self-assessment report and annual well-being report under Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 respectively.

- 1.3 The Annual Well-being Report must set out progress meeting the 'steps' described in the Corporate Plan to achieve our Well-being Objectives established through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how, in doing so, it is working sustainably and maximising its contribution to the national goals established by the Act.
- 1.4 The Annual Self-Assessment Report must report on the extent to which a local authority is: exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and; is governing itself effectively in securing the above.
- 1.5 The Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 ("the Review") discharges both of these statutory and annual reporting requirements.

2. Content

2.1 Part 1 of the Review represents a report on the progress the Council has made undertaking the steps it set out in its Corporate Plan 2021/22 to work towards meeting each Well-being Objective. It provides a self-assessment on the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively. The Council is exercising its functions effectively when:

- It is meeting the steps set out to achieve its Well-being Objectives.
- It is maximising its contribution to its Well-being Objectives and National Goals.
- When it is working sustainably (in line with the 5 ways of working).

2.1.1 For each Well-being Objective:

- Why this is a Well-being Objective and what does success look like?
- How well are we doing - and how do we know?
- What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?
- Conclusion – the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively:
 - Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective.
 - Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.
 - Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective.

2.1.2 This first part of the report assesses the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively using a modification of the Future Generations Commissioner's Self-Reflection Tool to support an integrated approach to the gathering of evidence to determine progress against the Council's Well-being Objectives and to fulfil its new self-assessment responsibilities.

2.1.3 An assessment on progress is made against the following criteria:

- **‘Getting started’** means this is a new objective or a change in direction. This could also mean the Council has faced challenges or barriers to progress.
- **‘Making simple changes’** should be quick and easy to implement. They’re often actions that are ‘low hanging fruit’ that have been tested by others and have a low risk of failure.
- **‘Being more adventurous’** involves stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. Signalling early progress to wider change, this might involve a change in strategy or team approach to doing something and could involve more departments and organisations than a ‘simple change’.
- **‘Owning our ambition’** can be a similar stage to ‘being more adventurous’ with initiatives developing and more people becoming involved. The Council will be taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff feel empowered to work across sectors and influence change.
- Those that are **‘Leading the way’** may be the first people or Council to be taking these actions and are a guide for others to follow. This is a systemic, transformational change to how things have always been done and will require reallocating resources, time to put the changes in place and collaboration with other bodies. Actions are innovative, inspirational and collaborative, putting the Act into practice across larger portfolios to achieve the Council’s priorities. This way of working becomes embedded in the Council and good practice is shared with others.

2.1.4 Case-studies are also included in the full Review to better show the impact the steps are having.

2.2 Part 2 of the Review demonstrates the extent to which the Council is using its resources effectively. The Council has a duty to the public to use its resources wisely. This means making economic, efficient and effective use of the resources at its disposal. In other words, providing value for money to the public; but it also means doing so in a way that is fair and sustainable so that services are available to all without compromising the needs of future generations.

2.2.1 When we talk about the ‘resources’ that are at the Council’s disposal, we are generally referring to the Councils budget, its workforce and its other assets, such as buildings. The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively when:

- It is minimising the resources used (Economic).
- The intended results correspond to the actual results (Effective).
- There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).

- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).

2.2.2 These resources are used through the following areas:

- Financial Planning.
- Workforce Planning.
- Procurement.
- Performance Management (and benchmarking).
- Asset management.

2.2.3 This part of the Annual Review of Performance is an assessment on the extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. It does so by critically reviewing and evaluating how these resources were used through financial and workforce planning, procurement, performance management and asset management. Part 1 of this assessment, which looks at how effectively the Council is delivering its functions, is also a measure of the effective use of resources, i.e. the extent to which the intended results correspond to the actual results and should also be read as such.

2.2.4 The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its use of resources and governance arrangements in place. The assessment looked at what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence – using the following criteria:

	Evidence & effectiveness of delivery	Extent of evidence & effectiveness
1	Not in place	No evidence of effective delivery.
2	Limited application and effectiveness	Some evidence of application, but the effectiveness of delivery is limited.
3	Mixed Application and effectiveness	Mixed evidence of effective application, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence.
4	Strong Application and effectiveness	Clear evidence of effective application.
5	Embedded	Clear evidence of effective and embedded application

2.3 The third part of the Review is an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements to secure the above. The Council is required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 to undertake a review of its governance arrangements, at least annually. The review is intended to show how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance.

- 2.3.1 The review of governance is brought together in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is to accompany the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. The AGS is a key document informed by a number of both internal and external assurance sources.
- 2.3.2 This part of the Annual Review of Performance is not meant to replicate the AGS but should be read in conjunction with it. This part of the Review is intended to assess and evidence the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements in helping to deliver its functions and provide value for money.
- 2.3.3 The Council has effective governance when it effectively applies the core principles of good governance are set out by CIPFA / SOLACE in *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*:
- A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.
 - B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
 - C - There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
 - There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).
 - D – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
 - E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
 - F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
 - G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 2.3.4 These core principles are applied in the Council through the following governance arrangements:
- Vision, strategy and performance.
 - Organisational Governance, Ethics and Values.
 - Organisational leadership.
 - Customer & Community Engagement and Involvement.
 - Risk Management and Business Continuity.
 - Partnership / collaboration governance.
 - Internal Control Environment.
 - Fraud & Financial Impropriety.
 - Programme and Project Assurance.
 - Innovation & Change Management.
- 2.4 The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The assessment looked at

what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence using the same described above in para 2.2.4.

- 2.5 Each part of the Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 ends with an assessment made against the criteria and identifies areas for continued improvement.

3. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

- 3.1.3 This report meets our duty to report on progress in 2021/22 meeting the 'steps' described in the Corporate Plan to deliver our well-being objectives and on the extent to which a local authority is: exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and; is governing itself effectively in securing the above – as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 respectively; so there is no direct impact on people or communities.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The financial resources required to implement all the actions and achieve the specified performance targets in 2021/22 were provided in the approved budget. Any additional financial implications that arose from the pursuance of the priorities in the Corporate Plan would have been dealt with as virement within the normal financial procedures.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A** Executive Summary - Annual Review of Performance 2021/22
Appendix B Annual Review of Performance 2021/22
Appendix C IIA Screening Form

Annual Review of Performance

Executive Summary

2021/22



Introduction - The Annual Review of Performance 2021/22

The Council's Corporate Plan 2021/22 *Delivering a Successful and Sustainable Swansea* describes our 6 key priorities (Well-being Objectives) and our organisation values and principles that will underpin the delivery of our priorities and overall strategy; this discharges our duties under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 'Act') to set Well-being Objectives.

Our Well-being Objectives show the Council's contribution to Wales' 7 national goals¹ described within the Act and describes how we will maximise this contribution to the national goals and to the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Swansea by working in line with the sustainability principles set out within the Act.

The Corporate Plan sets out the steps being undertaken to meet our Well-being Objectives and contribute to the seven national well-being goals outlined in the Act.

The Plan also sets out how we are maximising our contribution to our well-being objectives and national goals through the way in which we work, which is in line with sustainable principles as follows:

- Looking ahead to the medium and long-term challenges.
- Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse.
- Ensuring our objectives do not contradict each other and compliment those of other public bodies.
- Working in partnership with others.
- Involving local people.

Our ambitions and commitments to residents – our Well-being Objectives 2021/22

In order to meet these challenges, we prioritised six Well-being Objectives in 2021/22. These were:

- ***Safeguarding people from harm*** – so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation.
- ***Improving Education & Skills*** – so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life.
- ***Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure*** – so that Swansea has a thriving mixed use City Centre and a local economy that will support the prosperity of our citizens.
- ***Tackling Poverty*** – so that every person in Swansea can achieve his or her potential.
- ***Transformation & Future Council development*** – so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future.
- ***Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity*** - so that we maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, improve our

¹ The National Goals are: A Prosperous Wales; A Resilient Wales; A Healthier Wales; A More Equal Wales; A Wales of More Cohesive Communities; A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language; A Globally Responsible Wales.

knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and benefit health and well-being.

This Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 (the 'Review') is the Council's Annual Well-being Report required under the Act on its progress undertaking the steps to meet its Well-being Objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan to maximise its contribution to the national goals by applying the sustainable development principle. This report also discharges our duty under Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) Act to publish an annual Self-assessment Report 2021. In doing so, the Review seeks to describe the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources well and governing itself properly by working in line with the requirements set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Section 6 Biodiversity Duty

The information detailed under the *Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity* Objective in this report will be used as the basis for the Council's Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Report to Welsh Government.

How can you get involved?

You can get involved and have your say. <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/haveyoursay>. You can also get involved through the Council's Scrutiny Boards and panels, which are open to the public: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny>. You can contact the Council at any time by: Email to improvement@swansea.gov.uk Telephone 01792 637570.

Executive Summary

Part 1 – How the Council is exercising its functions

This part of the Review represents a report on the progress the Council has made undertaking the steps it set out in its Corporate Plan 2021/22 to work towards meeting each Well-being Objective. It provides a self-assessment on the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively. The Council is exercising its functions effectively when:

- It is meeting the steps set out to achieve its Well-being Objectives.
- It is maximising its contribution to its Well-being Objectives and National Goals.
- When it is working sustainably (in line with the 5 ways of working).

For each Well-being Objective:

- Why this is a Well-being Objective and what does success look like?
- How well are we doing - and how do we know?
- What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?
- Conclusion – the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively:
 - Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective.
 - Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.
 - Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective.

This first part of the report assesses the extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively using a modification of the Future Generations Commissioner’s Self-Reflection Tool to support an integrated approach to the gathering of evidence to determine progress against the Council’s well-being objectives and to fulfil its new self-assessment responsibilities.

An assessment on progress is made against the following criteria:

- **‘Getting started’** means this is a new objective or a change in direction. This could also mean the Council has faced challenges or barriers to progress.
- **‘Making simple changes’** should be quick and easy to implement. They’re often actions that are ‘low hanging fruit’ that have been tested by others and have a low risk of failure.
- **‘Being more adventurous’** involves stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. Signalling early progress to wider change, this might involve a change in strategy or team approach to doing something and could involve more departments and organisations than a ‘simple change’.
- **‘Owning our ambition’** can be a similar stage to ‘being more adventurous’ with initiatives developing and more people becoming involved. The Council will be taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and

collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff feel empowered to work across sectors and influence change.

- Those that are **‘Leading the way’** may be the first people or Council to be taking these actions and are a guide for others to follow. This is a systemic, transformational change to how things have always been done and will require reallocating resources, time to put the changes in place and collaboration with other bodies. Actions are innovative, inspirational and collaborative, putting the Act into practice across larger portfolios to achieve the Council’s priorities. This way of working becomes embedded in the Council and good practice is shared with others.

Case-studies are also included in the full Review to better show the impact the steps are having.

Impact from the COVID-19 Pandemic

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has brought huge challenges and changes to the Council, its services and workforce. The Council has never undertaken such change in such a short timescale and in such challenging circumstances. A number of non-essential services were suspended or reduced during 2020/21 and 2021/22 in order to redeploy resources to areas where they were most needed.

This inevitably has had a significant impact on the usual areas of performance across the council and that is why targets for performance indicators were not set for 2020/21 or 2021/22. This should also be considered when comparing performance to previous years.

Summary of Part 1 - How the Council is exercising its functions

The Council is effectively delivering its functions. The evidence in Part 1 of the assessment shows that the extent to which it is delivering its functions is that it is **owning its ambition** in the delivery of its well-being objectives, which are the councils key priorities for delivery. This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

A summary of the evidence shows the following areas for continued improvement.

Well-being Objective	Areas for continued improvement
Safeguarding People from Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the lessons of these new ways of working to inform future delivery models that ensure that we are the best that we can be in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain our focus on prevention / early help across the whole system, and at the same time safeguarding and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. • Develop new, imaginative approaches in attracting new qualified and unqualified workers to want to work in the health and social care sector, and in retaining their loyalty and commitment.
<p>Improving Education & Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further analyse with schools the impact on learner outcomes because of the pandemic, including basic skills in the early years and pre-school, Welsh language skills, mental health and wellbeing, curriculum design, teaching and learning, and assessment. • Develop a strategy to promote the inclusion to support vulnerable groups of learners and to ensure that the Local Authority has oversight of individualised tracking on learner progress. • Develop an Inclusion for Learners Strategy, focus on the few elements of the ALN strategy where further progress is required and finalise the revision of the accessibility strategy and plan. • Develop further sufficient specialist places for learners with ALN, including STFs and special schools, and support schools to build capacity to meet the needs of learners with SEBD to prevent exclusion or referral to EOTAS and embed universal strategies for all areas of ALN. • Develop a coherent strategy to support literacy and numeracy outcomes in schools and further assess the impact of increased Welsh-medium provision and falling birth rates within the English medium sector. • Evaluate provision within schools that have smaller numbers. • In terms of provision (services), continue and enhance the effectiveness of Member/Officer engagement to inform next stage development of longer-term capital investment and school organisation proposals. <p>Areas for improvement in relation to leadership include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the Abertawe 2027 strategic plan to succeed Abertawe 2023 for education improvement in Swansea. • Sustain the quality of leadership across the education system (school leaders, governors, members, and officers) and embed a consistent and high quality new regional improvement partnership.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish more effective collaboration with the Local Health Board to ensure the statutory requirement of ALNET are met to ensure vulnerable leaders achieve good outcomes.
<p>Transforming our economy and infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Economic Delivery Plan - Lead implementation of South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan in Swansea and associated work packages and funding streams such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government sources. • Diverse and sustainable local economy - Promote and enhance a diverse and sustainable local economy through strong local networks such as the Regeneration Swansea Partnership, development partner Urban Splash and leisure delivery partners Freedom Leisure and Parkwood, to progress Swansea's economic regeneration and cultural agendas including delivery of the Welsh Government Transforming Towns programme, Creative Wales, and through the implementation of the Local Development Plan (LDP) that supports the regeneration of Swansea and promotes sustainable communities underpinned by sustainable transport connectivity. • Community Benefit clauses - Create employment & training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive through community benefit clauses in contracts. • Business support - Leverage of support, advice and funding for new start-up businesses and our existing business stock through Business Swansea and working with Welsh Government to continue to innovate support programmes such as commercial meanwhile uses, and other support interventions in City Centre and District and Local Centres. • Creative Network - Continue to work through strong and resilient Creative Network to support both existing, under development and future fabric of cultural and leisure assets embedded across the City Centre and District and local centres. • Housing - Progress strategic housing and mixed development sites to meet housing need and provide employment. • Public protection - Protect and promote the health, wellbeing, safety and consumer interests of people living in or visiting Swansea by working with others to maintain public safety across the range of regulatory services such as pollution, scams and unfair trading, public health and housing issues, etc.
<p>Tackling Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify aims and objectives in relation to tackling poverty and improve the ways in which it monitored and measured the outcomes of work.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the reliance on grant funding to tackle poverty and look for greater flexibility in relation to using funding in a way which best meets local needs in a sustainable way. • Complete the revision of the Council’s Tackling Poverty Strategy. • Complete and implement the Review of Employability and the Review of Financial Inclusion. • Develop and implement the Corporate Volunteering Policy. • Review food poverty and community cooking and growing activities, employment support and access to Lifelong learning, developing evidence based outcome models for projects and developing a quality / satisfaction framework for services.
<p>Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the delivery of the Section 6 Corporate Biodiversity Plan, the Nature Recovery Action Plan and the Resilient Wales goal through annual business planning and reporting mechanisms up to 2027. We will report to WG every 3 years in line with our Biodiversity Duty. • Embed a Climate Change and Nature Strategy and monitor the delivery of respective Action Plans up to 2027 • Continue to monitor air, water and soil quality. • Monitor the delivery the Energy Action plan targets proposed to 2027. • Set out new measures for monitoring the impact of our Procurement of goods and services in line with eth emerging WG carbon measurement toolkit. • Embed and deliver a Sustainable Transport strategy to 2027. • Continue to report the number of new homes constructed to net carbon zero standards and set out new measures of recording the decarbonisation of our existing stock in line with emerging WG guidance. • Report on the delivery of a Waste Reduction strategy. • Secure grants and other external funding to help deliver the above.
<p>Transformation & Future Council development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Part 2 – Areas for Continued Improvement

Summary of Part 2 – How the Council uses its Resources

The Council has a duty to the public to use its resources wisely. This means making economic, efficient and effective use of the resources at its disposal. In other words, providing value for money to the public; but it also means doing so in a way that is fair and sustainable so that services are available to all without compromising the needs of future generations.

When we talk about the ‘resources’ that are at the Council’s disposal, we are generally referring to the Councils budget, its workforce and its other assets, such as buildings. The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively when:

- It is minimising the resources used (Economic).
- The intended results correspond to the actual results (Effective).
- There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).

These resources are used through the following areas:

- Financial Planning.
- Workforce Planning.
- Procurement.
- Performance Management (and benchmarking).
- Asset management.

This part of the Annual Review of Performance is an assessment on the extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. It will do so by critically reviewing and evaluating how these resources were used through financial and workforce planning, procurement, performance management and asset management. Part 1 of this assessment, which looks at how effectively the Council is delivering its functions, is also a measure of the effective use of resources, i.e. the extent to which the intended results correspond to the actual results and should also be read as such.

How well and we doing and how do we know?

The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its use of resources and governance arrangements in place. The assessment looked at what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence.

	Evidence & effectiveness of delivery	Extent of evidence & effectiveness
1	Not in place	No evidence of effective delivery.
2	Limited application and effectiveness	Some evidence of application, but the effectiveness of delivery is limited.
3	Mixed Application and effectiveness	Mixed evidence of effective application, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence.
4	Strong Application and effectiveness	Clear evidence of effective application.
5	Embedded	Clear evidence of effective and embedded application

The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively when:

- It is minimising the resources used (Economic).
- The intended results correspond to the actual results (Effective).
- There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).

The evidence in Part 2 of this assessment shows that: there is a **strong application and effective use of resources** around financial management, procurement and asset management.

Use of Resources	Areas for continued improvement
Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to contain, reduce, defer and delay spending as far as possible, having due regard to the existing agreed budget and political priorities to nonetheless seek to limit service overspending and take corrective action. • Re-establish tracking (suspended as a result of Covid) to ensure that savings targets are monitored and reviewed at the Reshaping and Budget Setting Board established as part of the Council's Achieving Better Together transformation strategy.
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Inquiry into procurement - including a focus on enhanced social value considerations in procurement in line with new legislation that the UK and Welsh Governments are developing (once that legislation is published and its impact becomes known), to include considerations of sustainable development, development of the local supplier base and co-production activity, i.e. involving citizens in decision-making, and also a focus on any areas of non-compliance in procurement activity.
Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Asset Management Plan 2021/25 and monitor and report on progress.

There is a **mixed evidence of effective application**, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence regarding workforce planning and performance management.

A summary of the evidence shows the following areas for continued improvement.

Use of Resources	Areas for continued improvement
Workforce Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the key messages from engagement exercises and finalise the Workforce Strategy. • Seek to improve the number of responses to the staff survey.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce staff sickness.
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the current suite of corporate performance indicators for continued relevance for 2022/23 reporting and set annual targets for end-of-year reporting. • Develop a Corporate Plan and associated performance indicators for 2023/27. • Look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process and improve the response rate for the annual self-assessment. • Review and work to improve the amount of review, scrutiny and challenge to the self-assessment process.

Summary of Part 3 – the effectiveness of the Councils Governance arrangements

The Council is required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 to undertake a review of its governance arrangements, at least annually. The review is intended to show how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance.

The review of governance is brought together in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is to accompany the Council’s Annual Statement of Accounts. The AGS is a key document informed by a number of both internal and external assurance sources.

This part of the Annual Review of Performance is not meant to replicate the AGS but should be read in conjunction with it. This part of the review is intended to assess and evidence the effectiveness of the Councils governance arrangements in helping to deliver its functions and provide value for money.

The Council has effective governance when it effectively applying the core principles of good governance set out by CIPFA / SOLACE in *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*:

- A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.
- B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C - There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).
- D – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- E - Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

These core principles are applied in the Council through the following governance arrangements:

- Vision, strategy and performance.
- Organisational Governance, Ethics and Values.
- Organisational leadership.
- Customer & Community Engagement and Involvement.
- Risk Management and Business Continuity.
- Partnership / collaboration governance.
- Internal Control Environment.
- Fraud & Financial Impropriety.
- Programme and Project Assurance.
- Innovation & Change Management.

How well and we doing and how do we know?

The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The assessment looked at what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence.

	Evidence & effectiveness of delivery	Extent of evidence & effectiveness
1	Not in place	No evidence of effective delivery.
2	Limited application and effectiveness	Some evidence of application, but the effectiveness of delivery is limited.
3	Mixed Application and effectiveness	Mixed evidence of effective application, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence.
4	Strong Application and effectiveness	Clear evidence of effective application.
5	Embedded	Clear evidence of effective and embedded application

The evidence in Part 3 of this assessment shows that: there is a **mixed application and effectiveness of governance** around vision, strategy & performance.

A summary of the evidence shows the following areas for continued improvement.

Use of Resources	Areas for continued improvement
Vision, Strategy & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Part 2 - including financial management, performance management and workforce planning.

There is a **strong application and effectiveness of governance** in all of the other areas.

A summary of the evidence shows the following areas for continued improvement.

Use of Resources	Areas for continued improvement
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Organisational Governance, Ethics and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put arrangements in place to ensure that Audit Wales recommendations are recorded and tracked in a consistent way.
Organisational leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Part 2 – workforce planning.
Customer & Community Engagement and Involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Part 2 – performance management. Continue the development of a Public Participation Strategy, as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Risk Management and Business Continuity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement recommendations from 2021/22 Internal Audit Report on risk management to continue regular updates and ensure control measures remain SMART.
Partnership / collaboration governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work to address all proposals for improvement to the operation of the Public Service Board made by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.
Internal Control Environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified.
Fraud & Financial Impropriety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work to address all recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'Raising our Game - Tackling Fraud in Wales'.
Programme and Project Assurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified.
Innovation & Change Management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified.

Annual Review of Performance

2021/22



Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Part 1 – How the Council is exercising its functions	Page 4
Safeguarding People from Harm	Page 7
Improving Education & Skills	Page 21
Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure	Page 32
Tackling Poverty	Page 55
Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity	Page 71
Transformation & Future Council development	Page 89
Part 2: How the Council uses its resources	Page 103
Part 3 – the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements	Page 123
Where to find additional information	Page 140

Introduction - The Annual Review of Performance 2021/22

The Council's Corporate Plan 2021/22 *Delivering a Successful and Sustainable Swansea* describes our 6 key priorities (Well-being Objectives) and our organisation values and principles that will underpin the delivery of our priorities and overall strategy; this discharges our duties under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 'Act') to set Well-being Objectives.

Our Well-being Objectives show the Council's contribution to Wales' 7 national goals¹ described within the Act and describes how we will maximise this contribution to the national goals and to the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Swansea by working in line with the sustainability principles set out within the Act.

The Corporate Plan sets out the steps being undertaken to meet our Well-being Objectives and contribute to the seven national well-being goals outlined in the Act.

The Plan also sets out how we are maximising our contribution to our well-being objectives and national goals through the way in which we work, which is in line with sustainable principles as follows:

- Looking ahead to the medium and long-term challenges.
- Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse.
- Ensuring our objectives do not contradict each other and compliment those of other public bodies.
- Working in partnership with others.
- Involving local people.

Our ambitions and commitments to residents – our Well-being Objectives 2021/22

In order to meet these challenges, we prioritised six Well-being Objectives in 2021/22. These were:

- ***Safeguarding people from harm*** – so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation.
- ***Improving Education & Skills*** – so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life.
- ***Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure*** – so that Swansea has a thriving mixed use City Centre and a local economy that will support the prosperity of our citizens.
- ***Tackling Poverty*** – so that every person in Swansea can achieve his or her potential.
- ***Transformation & Future Council development*** – so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future.
- ***Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity*** - so that we maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, improve our knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and benefit health and well-being.

This Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 (the 'Review') is the Council's Annual Well-being Report required under the Act on its progress undertaking the steps to meet its Well-being Objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan to maximise its contribution to the national goals by applying the sustainable development principle. This report also discharges our duty under Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) Act to publish an annual Self-assessment Report 2021. In doing so, the Review seeks to describe the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively,

¹ The National Goals are: A Prosperous Wales; A Resilient Wales; A Healthier Wales; A More Equal Wales; A Wales of More Cohesive Communities; A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language; A Globally Responsible Wales.

using its resources well and governing itself properly by working in line with the requirements set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Section 6 Biodiversity Duty

The information detailed under the *Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity* Objective in this report will be used as the basis for the Council's Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Report to Welsh Government.

How can you get involved?

You can get involved and have your say. <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/haveyoursay>. You can also get involved through the Council's Scrutiny Boards and panels, which are open to the public: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny>. You can contact the Council at any time by: Email to improvement@swansea.gov.uk Telephone 01792 637570.

Part 1 – How the Council is exercising its functions

This part of the Review represents a report on the progress the Council has made undertaking the steps it set out in its Corporate Plan 2021/22 to work towards meeting each Well-being Objective. It provides a self-assessment on the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively. The Council is exercising its functions effectively when:

- It is meeting the steps set out to achieve its Well-being Objectives.
- It is maximising its contribution to its Well-being Objectives and National Goals.
- When it is working sustainably (in line with the 5 ways of working).

For each Well-being Objective:

- Why this is a Well-being Objective and what does success look like?
- How well are we doing - and how do we know?
- What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?
- Conclusion – the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively:
 - Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective.
 - Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.
 - Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective.

This first part of the report assesses the extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively using a modification of the Future Generations Commissioner's Self-Reflection Tool to support an integrated approach to the gathering of evidence to determine progress against the Council's well-being objectives and to fulfil its new self-assessment responsibilities.

An assessment on progress is made against the following criteria:

- **'Getting started'** means this is a new objective or a change in direction. This could also mean the Council has faced challenges or barriers to progress.
- **'Making simple changes'** should be quick and easy to implement. They're often actions that are 'low hanging fruit' that have been tested by others and have a low risk of failure.

- **‘Being more adventurous’** involves stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. Signalling early progress to wider change, this might involve a change in strategy or team approach to doing something and could involve more departments and organisations than a ‘simple change’.
- **‘Owning our ambition’** can be a similar stage to ‘being more adventurous’ with initiatives developing and more people becoming involved. The Council will be taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff feel empowered to work across sectors and influence change.
- Those that are **‘Leading the way’** may be the first people or Council to be taking these actions and are a guide for others to follow. This is a systemic, transformational change to how things have always been done and will require reallocating resources, time to put the changes in place and collaboration with other bodies. Actions are innovative, inspirational and collaborative, putting the Act into practice across larger portfolios to achieve the Council’s priorities. This way of working becomes embedded in the Council and good practice is shared with others.

Case-studies are also included to better show the impact the steps are having.

Impact from the COVID-19 Pandemic

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has brought huge challenges and changes to the Council, its services and workforce. The Council has never undertaken such change in such a short timescale and in such challenging circumstances. A number of non-essential services were suspended or reduced during 2020/21 and 2021/22 in order to redeploy resources to areas where they were most needed.

This inevitably has had a significant impact on the usual areas of performance across the council and that is why targets for performance indicators were not set for 2020/21 or 2021/22. This should also be considered when comparing performance to previous years.

In summary, since March 2020 the Council has transformed the way it works to manage the impact of the pandemic. Thousands of staff were successfully mobilised to work remotely and/or from home within a matter of weeks. This took a massive effort from our ICT team to provide the necessary changes enabling staff and councillors to have full network links at their preferred location.

Other changes include:

- Supporting the Welsh Government’s Shielding Programme by setting a new call centre and providing daily support to thousands of vulnerable people.
- Focusing social services care on the most vulnerable, re-opening a care home and supporting the private care sector.
- Overseeing the planning and construction of the Bay Field Hospital on Fabian Way.
- Remodelling schools into care settings for key workers’ children.
- Providing meals to care settings and delivering free school meals.
- Providing food banks across the city and county.
- Providing financial support in excess of £100 million to thousands of businesses.
- Setting up a Track, Trace and Protect function and providing community testing centres.
- Preparing for mass vaccination in our communities.

Performance for 2021/22 should therefore be considered within this wider context and achievements noted.

Safeguarding people from harm

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what success will look like

- We are committed to ensuring that citizens live their lives free from harm and exploitation.
- Safeguarding vulnerable people needs to be seen as everybody's business within every service within the Council, by all elected Members and by those who do work on behalf of the Council.
- We want children to be safe from harm and to stay with their families or be supported in family settings where it is safe for them to do so.
- We want to ensure all vulnerable adults are safeguarded from harm and able to live to their maximum potential.
- We want to tackle domestic abuse and ensure that victims are fully supported.
- We want people to age well and be able to live as independently and as safely as possible in their own homes.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Safeguard the most vulnerable people and prioritise services and contact with them during the Covid-19 response and recovery.

This past year has again been dominated by the impact of COVID-19 on our population with care and support needs, our workforce and health and care services. Delivery of our key strategies to support children, families and adults with care and support needs to remain safe and well at home have been severely challenged. In children services the Wales wide deficit in social worker capacity has significantly impacted as has the Wales wide issue around sufficiency of looked after children placements. In adult services the backlogs caused by individuals being unable to access health and care services have compounded the complexity of individuals presenting needs. This has in turn exacerbated the difficulties in meeting that increased need caused by the shortfall in workforce capacity across all adult health and care services.

Workforce shortages are particularly acute in domiciliary care services further undermining delivery against our strategic ambition to support more individuals in their own homes rather than in more institutionalised settings. There has been a further complicating factor with reporting and monitoring performance during this crucial period caused by the lack of stability of the Welsh National Community Care Information System, which went live in Swansea during this reporting year. The system is now stable but some end of year reporting to Welsh Government on some indicators will not be possible due to the significant in year impact.

Quite understandably, the challenges highlighted above had a significant impact on performance particularly where our focus has necessarily shifted to managing the emergency and ensuring that health and care systems did not collapse. In that context, overall performance has held up astonishingly well and is a credit to the council's workforce.

All those working in health and social care and with and in our communities whether employed by the Council, in the independent and third sectors, our statutory partners, all the unpaid carers, volunteers and other members of the community have shown remarkable resilience, innovation, commitment and humanity to support our most vulnerable citizens during the past two years. We are now learning from these different ways of working to inform future delivery models that ensure that we are the best that we can be in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. The

Council's post pandemic recovery programme – "Achieving Better Together" is heavily informed by the Adult Services transformation, and Child and Family Services Improvement programmes.

Continue to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect those at risk from significant harm and exploitation.

Swansea Council expects that vulnerable people in Swansea are kept safe and protected from harm, abuse and neglect. Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children is both a corporate priority, and well-being is a strategic outcome within the Corporate Plan (2021-22). By implementing a corporate wide approach to safeguarding vulnerable people the Council has to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability in all service areas of the Council, and that we are involving representatives of partner organisations in this work.

In children services the twin focus of delivering more early help whilst maintaining robust proactive safeguarding practice has meant that more children have been supported to remain safely living at home and our looked after children numbers have continued to reduce. There is a particular challenge around older adolescents with complex and challenging behaviour requiring specialist residential provision, which we have been unable to provide or commission. Our strategy to expand in house local and specialist regional provision will address this in the medium term but in the meantime we have seen an increase in young people being placed in England or in unregulated placements. The numbers are not high but nevertheless it is an indicator of concern that we will need to monitor closely into next year.

In adult services a strengthened prevention offer both through local area coordination and work with third sector colleagues has meant individuals and their carers unable to access formal care and support have had a level of mitigating support. This has helped bear down on levels of demand that exceed current capacity but there were still end the year with significant backlogs in assessments, reviews and access to domiciliary care.

Day services and other day opportunity provision have continued to expand throughout the year and the Council maintained extra capacity in its in-house residential provision to provide emergency and extended respite/ short term placements. We have also expanded access to direct payments both for individuals with care and support needs and carers in their own right.

Continue to ensure that safeguarding is 'everyone's business' across the Council, within schools, with partners, and through West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board, to ensure we collaborate and intervene on wider, emerging issues, such as County Lines, Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking, Bullying in Schools, Hate Crimes, and the PREVENT strategy.

Swansea Council's corporate safeguarding policy has a strong focus on early intervention and prevention and places a duty to report on all public service officers. Our updated policy now covers a broader range of potential abuses, and contextual safeguarding which may be a threat to vulnerable people, such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, radicalisation, etc. Safeguarding is now widely understood as "everyone's business", by Council leaders, elected members, our workforce, partner organisations and any individuals who are carrying out work with or on behalf of the Council.

Case study 1: City in 'strong position' to continue support for young people

Swansea is in a strong position to continue to improve children's lives by preventing harm and exploitation, not just in their homes but in other places where they spend time, according to experts.

The council is pioneering a new approach for Wales called Contextual Safeguarding so that children and young people get the right help they need from the right people, in the right place, and at the right time for them.

As well as increasing its youth work with five additional staff and increasing youth club provision, the council has worked with others - for example police and businesses - to reach into areas such as parks, the promenade, beach, and other community spaces where young people tend to gather and to make these places safer.

There are also now processes and practices in place to listen to young people, residents, and people in the community when there is a concern about the safety of young people and work together to make it safer place and space for all.

These concerns help inform part of the work of a multi-agency panel established last year which has actively considered 50 referrals and taken a range of actions from street lighting and help signage to outreach youth work, training in schools, and supporting community groups and businesses to help keep places safe.

This new Contextual Safeguarding approach is led by Swansea Council's Child and Family Services in partnership with more than 25 agencies from police and health to the third sector and local business.

It's the result of work that started two years ago when Swansea became one of just five test sites across England and Wales to successfully bid for Durham University and the University of Bedfordshire to work with them to develop a Contextual Safeguarding approach.

It offers new approaches and learning about safeguarding young people who come to harm and are at risk of exploitation beyond their family home.

Researchers say this has placed Swansea in a strong position to continue to improve the way it looks out for all its young people in the years ahead.

The programme also seen the council develop its single point of contact for Child and Family Services so that it now has a wide range of expertise and services to help families.

It provides information, advice and assistance and has staff with expertise in domestic abuse, safeguarding, intensive family support and specialist child sexual abuse and criminal exploitation services. Its Practice Lead for Safeguarding Children at Risk of Exploitation is also based there.

Dr Rachael Owens, Social Work Practice Advisor at Durham University, said at the heart of this Contextual Safeguarding approach is the importance of listening to young people, residents, and people in communities when there is a concern about the safety of young people.

"There are new partnerships with agencies who reach into, and have responsibility for, contexts and places where young people spend their time. Alongside these new partnerships, there are now processes to co-ordinate welfare-oriented responses to a child's situation. The idea is to target the social conditions of harm so that social care partners with the most appropriate agency or agencies can make the changes needed to keep the child safe.

"In terms of practice changes, Swansea Children's Services has increased its detached youth work provision. It means that alongside changing the environments, there is a commitment to building

trusting relationships which increases the guardianship of young people in outdoor spaces, addresses their needs and supports them to learn from each other.

"This has all been possible because the team leading the Contextual Safeguarding at Swansea have engaged wholeheartedly with the process.

"They have executed a vision for making radical changes to the structure and offer of services, in order to increase safety for young people and are now in a strong positive to embed this into their 'practice as usual.'

"We look forward seeing how this learning develops and can support approaches to safeguarding young people outside the home across Wales."

Swansea Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services in 2021/22, Elliott King, said: "I'm pleased that the council's determination and commitment to ensure all our young people are as safe as they can be, has been recognised.

"There has been a lot of work in recent years changing and improving the way we and our partners work and this would not have been possible with the commitment and professionalism of our staff and partners.

"We will always look to improve on what we do but I would like to recognise and thank all involved for the progress to date."

Continue to ensure that Adult and Child & Family Services are robust and effective in meeting the statutory requirements laid on the Authority as set out in the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 to improve well-being outcomes for vulnerable adults in Swansea.

How our social service has adapted to the pandemic demonstrates the resilience of staff, their continued hard work and professionalism. These are challenging times in for children, young people, vulnerable adults, carers and families, and the Council is responding magnificently to the new and existing challenges, by continuing to deliver core services effectively and with innovation. The Director of Social Services' Annual Report gives a comprehensive account of current performance and how improved outcomes are being achieved.

Continue to ensure that Adult and Child & Family Services are robust and effective in meeting the statutory requirements laid on the Authority as set out in the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 to improve well-being outcomes for vulnerable adults in Swansea.

Child & Family Services are responsible for the provision of services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Our vision is "Doing what matters to make things better for children, young people and families". We have been concerned about the impact of school closures during the pandemic, as this means there are fewer opportunities to consider the welfare of each child, and to intervene where there is a possibility of a child experiencing harm. We remain focused on safeguarding children and improving outcomes for the high numbers of looked after children and young people, and with a high level of success, we are finding safe placements in supportive families and more locally. Swansea has a well-established Signs of Safety/Wellbeing practice model, to shape how we work in partnership and collaboration, to understand what matters most to children and families, together exploring strengths and managing risks to ensure there is safety, care and support in the child and family's situation.

Continue to target a Safe Looked After Children (LAC) strategy by implementing Child and Family service improvements, and through the Corporate Parenting Strategy to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Our Safe LAC reduction strategy has now changed – to become a ‘Supporting children and young people to be safe with family’ strategy. Swansea's Corporate Parenting Board champion the rights of looked after children, and the Board have been working co-productively with our care experienced population on “what a best life” can look like in Swansea. We believe all children should live in safe stable homes where they can achieve good outcomes and grow into adults who can lead successful lives. Looked after children are those children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority. For these young people, we are developing a whole service approach to getting children back with their families, wherever possible, or otherwise achieving genuine permanence and security until they reach adulthood. By working with children, young people, and families to help them identify their needs the right support for them at the right time.

Through a Getting It Right for Every Child programme, we will implement a new whole system, integrated approach to focus early help and prevention services to improve well-being for children and young people, and support to families.

We are working closely in partnership to focus on prevention and early help. Within the overarching Child and Family Services Improvement Programme – we are taking forward the Systems Thinking approach to get the right level of help to the right child and family at the right time. More children and families are being supported through the early help hub. Swansea may be reaping the benefits of investing in early help and prevention, as we are seeing fewer children placed on the child protection register and fewer children looked after. Formerly the Information Advice & Assistance (IAA) team, the new 'Single Point of Contact' is an enhanced, multi-agency, advice and advocacy offer to help understand what is happening to a child, and within their family, to help decide if statutory support is needed and to find the best help quickly.

Continue to involve children in getting their voice heard, and Adults and Carers about the services they receive, by improving our model of social work practice that focusses on a person’s strengths and assets, what matters to them, what their families and friends can do to help, and by coproducing plans to achieve better outcomes.

The Children and Young People’s Rights Scheme sets out how Swansea Council will achieve our duty regarding the United Nations Commission Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A plan on a page of the Children and Young People’s Rights Scheme, was co-produced with children, young people and the Children’s Rights Network in preparation for formal consultation.

We also have a strong Co-production Network in Swansea, hosted by Swansea CVS, and together, a coproduction strategy aims to give people clarity and resources to build their knowledge and practice in this area. This includes the development of a training programme for staff to better understand and implement co-productive practice. Coproduction is central to how we commission services and develop policy, for example:

- Direct Payments Co-Production Group has designed a new Direct Payments process for Swansea.
- Practice Framework Co-Production Group is developing a guide to support people prepare for their assessment.
- Learning Disabilities Co-Production Group has supported the involvement of citizens in contract awards.
- Advocacy Co-production Group has designed a new advocacy service.

Case Study 2: Swansea’s Children’s Rights Network

Swansea's Children's Rights Network is made up of over 80 stakeholders with a vested interest in furthering the children's rights agenda in Swansea. We now know, based on feedback from children and young people, the key issues they wish to work on to make Swansea a better place to live are:

1. Protecting the Environment and Green Spaces
2. Quiet voices – developing systems for listening to children and young people who do not wish to 'speak up' but do want to have their say, e.g. digital platforms and virtual suggestions boxes
3. Supporting disabled children – working on making change so that disabled children feel integrated and able to have their voices heard as any other child would.
4. Equality for LGBTQ+ children and young people – developing resources that address discrimination and promote diversity and equality for children and young people who identify as LGBTQ+
5. Politics – developing resources for children and young people to understand what politics is, who local politicians are and how to organise change
6. Listening to Learners – strengthening collective pupil voice across the County, build [Children-and-Young-Peoples-Rights-Scheme 2021](#)

Work with partners to raise awareness around domestic abuse and put in place effective and timely interventions and support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Council's response to Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) shifted to a rapid and adaptable partnership approach to the emerging crisis and the impact it had on the safety of women, and within families. Our VAWDASV offer works alongside early help, our safeguarding hub and the Child and Family Single Point of Contact to ensure a more coordinated response to requests for help. Also strengthening the work between adults and child and family services by working together on a whole system approach. Swansea Council prioritised awareness raising campaigns with a strong message that help is available. We developed multimedia campaigns involving staff from Child and Family services, supporting national messaging such as #youarenotalone, and ensured that local information on support services was regularly promoted.

Case study 3: Football and rugby clubs urged to support White Ribbon campaign

Rugby and football clubs across Swansea were asked to join the council in marking White Ribbon Day on Thursday November 25. It is a national campaign to tackle male violence against women by asking men and boys to take a stand against violence and to challenge sexist and inappropriate behaviour.

Swansea RFC and Loughor RFC signed-up with their players making short video pledges. Other clubs including grassroots and community clubs were asked to also join by posting their support on social media ahead of November 25 by using the hashtags #AllMenCan and #SwanseaMenCan.

Swansea Council Cabinet Member Andrew Stevens, who plays for Loughor, said: "Every three days a woman is killed by a man in the UK.

"Harassment and abuse affect women daily, in the street, workplaces and in their homes. It is a growing issue and it is our responsibility as men, to stop it.

"For White Ribbon Day this year, we are asking rugby and football clubs across Swansea to come together and say no to violence against women. Swansea men can make a change.

"I'm proud that my club is supporting this campaign and I would urge others - seniors and juniors - to join in and show their support for White Ribbon Day."

Address social isolation and enhance quality of life of older people, within supportive communities by extending local area coordination and the range of support and preventative opportunities.

We are looking at new sustainable models to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. We are supporting the development of a volunteer strategy and the development of domiciliary care micro enterprises, in areas where traditional providers struggle to operate within and to support to unpaid carers.

Swansea has a Local Area Coordination team covering the whole city to help people find the right help and support, now working in all areas, helping people to 'Get a life not a service'. A Local Area Coordinator can help anyone build relationships within their community. We support older people, disabled people, people with mental health problems, and their families and carers to:

- to build their own vision of what a good life looks like;
- to stay strong and connected;
- to feel safer and more confident in the future.

Swansea's Employability Team continues to support a diverse range of clients across many age groups into employment. Swansea's CREST Recovery college offers a range of mental health recovery focussed courses, and day opportunities are resuming after the pandemic. We must acknowledge the efforts of our workforce and volunteers in ensuring our most vulnerable people are supported, and in responding to the new challenges as Swansea welcomes new families and citizens from troubled countries.

Case Study 4: Local Area Co-ordination

When C phoned S, the Local Area Coordinator, it was initially to glean some information regarding her mother (who she was caring for). When they discussed some possible options for her mother, C said there was no way her mother would engage with anything at present and would not accept calls from anyone. While they were on the phone, S asked how C was personally coping. She said she was struggling to care for her mother as well as dealing with current stresses that were going on in her own life. She joked that she needed to work with S herself.

What happened:

S noticed this and offered to discuss it further. C was appreciative and they agreed a call the following week. During this call, C explained that she was in the process of trying to move which was very stressful and was experiencing her own health issues. Her mother was an additional responsibility, which sometimes made things feel overwhelming.

Starting at the start – a Local Area Coordinator works within a local community and provides information, advice and support to help people solve their own problems

They broke down what was important and needed focussing on first and it was C dealing with her admin because she felt unable to make a start. She had forms that needed completing that have been there for months as well as phone calls which could mean she is on hold for ages. She just could not face doing it. Together, they unpicked what doing one of the tasks could mean and discussed how it would feel to allocate half an hour and do one form or one phone call. C agreed she could do this and said she felt better with a realistic plan.

Local Area Coordination focusses on information, enabling people to access what they need to know to support their decision making

They also looked at support for her as a Carer and C has already received some support from Swansea Carer's Centre. Because her mother was not willing to engage, C said she has accepted that responsibility, so they looked at how C could be proactive with her own self-care. C felt that having some support and encouragement to navigate the things that were causing her stress and setting small goals that she could achieve would help her to start feeling more positive and motivated. S reassured her that she would lead the support and it could last as long as she needed it.

Asking the right questions – instead of focussing on deficits, the Local Area Coordinator helps people focus on their own vision for a good life building on their own assets and relationships

What's next:

C has completed all the relevant housing forms, put her house on the market and is currently awaiting to hear back. She said she was in a "real dip" for a while and once she made a start on the things she needed to do, everything became a little easier and less overwhelming.

The individual or family leads but the Local Area Coordinator supports people to take practical action for change

C feels as though things are moving in the right direction and she has S's phone number if she ever needs to call again.

"Thank you so much for being there. Things are starting in the process of getting sorted so hopefully I'll be ok now. If not, I may be in touch in the future!"

Supporting our most vulnerable adults to remain safe and independent at home, by implementing the Adult Service model and rebalancing our service offer to focus on prevention, reablement, and recovery, including Community and Residential Reablement services, a new model of delivering domiciliary care and implementing the 'Hospital to Home' model.

Adult Services is supporting more people in innovative ways, and the Council has remodelled more of its service delivery to people with complex needs who require care and support. Our Adult Services Service model continues to focus upon early intervention, prevention and reablement. We achieve the best possible support for people by making best use of community resources available supported by our highly skilled and valued workforce. Our transformational ambition for Adult Services is based on our vision:

"People in Swansea will have access to modern health and social care services which enable them to lead fulfilled lives with a sense of wellbeing within supportive families and resilient communities".

By ensuring co-production underpins our planning and commissioning, we are delivering services with people, rather than for them. There is high demand for social care assistance at the front door, and for social care assessments completed by frontline social work teams, with people receiving ongoing care and support, including support to carers as a result. We are challenging historic ways of working through a new practice model, 'Collaborative Communication', which focuses on working with the rights, strengths, outcomes, voice, choice and control of individuals.

Case Study 5: New Models of Delivery.

Working with elected members, building on a pilot funded through the Foundational Economy Fund we have continued to develop micro enterprises in partnership with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service. Working alongside colleagues from assessment and care management, commissioning, local area coordination and direct payments we have supported the development of a range of micro enterprises meeting a range of need. Current work includes a focus on the development of domiciliary care micro enterprises in areas of Swansea that traditional providers struggle to operate within.

Funding secured from Covid Recovery Grant was used to pump prime micro enterprises which were able to deliver services to unpaid carers free of charge for a temporary period. We are hopeful that this will change the narrative within carers assessments leading to practical solutions to meet carers needs via direct payments in the long run.

We are also looking into a pilot working with existing supported living providers and micro providers to look at how we can deliver collaborative care and support at a hyper local level.

Case Study 6: Day Care in Swansea: St Johns

Swansea Local Day services are transforming into innovative hubs and spaces where care and support is provided alongside a broader wellbeing offer.

St Johns is a great example, having been nominated for a social care accolade recently, the service has continued to grow.

Men's shed has gone from strength to strength, there are around 20 members who visit regularly, and they have formed valuable friendships that go beyond the weekly meet.

A ladies group was started through covid so people would have a safe space to meet and make friends, relieving loneliness and isolation.

Also an emergency food bank has grown to support people who found themselves without food for a variety of reasons, with the "food pantry" now sponsored by Morrisons. Through a period poverty grant, they can offer sanitary products as well.

Their community garden now grows a variety of fruit and vegetables which support the food bank so people are able to have fresh, wholesome items to supplement their weekly parcels. We are looking at having a weekly farmers market through the summer this year so people can pick their own, with the men's shed group are dedicated to making the garden a success.

St Johns also participated in a "kite project" last year, led by the Glyn Vivian art gallery. A giant kite was produced by the community and woven together from individuals postcard sized pieces of material. The theme was - what you want to hold onto and what you want to let go of from the covid pandemic.

The "People's library" has now started and is about bringing people together and sharing stories. It is the first one in Wales and is proving to be very successful. We are going to produce a book this year of stories that people want to share with others. It proves that people are people and were not so different regardless of background, age, gender or where we originated from.

There are similar stories emerging in other local day services.

Improve the well-being outcomes of young carers and care leavers, through a range of interventions, including Information, advice and improved access to support services.

YMCA Swansea and Swansea Council are working together to improve the support available to young carers. The young carers support service was the subject of a Council procurement and tendering process early in 2021 to reflect the scale and ambition of this new, emerging service. Through the formation of a Young Carers Board, engagement is taking place on a broad vision to create an inclusive movement, transforming communities so that young people belong, contribute & thrive.

Since the systems thinking review last year, the BAYS+ Service has been through lots of changes. The primary focus of the service in meeting the needs of including young people care experienced is: "BAYS+ will listen, understand, care about, and support me to make the best choices in my life. If I need to, I can rely on them 'no matter what.'" Info-Nation have redesigned their front door offer to ensure a more responsive drop-in service, and improved coordination of preventative service.

Case Study 7: Swansea Parent Carer forum/PAN Parents Advisory Network

Swansea Parent Carer forum are interested in how the system can learn from individual stories. The Forum listens and feed the voice of parent carers into decision making. Then to feed back to parent carers.

The group sits on working groups with the Local Authority, Health Board and West Glamorgan Regional Partnership. They also arrange training for other parent carers.

<https://swanseapcf.org/>

PAN West Glamorgan is a group of parents and professionals, working for a more compassionate and humane response to parents who may be at risk of losing their children, or who have lost their children to the care system. The project is parent-led, supported by professionals.

The Parent Café is extending engagement to inform, support, educate and influence parents and professionals in promoting the voice and participation of parents in decision making in the safeguarding arena.

Case Study 8: Direct Payments to Carers

We have extended the use of direct payments to support carers, and as an alternative to domiciliary care. The new Direct Payment team have been listening to stories of carers who have been receiving direct payments to support them in the care of a loved one:

'C' said direct payments is a fantastic service in terms of giving him flexibility by employing a Personal Assistant (PA) which work flexibly for him and his family's needs and requirements, as opposed to maybe domiciliary care with fixed days times of calling etc..

Having direct payments has enabled 'K' to utilise her time in doing lots of basic things which everyone takes for granted like. These are things that most people take for granted, to eat to feel fresh, improve health & well-being. K would like to primarily have time away from her caring role, and have a holiday, respite, quality of time on her own to rest, recuperate, and think.

'R' said the Direct Payment (DP) has made a HUGE DIFFERENCE to her quality of life

The [DP] has enabled her to do basic things in life, like sitting down, RELAXING, making telephone calls to family / friends and paying household bills. Sometimes the Personal Assistant is caring for her husband at home, so this gives R some time to lie down and rest as well.

Further examples can be found within Director of Social Services Annual Report.

As a Dementia Friendly City, Charter for Older People, and through the Ageing Well strategy, we will support Swansea citizens who are affected to feel valued, to contribute and participate in mainstream society, and to remain safely in their own homes.

Swansea is the first Dementia Friendly City in Wales, with the Dementia Friendly Swansea forum aimed at improving the quality of life for people living with dementia. A Dementia Hwb is a unique pop-up information centre, open in Swansea Quadrant centre, and staffed by a mix of volunteers from Dementia Friendly Swansea plus individuals and professionals from local organisations. Intergenerational work continues to raise awareness of dementia across Swansea, within schools and involving pupils with residents in local care homes. Pontarddulais Comprehensive became the first school in the city to be officially recognised as a Dementia Friendly School. Pupils at and their teachers were presented with the award by the Alzheimer's Society. This work involving school children and residents at The Hollies and Pontarddulais continues through bilingual awareness sessions and joint activities through the medium of Welsh in The Hollie and other local services. Swansea is committed to a rights-based approach to work with adults. Our Ageing Well Engagement Plan ensures that older people's views and issues are well represented and considered in all planning work, whether through the Big Conversation events, 50+ Network or through all our engagement work. Our Life Stages Team continues to promote participation, a wide range of activities and support networks.

Case Study 9: Ideas shared as council marks Day of Older Persons

Residents and community groups have been sharing their thoughts and ideas on reducing social isolation and ageing well as part of the International Day of Older Persons. Swansea Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in 2021/22 Mark Child joined them for a social gathering at the marina in October 2021.

Cllr Child said: "Over the coming months the council, working with our partners, will be looking to identify new initiatives to reduce social isolation in a Covid safe way, encourage active ageing and also tackle other issues that are important to older people such as digital exclusion.

"I was really pleased people were able to join me and hope they enjoyed it as much as I did and felt it was worthwhile.

"We have recently appointed Rhys Thomas as our new Older Person's Partnership and Involvement Officer and Rhys also joined us.

"Rhys will be working with community members and groups to hear the voice of people aged 50 and over and to work with them to improve opportunities to live and age well in Swansea."

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

Our social services carried on throughout this extraordinarily difficult period; some services delivered in new ways and some meeting different and additional demands. We will:

- learn the lessons of these new ways of working to inform future delivery models that ensure that we are the best that we can be in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Swansea Council has a proud track record of respecting the rights of adults and children, by listening closely to and working with them in making decisions that affect them. There are many and varied ways in which we support people want to exercise their right to take part in decisions that affect them at different times and in ways that make sense to them. We will:

- Retain our focus on prevention / early help across the whole system, and at the same time safeguarding and meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

We also need a skilled, professional workforce, across the whole social care sector, who are well managed and supported to carry out their work to highest standards. We will:

- develop new, imaginative approaches in attracting new qualified and unqualified workers to want to work in the health and social care sector, and in retaining their loyalty and commitment.

4. Conclusion – the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

Well-being Objectives	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Safeguarding People from Harm</i>				X	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

The evidence shows that the Council has made significant progress meeting the steps required to deliver its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm. Swansea Council continues to promote a “Safeguarding is everyone’s business” approach; safeguarding our most vulnerable people by prioritising high quality preventative, well-being and social services, by continuing to ensure that safeguarding is ‘everyone’s business’ across the Council, within schools, with partners and through West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board and partnerships.

The Council leads on a corporate wide approach to safeguarding vulnerable people to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability in all service areas of the Council. By working in partnership, we are implementing the new statutory requirements and the ‘duty to report’ placed on all officers, elected members, volunteers and partners to raise concerns and help tackle the wider range of safeguarding issues now present in our communities. Swansea Council emphasises the rights of adults and children by using ‘what matters most’ to them as citizens, by placing them at the centre of their own care and support and by coproducing services to achieve better outcomes The Council is committed to ensuring citizens have access to high quality and resilient statutory social

services, and to ensure that Adult and Child & Family Services are robust, resilient and effective in getting right care and support to the right person, at right place and at the right time.

The Council are Improving outcomes for children and young people - by promoting rights of, and opportunities for children and young people, and toward better life chances for looked after children and care leavers. We are implementing a new 'Supporting children and young people to be safe with family' strategy, taking action to reduce the number of children and young people who need to be looked after by Swansea Council, where safe alternatives can be identified. The Child and Family Services Improvement programme continues to develop our social work practice and the high-quality range of services to support children, young people, and families.

We are transforming how we manage care and support vulnerable adults. We are working regionally, with health board partners and local providers to support our most vulnerable adults to remain safe and independent at home, with access to joined-up Health and Social Care services to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable Swansea citizens, and by rebalancing our service offer to focus on prevention, reablement and recovery.

Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.

The Council is working to maximise its contribution to the national well-being goals when meeting its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm:

- *A prosperous Wales* –the local and regional health and social care market contributes significantly to the local and regional economy, with a skilled, professionalised workforce needed to meet growing demand.
- *A Resilient Wales* – we are supporting adults with a range of disabilities and needs to become more independent by promoting access to well-being, learning and work experience opportunities, including support to manage coastal, wildlife and environmental habitats.
- *A Healthier Wales* – by working together health and social care services have responded to challenges posed by the pandemic to safeguard people from harm, improving their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being, and by supporting people to maintain independence and quality of life throughout their life course.
- *A more Equal Wales* – ensuring equal access to health and social care through information, advice and assistance and building on strengths of families and assets within communities to plan their own care and support, and to reach their full potential, increasingly by preventing the need for statutory services.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – through supportive and mutually responsible communities working together to safeguard our most people, with Council employees, elected Members and people in our communities feeling confident about identifying and reporting their safeguarding concerns in respect of children and adults.
- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – Working with partners through the Ageing Well Strategy to deliver the active offer and apply our learning to improving social care, and through intergeneration working, including through the medium of Welsh.
- *A globally responsible Wales* – the Council's safeguarding arrangements are informed by the Council's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and human rights of all citizens

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The council is working sustainable in line with the following five ways of working when meeting its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm:

- *Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse* – by developing early help to ensure people’s wellbeing outcomes are met before becoming more complex, needing statutory services.
- *Addressing long-term challenges* –by doing preventative work to reduce demands placed on social care services from local population changes, number of children needing to be looked after by the Local Authority, vulnerable adults and those experiencing long term conditions, such as mental health, dementia.
- *Working in partnership with others* –by tackling domestic abuse and helping people to live and age well with partners through the Public Service Board.
- *Avoiding conflicts between public body objectives* –by working with partners through the West Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding arrangements and through the Public Service Board.
- *Involving people* – by involving carers and victims of domestic abuse in their care and looked after children and their families by focussing on their strengths and assets and what they can bring to the table involving parents, families and communities.

Improving Education and Skills

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what success will look like

We want:

- Swansea to be one of the best places in the world for children and young people to grow up.
- Every child and young person in Swansea to achieve, to be healthy, to be resilient and to be safe.
- Children and young people to attend school regularly because they are more likely to achieve the skills and qualifications that they need to go on into further education, higher education, employment, or training.
- Children and young people to obtain qualifications and skills that are suited to the economic needs of the future and to be able to contribute positively as active local citizens.
- To prevent children from becoming disengaged from learning.
- As corporate parents of Looked After Children, we want our Looked After Children to succeed in school and to have opportunities for further education, higher education, employment, or training.
- We acknowledge that a child or young person with additional learning needs requires timely and effective support to allow them to reach their full potential.
- Our children and young people to be aware of their global rights and responsibilities so that they can be active and responsible citizens, fulfil their potential and make a difference to their communities.
- Our children and young people to have good Welsh language skills.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Support pupils, families, and schools to maintain continuity of learning and well-being during the Covid-19 response and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented several significant challenges for pupils, their families, and schools across two academic years in 2021-2022. The Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel identified a few challenges for learners because of the pandemic including: insecure foundations for learning, a lack of progression for some learners, a few learners being more challenged than others, demands on the teaching profession and pressures within the education system. During 2021/22, schools were required to implement Welsh Government guidance as Wales moved through different alert levels with the aim to normalise the school's environment as much as possible, when it was safe to do so. In addition to working with learners and staff within our schools to implement the guidance, schools also worked in partnership with parents and carers to support them and ensure they understood the guidance and their responsibilities.

Although COVID-19 restrictions for wider society were relaxed in the early summer of 2021, strict COVID-19 control measures remained in schools until September 2021 with significant disruption to education continuing during autumn 2021 and spring 2022. As part of the Council's Achieving Better Together recovery programme, Education delivered well on key work streams within the programme with a particular focus on well-being. Our recovery work in Education was also aligned with Welsh Government's Renew and Recovery Plan for Education. National operational guidance to schools was replaced by a national framework for recovery in September 2021. In addition to national guidance and frameworks, we continued to work with our headteachers and with children and young people to listen to their experiences of the pandemic and views on priorities for recovery and new learning opportunities in the future.

During 2021/2022, schools employed a wide range of strategies for continuity of learning. Additional support for learners and their families to attend school was delivered successfully. In addition to support for learning, schools also looked after the well-being of learners and their families with mental health, anxiety, and bereavement issues, with a specific focus on checking the well-being of vulnerable learners. Schools employed strategies to support the well-being of their staff and worked in partnership with Careers Wales, Virgin Atlantic, local colleges, and other partners to provide opportunities to welcome children back to learning, with new opportunities and experiences for vocational learning. Wider support provided by schools included the provision of childcare facilities for key workers and the delivery of information technology equipment. The introduction of an efficient payment system for children who were eligible for free school meals supported learners needs well.

Continue to support and challenge schools to improve attendance and pupil performance, with a focus on improving literacy (in English and Welsh), numeracy and digital competency for all children of all ages, including those who LAC, EOTAS or have additional learning needs.

School attendance has continued to be negatively impacted because of the pandemic during 2021/2022. The normal collection of attendance data continued to be suspended in 2021/2022. Local data shows that nearly all schools in Swansea were at least 5 percentage points lower than attendance rates in previous year. In secondary schools, whole year groups and 'bubbles' of children in primary school were still required to isolate if one of their peers tested positive for COVID-19, up until September 2021. New guidance from September 2021, allowed schools to relax their COVID-19 control measures, although attendance continued to be hampered by learners testing positive for COVID-19 and requirements to self isolate.

During 2021/2022, externally verified examinations, the collation of teacher assessments for earlier stage key assessments and the national categorisation of schools also remained suspended. Despite the lack of performance information in relation to externally verified examinations, we have continued to assess progress against our Education Directorate objectives, Business Unit objectives and Performance objectives. Overall, performance against key objectives is good and for the majority of objectives reflects a status of suitable progress, addressing the priorities in most aspects. Our Education Directorate continued to monitor a wide range of data on information about learners, school staff, school buildings and learning outcomes through using Management Information Systems (MIS) including SIMS and Capita ONE. The key assurances for school management, governance and performance were now mainly achieved through monitoring and evaluation by Education officers. Although Estyn inspections continued to be suspended during the pandemic up until Spring 2022, we received a good level of assurance from Estyn about the effectiveness of our approach and activities in relation to supporting learners and parents and carers during the pandemic.

Support for schools to improve high quality learning and teaching has continued effectively through virtual networks, events and conferences designed to share best practice and focus on evidence informed professional learning. Swansea's Virtual School remains live and updated. Professional learning in this area has been beneficial and has supported practitioners and local authority officers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of how to use digital technology to enhance learning and develop their skills. The journey towards ambitious curriculum provision in Swansea has progressed well with many schools embracing changes to ensure that learners are well equipped for future occupations.

Meet demand for Welsh-medium education and promote the use of Welsh in schools and socially through the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Cabinet approved the Council's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/2032 in January 2022. The ten-year plan outlines the Council's vision to increase and improve the provision of Welsh-medium education in the local area including increasing the number of Welsh-medium education places, promoting the use of the Welsh language and supporting bi-lingualism for children during their early years and throughout their school career. Work has continued to develop more Welsh-medium places with the opening of the new and enhanced accommodation and facilities for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tan y lan and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tirdeunaw, followed by additional classroom space at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bryn y Môr and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Y Login Fach. We have also been working to complement this provision through delivering enhanced provision at both our Welsh-medium Comprehensive Schools Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe. We have continued to monitor data on the number of learners attending Welsh-medium and schools have undertaken assessments on Welsh-language levels, which informed our strategy to increase the use of Welsh Language, for example Welsh in Education Strategic Plan in accordance with the Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050 strategy. An updated knowledge of the growth of Welsh-speaking households in the local authority will be gathered following the publication of the 2021 National Census data.

In addition to improving access to school spaces we have improved our provision for Welsh across Swansea through training for teachers and the development of an accredited scheme for creating a Welsh charter in schools and support for the use of incidental Welsh outside the classroom. Provision to support schools includes high-quality professional learning, brokering school-to-school support, developing a range of beneficial resources such as a language continuum and Dimensiwn Cymraeg website as well as supporting latecomers to Welsh. The Welsh language features heavily in the new curriculum. Professional learning to support subject teaching in Welsh in Welsh medium and English medium schools is supported by the newly formed regional partnership Partneriaeth. A collaborative effort between the local and central team of Welsh officers will give good access to professional learning for all progression point expectations in the new curriculum.

In terms of vulnerable learners, all our Welsh-medium schools have received good support and guidance in building their capacity in identifying need and providing provision at a local level through the medium of Welsh. Additional specialist support can be requested from Welsh speaking educational psychologists and through targeted support that is provided by the speech, language, and social communication resource (SLCT). The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) also provides long-term aims to ensure that ALN provision is provided in the language of choice, acknowledging the likely increase in demand. The ongoing specialist teaching facility (STF) review includes a workstream relating to Welsh-medium specialist provision, continuing the cross-cutting review ethos of providing opportunities for learners to be included in mainstream.

Continue to involve children and young people in their education and community through Schools Councils and Big Conversation engagement events. By continuing to encourage schools to become UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools as part of our commitment to the UNCRC, develop young citizens to respect rights, understand responsibilities and to be globally aware and responsible citizens.

We have continued to involve children and young people in their education and communities through our Children and Young People's Rights Scheme, aiming to ensure that the views of children and young people are fed into decision making processes and they can influence decisions which

affect them. We have adopted a whole Council approach to embedding the voices of children and young people into decision making. During 2021/2022, we revised our Children and Young People's Rights Scheme and co-produced several indicators to inform the development of the Scheme. Children and Young People emphasised the importance of equality and non-discrimination. Members of Swansea's Children's Rights Network met in January 2022 to begin the process of co-production, drafting indicators based around the five principles of our agreed rights-based approach. Work was undertaken to facilitate sessions with 233 children and young people from eleven schools to determine the actions that they think the Council should take and measures of success. All children chose to focus on equality and non-discrimination or participation as their principles of choice. Children's Rights Network members have used this work to inform the development of performance indicators for the UNCRC Action Plan.

The Council has continued to build upon our engagement with Children and Young People to identify priorities during recovery from the pandemic. During 2021/2022, the Cabinet Member for Education, the Director of Education, and a Pupil Voice Professional Learning Community (consisting of Secondary School Teachers and pupils) developed a 'pupil voice manifesto' for Swansea. This work was led by Bishopston Comprehensive and supported by the Education Directorate. Each secondary school has now developed their own manifesto and work is ongoing to bring these together into one Swansea Pupil Manifesto.

Case study 1: listening to the voices of disabled children and young people

A new pilot project has been established in Ysgol Pen Y Bryn where all staff have undertaken INSET training on what it means to embed a principled approach to children's rights into their new curriculum. Work has been undertaken with pupils and staff to map existing good rights practice, and areas for development, for embedding rights will be co-produced by teachers, governors, parents, and pupils. This work has contributed to the development of a national resource that support schools to fulfil their commitment to rights outlined in the Curriculum and Assessment Act and Additional Learning Needs Act, i.e., to promote knowledge of the UNCRC, as well as to understand the principles of the UNCRPD to support pupils with ALN and/or who are disabled. This work is a partnership piece of work with the Education service, Partneriaeth (the new regional education partnership) and the Children's Commissioner's Office for Wales. A case-study of this project is currently being developed to inform a National ALN toolkit showcasing best ALN rights based-practice. This will be hosted on the website of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Ensure our vulnerable children are not disadvantaged by poverty or other factors that limit or restrict them in achieving and attaining standards and wellbeing in education.

We have continued to support vulnerable children and ensure that they are not disadvantaged by poverty or other factors that impact upon them in terms of educational attainment and well-being. We have continued to deliver our plan to support vulnerable learners, particularly those with additional learning needs because of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (2018) through implementation of our Additional Learning Needs Strategy 2019/2022. Although the number of Statements of Special Educational Needs issued within 26 weeks has been an area for continual improvement, the transition to a gradual implementation of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for additional learning needs learners has progressed well. The new system to manage the process around creating and managing IDPs now focuses on a more person-centred approach and maps wider support for children and young people. More places have been created to meet the needs of children in our special schools as well as extensive training provided to teachers working with children with additional learning needs. Work is ongoing in relation to reviewing the sufficiency

of specialist places for children and young people across Swansea. There has been positive feedback from additional learning needs co-ordinators to confirm that Swansea provides strong support to implement the new ALNET Act.

Work has also been undertaken in mainstream schools to improve the support for children and young people with Social Communication Difficulties (including Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. We have also continued to work with the Welsh Government in terms of developing a curriculum for British Sign Language (BSL) and continued to work closely with the Local Health Board in terms of agreeing roles and responsibilities and the provision of appropriate support.

During 2021/2022, we have continued to track learners either individually at school level or via the Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) to identify learners who may need additional support and interventions. Around 10% of learners had VAP scores of 10 or higher in 2022. Local data based on the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) shows that the gap in attainment between Free School Meal (FSM) and non-FSM learners at key stage 4 remained during 2021. Good progress has been made in narrowing the gap in outcomes for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and non-ALN. The data also shows the outcomes for both minority ethnic learners and English as an additional language (EAL) have continued to improve throughout the key stages and these groups outperformed their peers by the end of key stage 4.

Performance data shows that there is a strong correlation between VAP average scores and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - pupils who live in the 10% most deprived areas have an average score of 6.9 - compared to 1.6 for those living in the 10% least deprived. During 2021/22 we also continued to use Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) to support learners by facilitating professional learning for staff focussing on elements such as speech and language provision, well-being, attachment, and catch-up programmes. We have also used the PDG to employ staff to support pupils and families. In addition, we have continued to participate in a range of programmes and professional learning coordinated by a regional lead to support children and young people impacted upon poverty and are working towards ensuring that all schools have a senior leader who has responsibility for championing pupils who are FSM.

During 2021/22, we have continued to build on our strong culture of safeguarding within education services ensuring robust integrated safeguarding procedures. Key personnel, such as a dedicated Education Safeguarding Officer, have worked closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and other services, such as the Contextual Missing and Exploited Team (CMET) and the Early Help Hub (EHH) through the Integrated Safeguarding Hub (ISH) to provide support for education services and its learners. We have continued to build on collaboratively working with Child and Family Services developed during the pandemic to ensure that there is a shared understanding and assessment of vulnerable learners which is consistent across all schools, enabling monitoring, support and targeted interventions.

Transform the schools' estate to meet demand and respond to the developments set out within the local development plan (LDP) whilst ensuring community benefits from contracts. We will, by using our school building and maintenance programme, reduce our carbon footprint.

We have continued to review capacity calculations in our schools on an annual basis and share information with the QED Programme Board, along with other statistics on school places, to monitor and review the spread of school places. There is currently sufficient capacity in all sectors, except for specialist provision, and a short-term strategy has been implemented to address the pressures on specialist places, with a long-term strategy in development. Schools that are oversubscribed are

subject to strategies as part of the long-term strategic outline programme for schools to manage the pressure, realise opportunities linked to the Specialist Teaching Facilities (STF) review, or long-term strategies including linkages to the Local Development Plan (LDP). This year, new and enhanced accommodation and facilities were opened for Welsh medium primary schools, providing a further 402 places. Over the last 5 years we have continued to transform our schools' estate to meet demand and as funding has allowed and developed detailed business cases in the region of £150m.

During 2021/2022 we have also continued with our strategy to support schools to maintain their buildings. Working with Building Services we have developed a more robust methodology for suitability assessments, which has been adopted by Welsh Government for its condition and suitability returns.

Knowledge of our schools, combined with a comprehensive assessment framework and other analyses has informed the authority's approved Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) and resulted in robust prioritisation of current and future needs. Schools have continued to benefit most of the Council's annual capital maintenance programme, which is prioritised based on risk and consistent with QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme schemes. During the life cycle of Band B funding, more than 63 schools in Swansea have benefitted from capital maintenance. All projects within Band A of the QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and three projects (the new Pupil Referral Unit and two Welsh-medium primary school builds) from Band B have been delivered. A Welsh-medium secondary school is due for completion in May 2022, and an English-medium secondary by May 2023.

Align our education system and continue to develop and enhance partnerships to ensure we create the right people with the right skills to supply the new economies and meet the challenge of the Swansea Bay City Deal. We will encourage schools to support each other.

The Skills and Talent programme is a unique programme within the Swansea Bay City Deal, which aims to provide a skills training solution and the development of a sustainable skills infrastructure to develop the future workforce of the region. The programme is led by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP), a partnership of industry employers and public sector training and education providers. During 2021/2022, the RLSP completed a business case for the Skills and Talent programme, which has now been approved by the Welsh and UK Governments.

A Regional Programme Manager has been appointed to take forward school-based projects, engagement, and other initiatives at a local level. The aim of this is to create a clear career pathway from school education through further and higher education in the key areas of digital, construction, energy, smart manufacturing and life-science and wellbeing. Specifically, the Skills and Talent programme seeks to influence curriculum development and delivery to ensure the adequate supply of young people with the right skills sets. It is anticipated that the project will create at least 3,000 new apprenticeships and deliver an additional 2,200 development opportunities as well as creating centres of excellence within sectors such Digital, Energy, Construction, and Well-Being.

Our Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe/Swansea Skills Partnership (PSA/SSP) has continued to build upon promoting, maintaining and developing Swansea as a UNESCO Learning City and developing a local action plan focussing on digital capacity and guidance for learners to inspire learners to consider the types of jobs and opportunities within the Swansea Bay City Deal. During the last year the PSA/SSP has developed further work in these areas with an emphasis on digital competence of both educators and learners as well as pupils being able to find out about digital careers. Funding has also been provided to all secondary schools to promote "digital" transition from primary to secondary and was used to design a digital transition project in collaboration with their feeder primary schools.

Further training sessions have also been delivered across all schools to try to improve the digital skills of teachers, including blended learning approaches and now hybrid approaches to ensure learners isolating/recovering from illness can be educated effectively. Teachers have also been trained through a Digital Learning Apprenticeship scheme and by Swansea University through Technocamps.

Case study 2: Schools developing a Climate sensor

One cluster of schools is trialling a climate sensor device from a local company. TASK, part of Vindico, offers a learner friendly device, that has inbuilt sensors including, temperature, particle, sound, and light. The device should lend itself well to the science and technology area of learning and experience including: a design and technology element (the kit is designed with Lego and will need to design the casing), a science element (discussion of readings and their meanings. Schools can investigate the particles from each school involved and why some are higher than others e.g., more built-up areas or farmed areas) and a computer element (analyse the data from the dashboard in a spreadsheet and create algorithms).

Raise vocational aspirations and skill levels in the workplace, contributing to the development of ambitious, skilled young people and adults by providing apprenticeships.

We have continued to raise vocational aspirations and skills in the workplace for young people by working with our Further Education colleges in Swansea and neighbouring areas and other learning training providers. Careers and work experiences form an integral part of the new curriculum for Wales. During 2021/2022, all our secondary schools continued to provide vocational courses for young people aged 14 to 16 either at school or off-site at college or in workplaces. We have also continued to work with Gower College and neighbouring colleges to provide options for young people aged 14 to 16, including those who are following an alternative curriculum. We have also continued to support the Welsh Government's Junior Academy, which offers vocational pathways to young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). We have also continued to work with Gower College through our Cynnydd courses, which provides a range of support and learning opportunities for learners who are at risk of disengagement and has supported over 1,000 learners since its inception. Despite the challenges of the pandemic our Youth work provision has continued to engage with young people and support them into further learning vocational training and employment. During 2021/2022, the service held 466 sessions and contacted 894 known young people and 6185 contacts with unknown young people.

Case study 3: the Junior Academy

The Junior Academy is aimed at young people 14-16 years old who have a very clear idea of the vocational pathway they wish to follow and would benefit from a less traditional route. The programme particularly suits those who are at risk of disengaging from the school system and becoming NEET. There are currently 13 learners from four different secondary schools following vocational pathways in Landscaping & Horticulture and Hair & Beauty. Alongside their studies, each learner takes part in work related opportunities through a range of work readiness activities and sector related experiences. All learners who successfully completed the Junior Academy in 2021 progressed to higher level vocational studies, apprenticeships, or employment. The Junior Academy is very much a partnership project between Gower College and secondary schools with a welfare and progression coordinator responsible for support and progression to suitable pathways upon leaving.

The My Choice web platform is now well established and fully updated with the most recent prospectus. This year the RLSP and Careers Wales have provided up-to-date labour market intelligence for several priority sectors for the My Choice website. This year we have continued to work in partnership with Careers Wales to support employer engagement and arrange visits from employers to give presentations, deliver workshops and provide mock interviews. We have also continued to work closely with Careers Wales to support learners with applications for apprenticeships (which are completed through Careers Wales). Many of our secondary schools in Swansea have also participated in the Welsh Government's "Have a Go" initiative, which allows schools to borrow industry kits to support vocational learning. During 2021/2022 we have continued to work with our partners and to promote and provide a range of post-16 vocational training opportunities in sixth forms, colleges, training providers or through apprenticeships with local employers. Young people are then supported to progress into further vocational study, apprenticeships, and employment.

Develop independent learning skills for lifelong learning to reflect the changing nature of work and to support well-being, creativity and reduce social isolation.

During 2021/2022 we have built upon our membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities through developing our international links through our membership to share ideas and best practice. We have held 3 Learning Festivals since 2019, which have taken place in a range of different communities across the city and have been hosted by learning providers, community groups, community centres, the YMCA, and schools. Our Swansea Lifelong Learning Service have coordinated the festivals, which have involved a wide range of organisations including major employers such as the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA), the Prison Education Service, Further Education College, two Universities and all schools in Swansea. More than 10,000 learners have participated in more than 400 events on courses such as Family Learning, Essential Skills, Guitar, Calligraphy, Art, Needlecraft, Digital Photography, IT, Floristry, Cookery and Yoga as part of the festivals

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

As part of our improvement culture, a few areas for improvement have been identified in relation to outcomes, provision, and leadership. Key areas for improvement in terms of outcomes include:

- further analyse with schools the impact on learner outcomes because of the pandemic, including basic skills in the early years and pre-school, Welsh language skills, mental health and wellbeing, curriculum design, teaching and learning, and assessment;
- develop a strategy to promote the inclusion to support vulnerable groups of learners and to ensure that the Local Authority has oversight of individualised tracking on learner progress;
- develop an Inclusion for Learners Strategy, focus on the few elements of the ALN strategy where further progress is required and finalise the revision of the accessibility strategy and plan;
- develop further sufficient specialist places for learners with ALN, including STFs and special schools, and support schools to build capacity to meet the needs of learners with SEBD to prevent exclusion or referral to EOTAS and embed universal strategies for all areas of ALN;
- develop a coherent strategy to support literacy and numeracy outcomes in schools and further assess the impact of increased Welsh-medium provision and falling birth rates within the English medium sector;
- evaluate provision within schools that have smaller numbers;

- in terms of provision (services), continue and enhance the effectiveness of Member/Officer engagement to inform next stage development of longer-term capital investment and school organisation proposals.

Areas for improvement in relation to leadership include:

- the development of the Abertawe 2027 strategic plan to succeed Abertawe 2023 for education improvement in Swansea;
- sustain the quality of leadership across the education system (school leaders, governors, members, and officers) and embed a consistent and high quality new regional improvement partnership;
- establish more effective collaboration with the Local Health Board to ensure the statutory requirement of ALNET are met to ensure vulnerable leaders achieve good outcomes.

Other significant areas for improvement are the need to further improve education outcomes and skills to take advantage of the Swansea Bay City Deal, funding, progressing projects that are in the final phases of Band B of the QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and commencing the planning for future school reorganisation and investment priorities.

4. Conclusion - the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

A review of the evidence in relation to whether the Council is exercising its functions effectively in relation to its Education and Skills priority suggests that it is owning its ambition.

<i>Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Improving Education and Skills</i>				x	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that the Council has made good progress in terms of delivering its Improving Education and Skills well-being objective. Although the collection of data for many of the national performance indicators remain suspended and comparison with previous years or other areas has not been possible, good progress has been made with meeting the Education Directorates objectives, Business Unit objectives and performance indicators. There is a robust internal challenge and quality assurance process within Education and corporately within the Council with a clearly defined process for identifying risks and under performance. Although Estyn suspended its usual round of inspections during the pandemic, as part of a national thematic review Estyn examined the Council’s (Education) response to pandemic and was assured that a range of effective measures had

been put in place to support learners, parents and carers and schools. Parents and carers also expressed high levels of satisfaction with support offered by schools during the pandemic.

Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.

The Council is working to maximise its contribution to the national well-being goals when meeting its well-being objective to improve education and skills:

- *A prosperous Wales* – Responding to the City Deal by ensuring young people have success in STEM subjects and digital skills, such as computer coding.
- *A Resilient Wales* – Schools in Swansea using an online energy analysis tool and energy education programme designed to help schools reduce their electricity and gas usage and reduce their school's carbon emissions and make a real contribution to addressing the 'climate emergency'.
- *A Healthier Wales* – Continuing to involve children in their education through Pupil Voice, Schools Councils and Big Conversation events. Topics have included mindfulness in schools, bullying, homelessness, and healthy relationships. Public Health Wales' healthy schools' initiative sees a high level of engagement in Swansea schools to promote nutrition, physical activity, relationships, awareness of substance misuse, emotional health and wellbeing, safety, hygiene, and the environment.
- *A more Equal Wales* – Ensuring that children are not disadvantaged by poverty or other limiting factors when achieving and attaining standards and well-being in education.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – Transforming the school's estate to meet demand and to respond to the developments set out within the local development plan (LDP)
- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – Meeting demand for Welsh-medium education and promoting the use of Welsh in schools through the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.
- *A Globally Responsible Wales* - teaching young citizens to respect rights, understand responsibilities and be globally aware by continuing to support schools to become UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools as part of the Council's commitment to the UNCRC.

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The council is working sustainably in line with the following five ways of working when meeting its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm:

- *Addressing long-term challenges* - Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe (Swansea Skills Partnership) has been established to look at the longer-term employment opportunities arising from the Swansea Bay City Deal and other longer-term skills required. This will help inform the skills required for learners to be able to fulfil these roles. The 21st Century Schools Programme by Welsh Government provides opportunities to improve and create learning environments fit for the future.
- *Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse* - Early intervention is key to preventing problems occurring or getting worse. For example, the Cynnydd project support learners who are at risk of becoming NEET. In line with ALNET, early identification of need is important to support learners access to education. Good quality teaching is a key factor in successful education. If we ensure that Swansea teachers and leaders are given professional and career development that is aligned to national renew and reform policies and strategies, we can sustain a strong workforce to meet the diverse and emerging needs of children across all Swansea schools.

- *Working in partnership with others* - there are well established working relationships with other areas across the local authority; these include Social Services Directorate for several services to support children and young people. The Parent Carer Forum has been involved particularly with the ALN Transformation programme to support the Authorities preparedness for the new legislation.
- *Joining things up and avoiding conflicts* – continuing to develop our work with Child and Family Services to build upon a shared understanding of vulnerability and identifying those most at risk of harm as we recover from Covid-19.
- *Involving people* - the Education Directorate has a stakeholder engagement function within its Performance Team that provides advice and guidance across the directorate on ensuring that stakeholder engagement mechanisms are used at the earliest opportunity.

Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what success will look like

- We want to raise economic performance and create wealth and employment opportunities to improve the economic wellbeing of Swansea's citizens.
- The biggest ever investment for south west Wales has been secured following the approval of the ground-breaking Swansea Bay City Deal on 20th March 2017.
- The City Deal is worth £1.3 billion deal and will transform the economic landscape of the area, boost the local economy by £1.8 billion, and generate almost 10,000 new jobs over the next 15 years.
- In Swansea, 100,000 square feet of flexible and affordable new office space will be constructed on Kingsway in the city centre for tech businesses as part of a digital village that will benefit from world-class digital infrastructure.
- The City Deal will lead to further property development on the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Waterfront Innovation Quarter in SA1 providing affordable space for start-up firms.
- The City Deal will also support the digitalisation of the 3,500 indoor arena planned for the city centre's Swansea Central development site, as well as the development of a digital square to include digital screens and digital artworks.
- The City Deal will further drive the physical regeneration of the city centre in line with our revised City Centre Strategic Framework – in particular, property development and enhancement and associated transport improvements, delivering enabling infrastructure to support regeneration.
- We want to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the City Deal and regeneration of the city centre by creating employment and training opportunities for unemployed and economically inactive people through community benefit clauses in contracts and delivering employability support services in partnership with other council services and external partners.
- We want a planning policy framework that supports growth and regeneration and ensures that communities have sufficient good quality housing at sustainable locations to meet community needs and support sustainable economic growth.
- We want to take advantage of untapped growth potential to generate sustainable energy, protect the environment and boost the economy, including continuing to lobby the government to approve the Tidal Lagoon.
- We want to take advantage of Swansea's natural, cultural and built assets and infrastructure to develop the economy while protecting the environment and improving well-being.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Prepare and implement a Covid-19 Economic Recovery Strategy.

The Swansea Economic Recovery Action Plan expands on the Council's wider Covid Recovery Plan. It was developed in partnership with Regeneration Swansea (our local economic regeneration partnership) to support the recovery of the local economy from the covid-19 pandemic. It highlights key actions that can support businesses and individuals, improving the resilience of the local economy.

The Plan complements programmes and projects that were already underway pre-COVID 19. It sets out additional actions focusing on raising confidence, supporting businesses, championing local food,

supporting tourism, developing skills and employability for a sustainable economic recovery. It is drawing in funding and resources from Swansea Council, Welsh Government and other partners.

The delivery of actions of initiatives to stimulate economic activity and resilience within Swansea's local economy is ongoing, supported by deployment of the Council's economic recovery fund.

In May 2021 Cabinet agreed that a sum of £20m be set aside to support the economic recovery for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23. This enabled recovery plans to be fully funded and instigated with immediate effect. Applications are considered on merit by the Reshaping Strategy & Budget Board. By April 2022, 84 projects had been approved. These included Local Business Grants, Free Bus Travel - Summer Bus Discounts, Free Outdoor Public space for Hospitality, Sector Support for Tourism and Culture, essential Playground Works, a Pilot Pop Up Energy Advice Centre, and Changing Places facilities.

Case Study: Free bus offer boosts enthusiasm for public transport

Swansea Council provided free bus transport on weekends for everyone in the city during the summer holidays in a bid to help the city recover from the financial impact of the pandemic. It also wanted to encourage more people to consider using buses instead of their car to get around in the future.

A survey completed by the council has shown that many of those who travelled on the free service will use buses again and could lead to an increase in future passenger numbers. More than 450 people took part in the survey and when asked if the free bus offer would encourage them use buses more regularly, more than 75% said they would. Passenger numbers supplied by transport operators to the council for the duration of the offer highlighted 220,000 passengers used the free service in Summer 2021.

The #FreerideSwansea initiative was successfully repeated at important times throughout the year including Christmas and in school holidays.

Lead the preparation of the South West Wales Economic Delivery Plan.

Swansea Council has led on the production of the Regional Economic Delivery Plan (REDP) in collaboration with other authorities in the region and Welsh Government.

The completed REDP is the new strategic framework for economic regeneration at the regional and local level. It sets out how we will build on our distinctive strengths and opportunities over the next ten years to develop a more prosperous and resilient South West Wales economy. The strategy and its accompanying action plan identifies transformational project investment in the region that will attract future funding streams from all levels of government such as the UK government's Shared Prosperity Funding programme. The REDP has a major influence on wider policy development so is critical to ensuring integrated delivery in the future.

Preparation of the REDP included a thorough analysis of the evidence base on the region's economy, labour market and infrastructure to determine its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Extensive consultation was undertaken with stakeholders across the region. Development of the plan also included consideration of national, regional and local policy context including the Well-being of Future Generations Act, decarbonisation and the achievement of net zero by 2050, technological and demographic change and Brexit.

The REDP sets out three 'Ambitions':

- Resilient and sustainable
- Enterprising and ambitious
- Balanced and inclusive

These ambitions are supported by three complementary ‘Missions’, which will guide activity over the next ten years:

- Mission 1 – Establishing South West Wales as a UK leader in renewable energy and the development of a net zero economy: Taking forward the region’s major energy related projects and driving the benefits through the region (via industrial decarbonisation, supply chain opportunities, university-linked innovation, etc.).
- Mission 2 – Building a strong, resilient and embedded business base: Understanding and growing the business stock, supporting widespread social and commercial entrepreneurship, creating stronger supply chain and innovation networks, making public sector support sustainable; driving forward technology adoption and diffusion.
- Mission 3 – Growing and sustaining the ‘experience’ offer: Linking environmental quality, quality of life and community character to create a region that retains and attracts talent and investment, and to promote this consistently and powerfully to the outside world.

The REDP sets out some initial key action areas to deliver against the ambitions and missions. These actions, which include key economic development and infrastructure projects, form the basis of a ‘living’ action plan document that will be regularly reviewed by regional partners and will evolve to embrace new investment proposals as they emerge.

Development of the Plan is now complete and it has been adopted by all four Local Authorities including Swansea Council in January 2022 and the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee in March 2022.

Take advantage of the opportunities presented by the City Deal and continue the regeneration of the city centre and work with partners to implement the City Deal to invest in digital infrastructure and support investment, innovation, growth, jobs, skills and productivity.

In March 2022, the Swansea Bay City Region Deal’s Five Year Anniversary was celebrated at a showcase event attended by investors, partners and business at Parc y Scarlets. Swansea Bay City Region is the only City Deal in Wales not only to have all projects approved and in delivery but to have allocated 99% of funds with £1.296B of the £1.3B assigned.

This year saw approval of the Life Science, Wellbeing and Sports Campuses project, a phased project based on two sites at Singleton and Morriston. The vision is to integrate life sciences, med tech, sport and well-being to transform existing services, drive economic growth contributing an additional £150m to regional GVA, create 1000 to 1200 jobs, and to attract significant inward investment into the region. The £15m City Deal investment will support the delivery of phase 1 of the project collocating commercial, clinical and academic research in a Morriston Hospital centre with access to the site via the M4 and creating 2,000sqm of dedicated research & innovation space within Sketty Lane Sports Park.

The Skills and Talent Programme business plan has been developed and will fund a Skills Barometer project which will identify the skills gaps that exist in the region and identify the new skills required

to meet the existing and future needs of the eight City Deal projects across the five key themes of Construction, Digital, Energy, Health and Well-being and Smart Manufacturing.

The approval of a £55 million Swansea Bay City Deal digital infrastructure project to boost internet connectivity is introducing full-fibre connectivity to the city centre, business parks and across the region. Enabling technology such as 4G Advanced, 5G, Internet of Things (IoT) Digital Innovation Network etc will allow quality digital services to be delivered and accessed over future-proofed fixed line networks or wireless networks.

Case Study: Fast Wi-Fi boost for Copr Bay

Fast and reliable Wi-Fi technology is being introduced in Swansea's emerging new Copr Bay district, letting thousands of people stream content at the same time to their mobile devices. A partnership between Swansea Council and Vodafone will see the free service made available in an area that includes the 1.1-acre coastal park next to Swansea Arena, the new ramp at the former St David's Shopping Centre site that leads to the landmark new bridge over Oystermouth Road and the bridge itself.

The £135m Copr Bay works have continued to make significant visible progress with work completed on the construction of a 3,500 capacity arena alongside the completion of the Copr Bay site. The Ambassador Theatre Group have been awarded the contract to operate the Arena and acts such as Alice Cooper, Rob Brydon, Diversity and Katherine Ryan opened the Arena's programme for 2022. Following a test event profiling local musicians, the first event was held on the 8th March 2022 with high profile names such as John Bishop and Royal Blood performing in sell out shows.

The new bridge over Oystermouth Road, a new MSCP and the 1.1-acre coastal park have also opened to the public. Other components of the scheme, including the residential block, North MSCP, and church hall were all significantly advanced or completed. A digital square featuring digital artworks and ultra-fast internet connection speeds is being developed outside the arena. The Cairn Group have been identified as the preferred bidder for a planned four-star 150 room hotel.

The 12m Kingsway Infrastructure project, enhancing the public realm has been completed. The scheme includes new hard and soft landscaped areas, cycle tracks and a two-way single lane vehicle route along with the creation of wider pedestrian walkways. Significant improvements to the green infrastructure for the city centre includes living walls, landscaped parkland and over 200 new trees. The space gained from development will allow for more public space and improved pedestrian and cycling routes.

Construction work is underway at 71 – 72 Kingsway. This will provide low cost, flexible offices within a high quality commercial environment with high speed broadband and will accommodate Swansea's growing technology businesses and ICT focused businesses expanding from Swansea University and University of Wales Trinity St David incubation facilities. The digital village development is acting as a catalyst for new private sector led development and the refurbishment of further properties on the Kingsway and a new Central Business District in Swansea City by 2023. The new offices will provide space for 600 jobs in the tech, digital and creative sectors, worth £32.6m a year to Swansea's economy once operational. A new link between The Kingsway and Oxford Street also forms part of the scheme improving footfall flow in the City Centre.

These interventions highlight the Council's success in leading the drive for positive change for Swansea City Centre and its key gateways. The initiatives demonstrate a 'town centres first' approach in line with Welsh Government and Audit Wales recommendations.

Swansea Council has an ambitious vision for a city that is a vibrant, 24-hour, living, working and leisure destination. A strong emphasis on lifestyle, environmental consciousness, strong placemaking and digital connectivity make Swansea more attractive than ever, proven by the continued levels of investment coming into the city across all sectors.

Case Study: Swansea has been named one of the UK's top five green cities to invest in.

According to expert-led independent research, Swansea scored excellently in areas including the number of environmentally friendly office buildings. Factors including CO2 emissions and roadside air pollutants were also considered by international banking group BNP Paribas as part of a real estate study called Next X that focussed on environmental data. Swansea is the only Welsh city to feature in the study's top ten environmental scores.

Cllr Rob Stewart, Swansea Council Leader, said: "We are facing a climate crisis so the council and our partners are doing a huge amount of work for Swansea to become a net zero city by 2050. "We also need to create a greener Swansea to attract more private sector investment and employment opportunities which include zero carbon office developments, the introduction of far more greenery across the city, and the installation of more and more charging points for electric vehicles. "This will continue to cut our carbon footprint and make the city more biodiverse, and it will also raise Swansea's profile as a place to invest while opening up jobs for local people. That's why it's so pleasing to be named as one of the UK's top five green cities to invest in."

The historic but derelict Palace Theatre was acquired by the Council both saving a part of Swansea's heritage and acting as a regeneration catalyst for the Upper High Street. Grant funding was secured and design and refurbishment works are underway. The innovative digital workspace will offer a home for growing businesses in the tech, digital and creative sectors. Heads of Terms have already been signed with the lead tenant Tramshed Tech.

Another landmark building, the grade II, 1864 Albert Hall is set for £7m regeneration because of Council support. Loft Co were able to invest in the former music hall due to support securing grant funding and loan funding from the Council via the Town Centre Loan Fund. Plans for a mixed leisure, commercial & residential development are moving forward preserving the architectural profile for future generations. The £8 million restoration and refurbishment of the historic Albert Hall by Loft Co will create an 800-capacity music and entertainment venue, along with dedicated new spaces for lifestyle businesses and offices

Decisions to invest in the regeneration of the City Centre both before and after the pandemic demonstrate confidence in the City's regeneration. The £39.8m student accommodation development opposite the railway station is almost complete. The building will be home to hundreds of students and includes ground floor commercial space. The green wall dominated refurbishment of the Potter's Wheel building has been led by Coastal Housing. While the forthcoming innovative 'living building' led by Swansea based Hacer Developments will feature an urban farm-style greenhouse over four floors, gardens, a courtyard and educational facility as well as residential apartments, shops and offices. Living walls and roofs along with rooftop solar panels and battery storage complete the eco development.

The Shaping Swansea procurement exercise has now been concluded with Urban Splash appointed as the Council's private sector development partner for next phase of strategic site development. The appointment brings new resources and development expertise to the City.

Early ideas for Phase 1 sites have been proposed, and a design concept is in development so local people can their feedback and help shape the plans. To be delivered by the private sector, the early proposals include:

- The transformation of the 23-acre seafront Civic Centre site into a new city waterfront district for Swansea. A mixed-use destination anchored by the beach is proposed, with new homes and a strong leisure and hospitality focus, generous civic spaces and plenty of greenery. Other proposals include a new walkway to the beach and a mix of permanent and seasonal uses and events to create an all-season visitor destination.
- New office buildings, new apartments for residents and shared workspaces on the 5.5-acre Swansea Central North site located at the former St David's Shopping Centre site. Capitalising on the major growth across the UK in demand for craft-based goods, space for small creative businesses to make and sell their products could also feature.
- A residential-led regeneration of a 7.5-acre riverfront site in St Thomas, featuring family homes, apartments, new public spaces and a new terraced river walk providing direct access to the river for the first time in over 150 years.

In acknowledgment of the need to rapidly intervene and manage the contraction of the retail sector in cities due to the economic shocks of Brexit and Covid-19. Swansea Council commissioned Council commissioned Rivington Hark and BDP to review the current retail and leisure offer with the aim of informing and refreshing a high-level city wide masterplan.

The Swansea City Centre Repurposing Strategy proposes to consolidate the Central Area into a Lifestyle Quarter with a greater mix of uses, particularly within the central core of St. David's/Quadrant. The retail circuit is retained and strengthened by consolidating the offer and introducing complementary uses to draw in footfall. A key aim is improving the integration of the city centre with Swansea's residential neighbourhoods and wider infrastructure of cultural and leisure destinations, venues, green spaces and waterfronts, and identifying a 'heart' of the City Centre that celebrates Swansea's distinctiveness and urban legacy.

Four complementary themes update the vision for the city centre's development and regeneration:

- City Centre Mix: Reconfigure the current mix and distribution of uses to incorporate flexible and diverse uses for a mixed economy city core (retail, employment, food and drink, leisure, education, community, and housing).
- Urban Culture: Facilitating events-led tourism and provision of an inclusive, accessible and flexible cultural offer, through linking a series of multi-functional open spaces (existing and proposed), cultural and historical points of interest, and leisure attractions of the city.
- Green Core: Capitalise on the existing network of open and green and blue spaces to create a healthy environment that is also instrumental in mitigating the effects of climate change.
- Accessible and Connected: Creating a 15 minute city of interconnected laneways which are safe, accessible, walkable, and interactive through high-quality placemaking and data-driven digital infrastructure.

The Strategic Objectives of the Swansea City Centre Repurposing Strategy are:

1. Create a Vibrant and Sustainable City Centre Core
2. Change Perceptions and Make Swansea A Destination
3. Enable New Living and Working Opportunities In The City Centre
4. Promote a Healthy, Inclusive and Connected Liveable City

These interventions highlight the Council's success in leading the drive for positive change for Swansea City Centre and its key gateways. The initiatives demonstrate a 'town centres first' approach in line with Welsh Government and Audit Wales recommendations.

Promote and enhance a diverse and sustainable local economy. For example, work collaboratively through the Regeneration Swansea Partnership to progress Swansea's economic regeneration agenda including delivery of the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme, and through the implementation of the local development plan (LDP) that supports the regeneration of Swansea and promotes sustainable communities.

Despite the backdrop of a global pandemic, the council and its partners have relentlessly worked towards the regeneration of the area. The Regeneration Swansea partnership works together to maximise economic benefits from regeneration projects to improve the prosperity of the local area and its people.

The Local Development Plan provides the policy context for the period up to 2025. Its policies promote a clear placemaking agenda which emphasises that future development must accord with the overarching aims of enhancing quality of life and well-being.

Swansea is the regional lead for the South West Wales region 'Placemaking award' accessing funding awards for £6.5m covering the region. The Transforming Towns Placemaking programme builds on the success of the previous Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme (TRIP). The Council has established a dedicated investment and growth team, to increase wider economic and social prosperity and the well-being of all our communities in Swansea. Over £1m of Welsh Government grants (Transforming Towns) has been allocated to local businesses.

An enterprise service supports business starts / self-employment, provides access to funding and sources of advice. Figures for April 2021 to March 2022 show 87 start-up businesses received funding totalling around £80,000 to help cover initial costs such as website design, training courses and equipment. Funding schemes accessed include the Council's Swansea Start-up Grant and the UK Steel Enterprise Start-up Grant. Also run by Swansea Council's business support team is a Swansea Start-up Enterprise Club, which holds monthly workshops with expert speakers to give new businesses skills in areas including social media, employment law and networking.

Small Business Saturday, a UK-wide grassroots campaign that encourages people to support small businesses within their communities was celebrated on December 4th 2021. We have also continued to support local businesses by administering Welsh Government Covid-19 financial support and secured a Kickstart bid from the Department of Work & Pensions offering internal and external work placements.

We aim to make the city more attractive and accessible all year round for pedestrians and shoppers, by encouraging the development of more homes with a mix of tenures, creating new outside dining areas and encouraging independent businesses to set up in Swansea. The Sustainable Living Grant has delivered 97 residential units in the city centre and completed a mixed use development comprising of purpose built student accommodation (780 bedrooms) with ancillary communal

facilities. While the Property Enhancement Development Grant has enhanced 3667m² of commercial space in the city centre.

Funding has been secured for the regeneration of Castle Square with plans for a new Water fountain/jets that enable a flexible use of space, the addition of green space and a range of new cafes and restaurants overlooking the square, this is due to be completed in 2023. In future, commercial units operating within the Square will share an element of responsibility for cleaning / maintenance which will be made clear in agreements. Maintenance costs have also been built into the project budget.

The completion of the £3m Reimagining of Wind Street project has improved the public realm and created a family friendly space. Distinctive new street furniture, seating, paving, lighting and greenery have been added and accessibility improved.

Case Study: Eye-catching road rainbows add colour and vibrancy to Wind Street, Swansea's emerging new all-day destination.

The multi-coloured designs span a newly-laid road being installed as part of the street's Swansea Council-driven regeneration. The 20mph one-way road - accessible only to business traffic (and only then from 7-11am every day) - also features three informal pedestrian crossings complete with tactile kerbsides for those with a disability.

Elliott King, the council's LGBTQ+ champion, said: "Swansea is a welcoming and diverse city. Wind Street will further add to its appeal - and our colourful areas of rainbow road will strengthen this message. "They will reflect the positive messages associated with designs used by those celebrating LGBTQ+ life." Work on the street's £3m upgrade began after businesses and residents had given their views on the area's future. Council engagement with local groups, traders and residents continues.

An investment of over £400,000 has refreshed Swansea market. The work includes new public toilets and a multi-purpose communal area, free public Wi-Fi, new interactive LED signs and improved entrances improvements to Swansea market, including upgrading entrances and the public realm, opened a market garden and the commissioning of art works.

Case Study: Swansea Business Improvement District (BID)

Swansea BID is a private sector led and managed partnership of which Swansea Council is a partner. There are currently over 320 BIDs delivering £136 million investment from their 87,000 businesses/organisations in town and city centres throughout the UK. Swansea BID is one of the older BIDs in the UK and the first in Wales.

As in 2011 and 2016, businesses/organisations voted to renew the Swansea BID and on 25/6/21, Swansea BID successfully secured a Wales record-breaking fourth term ballot with both an overall 77.4% Yes vote and 76.9% based on Rateable Value. The new BID term started on 1st August 2021 and will run over 5 years until 31st July 2026. The role of the BID is to help make the area it operates in a better place to shop, stay, study, visit and do business and it does this using the monies collected through a 1% levy.

Swansea BID operates in the top 20% BIDs in the UK based on its performance and management that is independently asset by national BIDs organisation. Over the last 18 months over 30 new businesses have opened, investing in the City centre and creating new jobs and careers. A range of events, and innovative improvements have taken place and more are planned. Swansea BID is keen

to capitalise on this positivity and collectively shout even louder about what's happening in Swansea City centre.

The Council's renovation of 277-278 Oxford Street (the former BHS building) ensures a large building is not left empty in the heart of the city centre. Instead, Council services which may include the library, archive services or contact centre previously sited at the Civic Centre will sit alongside services offered by other third and public sector services. This approach will ensure residents have easier access to services than ever before and make an important contribution to revitalising the city centre by increasing footfall and encouraging retail and residential investment.

The community hub will provide access to all and provide a range of services in a welcoming environment where people can meet and participate in social activities, learning and support groups. It will aim to promote community cohesion, opportunities for self-development and growth, support digital inclusion, improve well-being and unite and strengthen our diverse community.

The hub will also provide agile accommodation for third, public and private sector companies that endorse the ethos of a community hub. This will allow for flexible, collaborative office space that encourages a coordinated approach in supporting the community in finding and delivering solutions to improve quality of life. The Transforming Towns funding programme includes measures to increase footfall by making sure the public sector locates services in town centre locations, tackle empty buildings and land to help bring them back into use, and greening town centres.

A further public sector hub is anticipated to be sited at Swansea Central North with UK Government Property Agency considering proposals. In the interim, the Site of Hub will be grassed and put to temporary use (commercial units) whilst the final scheme is confirmed.

Works have also commenced on the Kingsway Employment Hub building to construct a major new hightech office development that will provide space for 600 jobs in Swansea city centre. Set for completion in early 2023, the five-storey development will include 114,000 square feet of commercial floorspace, providing flexible co-working and office opportunities for innovative tech, digital and creative businesses

Create employment & training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive through community benefit clauses in contracts.

The Council aims to maximise the value of the Swansea Pound through a range of procurement approaches and the development of the Foundational Economy. Community Benefit clauses are now included in contracts outside of construction, e.g. within our recent domiciliary care tender, to expand the range of opportunities that are available. Commercial Services have worked closely with our Community Benefits team to map the forward work plan in order to ensure appropriate contracts are identified.

We have also taken part in the Welsh Government's pilot to develop the Foundational Economy – Foundations for Local Success and are seeking to develop contracts with local suppliers to supply and install Solar PVs, supply and install Air source heat pumps and to undertake external environmental works. We are directly spending close to £180m direct spend per year in Swansea and the surrounding region and are developing new contract procurement rules to allow direct selection of local suppliers and contractors up to £140k. The WHQS programme contributes significantly towards community benefits

Case Study: Copr Bay boost for jobs and economy

Construction of Swansea's new £135m Copr Bay destination has led to a major boost for local workers and businesses. New figures show over 8,000 person weeks of employment, apprenticeships and trainee placements were secured throughout the build of the new district, which includes Swansea Arena.

Developed by Swansea Council and development managed by RivingtonHark, Copr Bay also includes the 1.1-acre coastal park, the new bridge over Oystermouth Road, new car parking, new apartments and new spaces for food and drink businesses. Buckingham Group Contracting Ltd are main contractors for the scheme, with the arena being part-funded by the £1.3bn Swansea Bay City Deal. The new figures also show a project 41.5% supply chain spend in the Swansea Bay City Region, with 64% of the spend staying in Wales.

This has led to the council's beyond bricks and mortar team beating off competition from the rest of the country to win the social value category at the GO Awards Wales, which celebrate the very best procurement achievements from public, private and third sector organisations.

A Swansea Council regeneration and procurement policy, beyond bricks and mortar ensures community benefits are embedded in all major contracts. This includes ensuring local businesses benefit from supply chain opportunities and working to secure apprenticeship, training and employment places for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive.

Improve, expand and diversify leisure, cultural and heritage facilities and infrastructure to help boost the economy, promote tourism, improve well-being, promote community cohesion and provide economic benefits.

Record number of visits (compared to 2019) to the visitswanseabay.com and increased engagement helped present a positive end to the year for the tourism sector with page views up 56% to 2.7M, Users up 28% to 608K and the number of sessions up 32% to 829K. The website continues to sell more event tickets for major events, Grand Theatre and Brangwyn Hall. Marketing support for events included the successful Christmas Parade and Croeso (St David's Day) event in the city centre. Our Enjoy seasonal campaigns during the period also supported other services and events and continues to be recognised as the Council's day visitor campaign to inform and encourage residents to participate in events and cultural activities. The team is increasingly 'cross sector', supporting the delivery of the city centre Arts Strategy and working with major event providers in readiness for summer 2023, resulting in the development of a new 'event brand' to harness the 3 major sporting events planned for this summer, highlighted below.

A busy Christmas period included a new and refreshed Waterfront Winterland attracting over 150,000 visitors, preceded an equally demanding new year into Q4. Alongside its regular programme of events, community and third sector oversight, including supporting the official Ministerial opening of Copr Bae and the Arena; its first public events and a Royal visit, the Special Events Team took on the management of the Digital Skin around Swansea Arena, requiring significant time and effort to understand its functionality, capability and best use. This asset has already proved popular with visiting artists and social media and will complement the other digital assets which have / are being developed in the city centre and which individually and collectively will be able to provide a fully immersive events experience in the future.

As the restrictions eased through the mid part of Quarter 4, doors were able to reopen safely with reducing restrictions leading to a successful reopening of the Grand Theatre, with strong audience

support. Work has continued in the background on the refurbishment of the Foyer to present a combined Box Office and Coffee/Catering offer, in partnership with Gower Brewery, alongside occupation of key spaces by Race Council Cymru, aiming to diversify usage, and a new production company in residence for the Auditorium and talent development strands – ‘Grand Ambition’. The programming challenges of re-scheduling shows, and lack of availability due to the pandemic disruption will continue to be a challenge through the most part of 22/3. It is anticipated that with good management and physical improvements to the building and the programme offer, recovery will stabilise and will complement the increasingly exciting offer across the city.

As mentioned above, the period saw the return of the popular two day Croeso event, celebrating all things relating to St Davids Day and Welsh culture - with live entertainment once again returning to the city centre, along with a busy Welsh produce market and a parade. In reflection of how the regenerated city centre will need cross sector collaboration, Creative Wales funded the creation of a new Creative Hub for the South West, to be based in Swansea. In collaboration with local businesses and Swansea University, the first phase of this is installed at the former Cranes music store, which the Events team oversaw the repurposing of, as a digital and cultural ‘laboratory’ providing training and engagement for local artists. There are current artist residencies underway with the vision to close the skills gap with our local creative sector and those working in digital realms so that we can fulfil the potential of the new city centre as a creative city going forward. This will be amplified by several ERF projects which are under commission including a mobile stage and the enhancements for the Amphitheatre in Copr Bae, alongside the continuation of support for community events, lettings, and sustained trading and use of outdoor space for covid recovery. We are well placed to secure this with a busy and exciting programme planned for 2022, including the popular Wales Air show, Singleton Park Concerts and some brand new events including Ironman 70.3, which sold out in record time, a Para Sports Festival and the World Para Tri Championships.

Progress on our participation in the ‘Unboxed’ Festival included identifying key buildings and stories in the community for the literature/ history trail in collaboration with Swansea Libraries and similarly, for The World Reimagined, we hosted sponsorship events, artist and community briefings to maximise engagement. We are now in the process of delivering training and resource support for teachers, artists and community groups, agreeing the route and ‘social history’ stories to accompany this public arts trail in future months.

Work with partners to enhance our leisure and cultural facilities such as the partnership with Swansea University for an international sport village and centre of sporting excellence; lifestyle attractions such as Skyline, Gondola & Luge facilities; complete the riverside corridor works; and oversee the management and development of the City Centre evening and night-time economy, including the retention of the Purple Flag, to ensure Swansea is a safe, clean and welcoming place to work and visit.

Substantial progress has also been achieved at the Hafod Copperworks Powerhouse project with shell and core works completion targeted for July 2022. The iconic Musgrave Engine House has been restored and Vivian Engine House repairs are underway. Work has also continued on the 110 year old Bascule Bridge working closely with Cadw.

Work has also continued with Skyline Enterprises who aim to create a gondola attraction with luge tracks, zip lines and visitor facilities on Kilvey Hill. The company has developed proposals, which include improving access and the ecology of the area. Heads of Terms had been signed by the Council and the Skyline board and survey work has made good progress. Although the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in Skyline temporarily stopping all of their projects across the world, Skyline

intend to pursue their proposed development on Kilvey Hill - subject to securing Welsh Government support for their proposal.

Case Study: Council set to continue support of Slip Bridge group

Swansea Council is set to continue working with supporters of the city's Slip Bridge to help them in their wish to bring new life to the structure. The council maintains a capital sum of £139,000 to help facilitate future plans of the Friends of Swansea Slip Bridge. This could include supporting specialist design work commissioned by the Friends. Other funding would be needed to deliver the scheme. Council leader Rob Stewart said: "We're supportive of the group's wish to reinstate the bridge and understand their view that it's important to Swansea's heritage.

"We've supported them in recent years as a source of guidance and we'll support them actively as they work through initial phases of their plan and look for external funding.

"The city's heritage is important to us as can be seen with our work with others to regenerate locations such as the Hafod-Morfa Copperworks, the Palace Theatre building and the Albert Hall." The Slip Bridge was built in 1915 when trains - and later trams - ran along the Oystermouth Road seafront. It helped people safely visit the beach. The span remains a prominent feature nearby as part of the popular seafront cycle route. Its original stone abutments remain and nearby lights-controlled crossings allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross the road safely. The Friends of Swansea Slip Bridge plan includes a replica span in low-maintenance steel, a cafe and new sports facilities for beach visitors.

Work commenced through the quarter with stakeholder engagement to develop a needs assessment and options appraisal by consultants in relation to the Swansea Bay Sports Park at King George V playing fields. This work aligns with our efforts to develop options to improve the site and leisure offer, in partnership with the University, for improved community, performance and student/educational sport, delivered under a single partnership model. Linked to this, work was completed to install a new water-based surface to the lower Hockey pitch at the Sports Park, which is now Olympic standard quality from Tokyo 2020, funded in partnership with Swansea University, Swansea Hockey Club and collaboration Welsh Hockey.

Case Study: City aims to continue flying the flag for nightlife safety

Swansea set to fly the purple flag once again. Swansea's nightlife scene is bidding to keep the Purple Flag flying over the city for an eighth consecutive year.

It's one of only two places in Wales that can fly the flag which highlights how visitors can always expect an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out. Swansea was the first in Wales to achieve the accolade.

Now a partnership of organisations has submitted its bid to maintain Purple Flag status into 2022. The bid highlights a wide range of reasons why the city centre is the place to be now and in the future.

As a national initiative run by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), Purple Flag status rewards vibrant, diverse and safe city centres. The quality mark is the equivalent of Blue Flags for beaches and Green Flags for parks.

Swansea city centre was first awarded the status in 2014 in recognition of the excellence of its evening and night-time economy between 5pm and 5am.

The new bid points to success stories such as new business openings, safety campaigns and the Enjoy Swansea Responsibly campaign to reinforce key Covid safety measures.

Forthcoming projects to strengthen Purple Flag status are set to include further regeneration, including the opening of Swansea Arena, extending the city centre ranger service into the evening and night-time economy and implementing a public space protection order (PSPO).

Partners involved in the management of Swansea's evening and night-time economy include Swansea Council, Swansea BID (Business Improvement District), South Wales Police, Swansea Street Pastors, St John Ambulance, Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, many city centre businesses, Swansea Bay University Health Board and several local developers.

Cllr Robert Francis-Davies, the council's cabinet member for investment, regeneration and tourism, said: "Swansea city centre is a vibrant and viable place that keeps visitors coming back for more. Our £1bn regeneration programme will strengthen its appeal.

"Great initiatives by our evening and night-time economy partnership have a chance to flourish so everyone has a great time out in a safe environment.

"We're very optimistic about retaining Purple Flag status though achieving this quality mark is no easy ride; the partnership has worked hard on keeping people safe right through the pandemic - and will continue to do so."

Examples of city centre improvements introduced in recent years include a medical help point on The Strand dealing with injuries and those at risk from intoxication and a drop-off point on The Strand providing a vehicle drop-off and visitor meet-and-greet service. A Safe Spaces scheme offers customers information and support to help deal with vulnerability. Best Bar None now has 24 premises accredited for customer service standards.

The council has transformed The Kingsway into a greener, pedestrian-friendly destination, is developing Wind Street into an all-day hospitality quarter and plans to improve Castle Square with new greenery and other reasons to visit.

The Purple Flag partners will find out later this year whether or not the city has retained its Purple Flag.

Russell Greenslade, chief executive of Swansea BID (Business Improvement District), said: "The Purple Flag is a mark of the hard work our city centre hospitality and night-time businesses do to ensure a safe and enjoyable night out; we're pleased to play our part in this as Swansea BID.

"As a BID we've just invested in extra night marshals, to help things run smoothly as our students return to Swansea, as well as safeguarding and cleansing teams previously.

"We're happy to manage and deliver the Best Bar None scheme, that helps improve standards through a combination of responsible management, ongoing improvements, and social responsibility.

"We're also offering, with our Gower College Swansea partners, free training courses for workforces in BID area. We hope these initiatives help the city to retain its Purple Flag."

Build on the legacy of Swansea's bid to be UK City of Culture by delivering the City Centre Arts Strategy and implementing the outcomes of our participation in the Culture 21 European Pilot programme by embedding the nine policy commitments for Culture in Sustainable Cities and the Diversity Pledge for Culture.

This year has presented unprecedented challenges for the Leisure and Cultural sector. During the pandemic our museum, galleries and libraries developed innovative ways of working to engage with a wide range of audiences, providing on-line events and materials, whilst maintaining sites and collections. Our online content has included the development of weekly on-line programmes, lectures, storytelling, looking back at past exhibitions, conservation, future exhibition planning and selecting favourite objects from the collection through videos, tweets and images. We have also facilitated a number of on-line workshops and events and joined local, national and international partners to explore and celebrate cultural icons and themes. This year we continued to support LGBT history month, Black history month and Interfaith Week by hosting a series of online events, talks and workshops.

Our work for the European Pilot programme 'Agenda21: Culture in Sustainable Cities' resulted in the realisation of a partnership with Race Council Cymru to create a new multi-cultural and digital Hub in the Arts Wing of the Grand Theatre, and the commitment to Diversity in the service through a 'Pledge'. The pledge to diversify and recognise all our communities in our cultural programming also set the framework for a review, undertaken by the service, into the city's street and place names, monuments, statues and other commemorations, in response to the Black Lives Matter campaign and subsequent Council motion.

Case Study: World Reimagined Comes to Swansea

UK-wide arts education project featuring globally-recognised artists came to Swansea to transform how we understand the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its impact on us all.

Launched in May 2021, The World Reimagined is a UK-wide art education project that works to transform our understanding of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its impact on all of us to help us make racial justice a reality.

1m+ people will engage with sculpture trails in host cities, which will include Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, London and Swansea, with more to be announced

Participating artists and icons include 2004 Turner Prize nominee and The World Reimagined's Founding Artist Yinka Shonibare CBE, as well as Lina Viktor; Zak Ové; Sir Trevor McDonald; Lakwena Maciver; Maxim (The Prodigy); Nicola Green and Kimathi Donkor.

Swansea acted as a host city for this ambitious project, which will see communities across the UK collaborate and explore a range of themes and cultural influences. These themes will unite participants and audiences to positively understand our cultural influences, and celebrate the present and future opportunities for us all, through a deeper understanding of history and what connects us as communities.

Michelle Gayle, co-founder of The World Reimagined, said:

"If we're going to make racial justice a reality for all, it calls on us to courageously face our shared history with honesty, empathy and grace. If we do that, we can create a future in which everyone can say I'm seen. That's the mission of The World Reimagined and we're so delighted to work with the people and communities of Swansea."

Swansea Council leader Rob Stewart said:

"Swansea is a welcoming city that thrives on diversity. We're delighted to be partners with the The World Reimagined project.

"We'll help to create many opportunities for communities, schools, colleges, local organisations and artists to get involved - as leaders and facilitators, participants, practitioners, audiences and beneficiaries.

"Our local activity will involve widespread collaboration to create a unique arts trail across the city and its communities."

Continue to improve and develop our Leisure facilities in partnership with our delivery partners Freedom Leisure and Parkwood, and secure the of our 'in house' Cultural services developing strategies for investment and innovative delivery models for Special Events, Libraries, Archives, Theatres, Galleries and Museums.

Close monitoring enables the Council to support partner operators of key Council facilities. The leisure Partnerships Annual Report 2020/2021 reported to Cabinet in March 2022 describes how close relationships across a mixed economy enables flexible performance management and the sharing of best practice resulting in better services for citizens. The pandemic continued to impact leisure services but this collaborative approach has ensured safe quality provision of activities essential to well-being.

Project milestones continuing to be delivered within the Cefn Hengoed 3G Barn and improved Community Leisure and PE facilities, with a preferred bidder identified, increased Capital investment and overwhelming support from Cabinet in March, with a final request for funding from the Football Foundation due in mid to late April.

Continued restrictions on numbers for participant activity across leisure centres prolonged the challenges faced by these venues. This, as well as a high Covid rate in the community and general reduction in customer confidence impacted the bottom line in terms of income and new membership sales across the post-Christmas period, which will impact into the early part of 2022/23. Community sites performed stronger than city centre attractions such as the LC in terms of gym membership, and this is also contributed to factors such as continued working from home and the significant city centre developments which impacted on access and parking. Late into the quarter the new Arena car parks opened and this addition, along with completed walkways to the Waterfront from the Arena should benefit the LC in terms of parking availability and general access.

Freedom Leisure's investment into these facilities continued through Q3, with significant plans for both Penlan and the LC, including installing Hypolyser electronic chlorination, offering a safer, cleaner and more environmentally friendly way to chlorinate the pools. Mitigation measures such as this will prepare the facilities to be more sustainable moving forward, with shortages of chlorine across the world, and significant cost increases, the investment is now seen as critical. Energy prices continue to concern leisure facilities that have high gas and electricity consumption, and whilst mitigation has already been invested to reduce energy, the unit rate inflation presents a significant risk to the operational costs, and a range of further models of mitigation and investment are being developed by Freedom Leisure to present to the Council in due course.

Progress strategic housing and mixed development sites to meet housing need and provide employment.

The Council's More Homes Programme, focussed on providing new build Council housing, is looking to a 10 year delivery ambition of 1000 new affordable homes. Following the completion of 34 homes in 2020/21, work is continuing on 25 homes on Hill View Crescent in Clase, which is due for completion in Spring 2022. This scheme has also been awarded £1.5m of Innovative Housing Funding, which will fund the renewable technologies to continue the Homes as Power Stations theme.

As part of the Welsh Government Phase 2 planning for homelessness, the Council has also developed 8 one bedroom homes at a former Education site in Uplands. The conversion of the existing building has been completed and is now occupied, and the 4 off site-manufactured pods will be ready for occupation in April 2022. A further 20 x1 bedroom acquisitions are planned for 22/23, as well as 6 acquisitions utilising Integrated Care Fund (ICF). Work has also started at West Cross, to develop 6 bungalows, which has also been awarded IHP funding to include the additional renewable technologies.

A planning application has been approved to convert a former social services property in Gorseinon into 2 x 3 bedroom homes, and work is due to start in July. The former Education site at Brondeg House has also been acquired to develop for affordable housing, and the existing building will be demolished to make way for new affordable housing. Cabinet has approved the appropriation of 3 sites from the General Fund to develop for affordable housing, and concept plans are now being developed for these sites. The demolition of the former Clase DHO has now been completed, as part of the Creswell Road development of 9 new homes.

The Council is also progressing the procurement of a development partner or partners to deliver mixed tenure housing on 2 Council owned sites in Penderry, whilst maximising the delivery of affordable housing to meet local need. The Council has also procured a multi-disciplinary team to deliver a masterplan for the regeneration of a large Housing owned site. This work is progressing however the timeframe has been extended as the planned resident consultation events, site visits and surveys were delayed due to Covid. The Council has also appointing a multi-disciplinary team to develop a masterplan for 4 x sites in close proximity, which should achieve planning application stage by the end of 2022.

Protect and promote the health, wellbeing, safety and consumer interests of people living in or visiting Swansea by working with others to maintain public safety across the range of regulatory services such as pollution, scams and unfair trading, public health and housing issues, etc.

Public protection teams continue to be under pressure due to additional responsibilities as a result of the pandemic. Enforcement officers have helped businesses ensure the safety of their staff and customers and taken action against irresponsible traders placing the public at risk.

However the teams continue to protect the public from changing and increasingly digital threats. Trading Standards took a proactive approach alerting the public to scams relating to topical issues like coronavirus, deliveries and the census. The Council is building a library of scams with Trading Standard. These are communicated to the public via social media and via the Councils Communication Team. A phishing campaign and training aims to make more people aware and help counter the issue. Use of social media to educate the public has increased with viral campaigns like 'the 12 Scams of Christmas' raising awareness as well as traditional alerts warning of doorstep fraud etc.

Swansea Council's fraud detection team detects people trying to abuse the system by claiming money or council services they are not entitled to. Last year there was a continuing high demand for the service, with hundreds of new fraud allegations made to the council. These ranged from organised fraudsters trying to swindle the council out of pandemic grants and other business grants, to those fraudulently claiming benefits or council tax relief or abusing the blue badge disability parking system. In total 49 grant cases were subject to detailed investigations in the last financial year which resulted in a dozen applications for grants being rejected, amounting to a £27,000 saving. A total of 379 cases of potential fraud were reported to the council in 2021/22, an increase from 302 the year before. Increases in cases were seen cases of alleged benefit fraud, council tax, social housing, and blue badge fraud. Of these allegations a total of 72 are currently either being actively investigated or still being evaluated for further action.

As well as carrying out test purchases of food items, the Council's Food Safety Team regularly works with businesses, conducting inspections of premises to ensure food preparation and storage meet national food hygiene standards. Trading Standards inspections of retail stores resulted in action being taken against stores selling expired foods. Since lockdown, consumers have increased their use of takeaway businesses so test purchasing was undertaken to ensure regulations keeping consumers safe were applied. Four businesses were fined as a result of selling undeclared allergens.

Case Study: City centre about to become an even more welcoming destination

New anti-social behaviour rules help Swansea city centre become a more welcoming place to live in, work in and visit. From December 2021, a city centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) will apply to behaviour such as drug-taking and drunkenness - and everybody will be asked to comply.

People who are vulnerable due to circumstances such as homelessness will be treated sensitively; housing and outreach services will be involved. The PSPO - part of a broader and coordinated Swansea approach to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and street vulnerability - is designed to boost the city centre which is already being improved. The PSPO - which had widespread public support in a recent consultation - means that alcohol and drugs being consumed on the streets can be confiscated before the situation becomes a problem. Fixed penalty notices can be issued for ASB such as swearing and aggression. Other action could also be taken to deal with persistent troublemakers.

December 1 was the start of a three-month PSPO trial in areas currently patrolled by the city centre rangers plus the Marina and Copr Bay coastal park with 120 engagements taking place. Initially no enforcement action is taking place - just a chance for the public to learn all about the scheme. If successful, PSPOs could be introduced in areas such as SA1, Swansea Beach and the centre of Morriston.

Robert Francis-Davies, the council cabinet member for investment, regeneration and tourism, said: "People are fed up with anti-social behaviour and want something done about it - the PSPO scheme will help address the issue. People should not feel intimidated or threatened by anti-social behaviour. The PSPO will also enable the rangers to tackle "professional" beggars who are known to target the area to solicit money from the public under false pretences.

Public protection teams continued to be under pressure in 2021/22 due to additional responsibilities as a result of the pandemic. However the teams continued to deliver services in accordance with regulation and perceived public risk protect the public from changing and increasingly digital threats. The Council is building a library of scams with Trading Standard. These are communicated to the public via social media and via the Councils Communication Team. A phishing campaign and training will be provided that will make more people aware and help counter the issue. It was recognised that some people do not like to do transactions online because of their concerns over safety and security.

Following adoption of the Climate Change Charter by Council in November 2020, deliver the Energy Strategy to reduce costs, provide cheaper energy and reduce our carbon footprint such as work with others to provide sustainable and low carbon transport and infrastructure providing improved and cheaper connectivity and mobility and associated economic benefits at reduced environmental cost and improved air quality.

A report was provided to Cabinet in November 2021 listing progress following the Councils 'Climate Emergency Declaration'. The report outlines that governance has been formalised both internally and externally with partners, including PSB (Public Service Boards) and regular programme boards and steering group meetings have ensured good progress throughout the last year. As part of the regional agenda the Council worked with three other local authorities to develop a new regional energy strategy, which was approved by cabinet in December. The report describes how the council will continue to build on the external working relationships to develop a 2050 net zero carbon strategy for the county. The report also outlines that a task and finish group has been established to bring together all the work currently being undertaken across the Highways and Transportation service area to develop various strategies, including Green Fleet (strategy already approved), Grey Fleet, Street Lighting, other transportation e.g. taxi, schools etc. and Active travel. The proposed approach will have specific strategies for all areas, and then a brief overarching document aligning the service wide approach to a Sustainable Transport Strategy. The report outlined further areas for

development and action, including an Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles strategy and the overarching Sustainable Transport Strategy by March 2022.

Case Study: Green light for regional energy and economic development vision

Regional plans and strategies aimed at boosting economic prosperity while helping South West Wales reach its net-zero energy targets have now been given the green light.

The plans and strategies were approved by the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales at a meeting on Tuesday March 15 2022.

Covering Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea, the regional economic delivery plan aims to build on a major study that's identified regional strengths and opportunities. These include its green energy potential, strong cultural identity, stunning scenery, quality of life and well-established links between universities and industry.

Based on these strengths and opportunities, the plan includes a series of actions and interventions on how to best develop the region's economy over the next decade. It also sets out how businesses, government, education, voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and other partners can best work together to realise the aims of the plan.

Cllr Rob Stewart, Chairman of the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales, said: "It's been eight years since the Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy was created, and the economic and policy context has changed so much since then, especially in the wake of Brexit and the impact of the pandemic.

"This means a new plan is now needed if we're to make the most of South West Wales' strengths and opportunities, maximise the region's potential and further close the productivity gap with other, more affluent parts of the UK.

"A huge amount of regeneration is already either complete, on-going or planned in South West Wales, so this plan will build on that work to create even more well-paid jobs and opportunities for local people, while attracting further investment. This will help develop a more resilient, sustainable, enterprising and balanced regional economy for the benefit of our residents and businesses."

Also approved at the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales is a regional energy strategic vision, which responds to the challenges and opportunities created by climate change, carbon reduction goals and the green industrial revolution.

Including actions to help South West Wales achieve its net-zero target by 2050, the strategic vision places particular focus on a number of key areas. These include energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, distribution of heat, decarbonisation of transport, local energy generation and ownership, and smart energy.

Cllr David Simpson, Pembrokeshire Council Leader, said: "This strategic vision follows-on from so much work that's already on-going in South West Wales to decarbonise our energy and contribute to the global fight against climate change.

"The strategy will harness our region's low carbon energy potential, both on-shore and off-shore, to deliver a more prosperous and equitable net-zero carbon economy that better protects our environment and leaves a more sustainable region for future generations.

"It will also help quicken the pace of realising our 2050 net-zero target here in South West Wales."

Formally constituted in January 2022, the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales includes the Leaders of Carmarthenshire Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, Pembrokeshire Council and Swansea Council, as well as senior representatives of The Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire National Park authorities.

Introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, it's one of four such bodies being established in Wales.

Manage and protect Swansea's green spaces, coastline and parks for recreation and play, to promote health and well-being, improved bathing water quality and maintain Blue Flag status at Swansea's beaches to encourage tourism, protect the environment and support well-being.

Over 50% of the County's area is identified as being of significant ecological interest. Nearly 70% of the habitats and at least 20% of species identified as being of importance for biodiversity conservation in the UK can be found in the County, and approximately 17% of the County's area is protected by designations at a European (SAC, SPA, RAMSAR) or National (SSSI, NNR) level. 5.2 The landscape is of critical importance within the County, as it provides a striking setting for the City and at least 40% of the County (the Gower AONB) is recognised as being landscape of national importance. Most of the AONB coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast which extends for 59km. Gower attracts large numbers of visitors and tourism is very important for the local economy.

CEEQUAL is the World leading sustainability assessment, rating and awards scheme for civil engineering, infrastructure, landscaping and public realm projects. The BRE Academy have verified and ratified that Kingsway Urban Park has achieved the CEEQUAL award. The County supports an extensive greenspace network, which is vital to economic, environmental and community well-being, and additional green infrastructure is needed to meet national guidance and local requirements for improving accessibility to open space. In particular improvements to linkages between open spaces, public rights of way and key destinations are needed to increase accessibility and promote physical activity.

Caswell Bay, Langland Bay and Port Eynon have all been awarded the prestigious international Blue Flag status for 2021. Swansea Marina has also retained its status as one of the few Blue Flag Marinas in Wales. While Bracelet Bay has also received the coveted Green Coast Award in recognition of its untouched and rugged beauty. The award replaces the Blue Flag award but visitors can be assured that the beach and the water quality at Bracelet Bay are still of Blue Flag quality.

Our efforts to make Caswell Bay more accessible has been recognised at the Celebrating Rural Wales Awards. Our Changing Places unit was one of five shortlisted in the Food and Tourism category and was praised by Rural Affairs Minister, Lesley Griffiths. We've also secured Welsh Government funding for another two Changing Places units in Mumbles and Rhossili.

Demand for services such as beach huts continued to increase post pandemic with around 1000 applications for less than 80 available seasonal beach huts. The Swansea Bay Strategy is currently being revised to update the existing 2008 document, this focuses on strategic locations on the foreshore.

The Green Flag Award programme is delivered in Wales by environmental charity Keep Wales Tidy, with support from Welsh Government. Sites are judged against eight strict criteria, including biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental management and community involvement. A total of 13 'community awards' have also been given to smaller community based gardens and green spaces, including two new winners - Clydach Community Garden and Blaenymaes Community Garden.

In Swansea, the Council's Clyne Gardens, Singleton Botanical Gardens, Brynmill Park, Parc Llewelyn, Cwmdonkin Park and Victoria Park have all gained the prestigious flag status. Our efforts to make Caswell Bay more accessible has been recognised at the Celebrating Rural Wales Awards. Our Changing Places unit was one of five shortlisted in the Food and Tourism category and was praised by Rural Affairs Minister, Lesley Griffiths. We've also secured Welsh Government funding for another two Changing Places units in Mumbles and Rhossili.

Case Study: Green flag awarded to Swansea parks

Six of Swansea's main parks have been awarded Green Flag status, recognising the vital role they play in boosting residents' wellbeing and improving the natural environment.

Clyne Gardens, Singleton Botanical Gardens, Brynmill Park, Parc Llewelyn, Cwmdonkin Park and Victoria Park have all gained the prestigious flag status.

All the parks are managed by Swansea Council and welcome thousands of visitors each year.

The Green Flag Award programme is delivered in Wales by environmental charity Keep Wales Tidy, with support from Welsh Government. Sites are judged against eight strict criteria, including biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental management and community involvement.

Swansea's parks are some of the 265 parks and green spaces across Wales to achieve the award.

Robert Francis Davies, Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism, said: "Our city is blessed with some beautiful parks which we are proud of and work hard to maintain.

"They all provide a space where families and visitors can relax, have fun and enjoy the outdoors. I'm thrilled that these locations have been recognised on a national level."

Two more Green Flag Awards have also been given to Swansea University Singleton Campus and Penllergare Valley Woods.

And a total of 14 'community awards' have also been given to smaller community based gardens and green spaces in Swansea, including Clydach Community Garden, Polly's Park in St Thomas and Coedbach Park.

Work in partnership with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and the three other regional Councils to develop a Metro solution which will improve connectivity to, and across the City and the wider region.

Early ideas on potential rail and bus service improvements for passengers throughout the Swansea Bay City Region have been discussed. A presentation from regional local authority heads of transport covered aspirations for the future as well as current transport projects being delivered in Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea. The presentation, which was given at the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales, will help prepare for the development of a regional transport plan once the early ideas have been further explored and detailed guidance from the Welsh Government is made available later this year. Further partnership work with the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and transport providers would also take place to identify transport priorities for the region. When it's developed in detail, opportunities will be made available for local people, local businesses and other organisations across South West Wales to give feedback and help shape the regional transport plan which - subject to approval - would enable bids for funding. As well as improving rail and bus services, priorities could include further decarbonising the public transport fleet, introducing more electric vehicle charging points, and creating even more high-quality cycling and walking routes. This would help tackle climate change by further cutting the region's carbon footprint.

Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro proposals were also discussed at the meeting. Subject to approvals, funding and consultation, they include potential new railway stations at several communities in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, which could follow-on from current work to re-open the railway station at St Clears in Carmarthenshire. Station improvements are also proposed as part of the metro vision for Neath, Swansea, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Whitland, Haverfordwest and Milford Haven, along with more frequent trains to better connect Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire with Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and beyond. Other metro aspirations include improved and better-connected bus routes in many parts of the region, both rural and urban. The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee is aimed at further driving economic prosperity across the region. It's made up of the Leaders of Carmarthenshire Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, Pembrokeshire

Council and Swansea Council, as well as senior representatives of the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire National Park Authorities

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

- Regional Economic Delivery Plan - Lead implementation of South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan in Swansea and associated work packages and funding streams such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government sources.
- Diverse and sustainable local economy - Promote and enhance a diverse and sustainable local economy through strong local networks such as the Regeneration Swansea Partnership, development partner Urban Splash and leisure delivery partners Freedom Leisure and Parkwood, to progress Swansea's economic regeneration and cultural agendas including delivery of the Welsh Government Transforming Towns programme, Creative Wales, and through the implementation of the Local Development Plan (LDP) that supports the regeneration of Swansea and promotes sustainable communities underpinned by sustainable transport connectivity.
- Community Benefit clauses - Create employment & training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive through community benefit clauses in contracts.
- Business support - Leverage of support, advice and funding for new start-up businesses and our existing business stock through Business Swansea and working with Welsh Government to continue to innovate support programmes such as commercial meanwhile uses, and other support interventions in City Centre and District and Local Centres.
- Creative Network - Continue to work through strong and resilient Creative Network to support both existing, under development and future fabric of cultural and leisure assets embedded across the City Centre and District and local centres.
- Housing - Progress strategic housing and mixed development sites to meet housing need and provide employment.
- Public protection - Protect and promote the health, wellbeing, safety and consumer interests of people living in or visiting Swansea by working with others to maintain public safety across the range of regulatory services such as pollution, scams and unfair trading, public health and housing issues, etc.

4. Conclusion - the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

A review of the evidence in relation to whether the Council is exercising its functions effectively in relation to its Economy & Infrastructure priority suggests that it is owning its ambition.

<i>Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Natural Resources & Biodiversity</i>				x	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a 'business as usual' mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

There has been significant visible progress on Swansea Council's major regeneration and infrastructure projects despite a challenging period. The Council continues to commit significant resource to the delivery of its regeneration priorities and visible results are currently being delivered on site. This focus has not only ensures the Council's long term strategic intent is realised but the city is appropriately supported to emerge from a difficult period, stronger and more resilient to future shocks.

Developments are largely on programme and are providing the catalyst for future investment by the private sector. This is evidenced by the recent appointment of a long term development partner to deliver future phases of regeneration via the Shaping Swansea procurement project. Work has commenced on the design stages of the first phase of projects.

In addition, strategy development work has identified projects, interventions and initiatives for the future, ensuring momentum will be maintained in the future with this priority. The REDP is already being used to leverage funding to take forward the next stage of Swansea's regeneration building on the strong foundation work accomplished over the last year.

Overall performance outcomes are largely positive. Although some indicators are showing downward trends, relevant, explanatory comments have been provided based on the specific circumstances prevailing. The Council is demonstratively exercising its functions effectively in relation to Economy and Infrastructure.

Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.

Swansea Council is maximising its contribution to its Well-being Objectives and National Goals.

- *A prosperous Wales* – Implementing the City Deal with partners to invest in digital infrastructure and support investment, innovation, growth, jobs, skills and productivity. Building sustainable development principles into the re-development of the city centre by incorporating requirements for resource efficiency (waste and energy), renewables, enhancing biodiversity / green infrastructure and the sustainable use of natural resources that support a productive and low carbon economy and adapt / mitigate for climate change. Maximising benefits from grant funding applications.
- *A Resilient Wales* – Promoting the 'Green Economy' including renewable energy to provide energy security, climate change mitigation and economic benefits. Promotion of green infrastructure methods in developments.
- *A Healthier Wales* – Promoting biodiversity and protecting Swansea's green spaces, including parks for recreation and play and to promote health and well-being. Managing Swansea's coastline and promoting improved drinking water quality and Blue Flag status to encourage tourism, protect the environment and support well-being.
- *A more Equal Wales* – Creating employment and training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive through community benefit clauses in Council contracts.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – Giving priority to providing affordable housing.
- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – Improving, expanding and diversifying leisure, cultural and heritage facilities and infrastructure to help boost the economy, promote tourism and improve well-being.

- *A globally responsible Wales* – Building sustainable development principles into the redevelopment of the city centre particularly around resource efficiency and the sustainable use of natural resources contributes to a low carbon economy and adapt / mitigate for climate change. Encouraging grant applicants to adopt green infrastructure measures in building refurbishments.

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The Council is working to maximise its contribution to the national well-being goals when meeting its Economy and Infrastructure well-being objective:

- *Addressing long term challenges or trends* - The Council is working regionally, leading the production of a Regional Economic Delivery Plan (REDP) for South West Wales. The REDP is an evidence based long term framework for addressing the challenges and maximising the opportunities. The REDP has now been adopted by all 4 authorities and the CJC and will form the basis for programmes, projects and funding bids going forward.
- *Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse* - A repurposing strategy has been prepared to tackle and help reverse the Covid related impact of changes to the retail sector in the City Centre. The strategy has now been approved by Cabinet and projects are under development.
- *Integration – joining things up and avoiding duplication / conflicting priorities* - A Covid economic recovery strategy has been prepared with stakeholders via the Regeneration Swansea Partnership to ensure joined up delivery of a range of priorities. Funding has been deployed via the Council's Economic Recovery Fund. Significant progress has been made in the delivery of the action plan via the Council and stakeholders on the Regeneration Swansea Partnership.
- *Involving people* - including the public, service users and stakeholders: A Covid economic recovery strategy has been prepared with stakeholders via the Regeneration Swansea Partnership to ensure joined up delivery of a range of priorities. All major projects involve a diversity of citizens from the earliest stage and use input to improve development.
- *Working in partnership and collaborating with other organisations:* The Council is leading the regional coordination of the Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme, delivering locally in partnership with private sector organisations. Discussions are underway to roll out this approach to regional delivery to other funding opportunities.

Tackling Poverty

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what success will look like

- Swansea Council is committed to reducing poverty and the impacts that poverty has upon its residents. Poverty limits aspirations, damages relationships and ensures a loss of life chances.
- We want a Swansea where having poverty is not a barrier to doing well at school, having a healthy and vibrant life, developing skills and qualifications and having a good job and income.
- We want to challenge inadequate access to necessary services of good quality by targeting resources where they have the most effect, with decisions about that made in conjunction with service users.
- We want all of our residents to have the opportunity and resources to join in with social, cultural and leisure activities and decision-making.
- We want people to maximise their income and get the most out of the money that they have.
- We want people to avoid paying the 'Poverty Premium', the extra costs people on low incomes must pay for essentials such as fuel and transport.
- We want to ensure removal of barriers to employment such as transport and childcare.
- We want to ensure inclusion of people from Swansea's most disadvantaged communities so that we reduce inequalities between and within communities.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Provide a joint and holistic response to poverty, population health and homelessness during the Council's COVID-19 response and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to the Council, its services and the workforce. In terms of responding to the immediate challenges of the pandemic a number of non-essential services were suspended in order to redeploy resources and refocus services to areas where they were most needed. Since the start of the pandemic, the Council has transformed the way it has worked developing a joint and holistic response to the pandemic during the recovery phase.

Working with Health and other partners, the Council responded to the immediate priorities presented by the pandemic in our hospitals, care homes, schools and our communities. We established a help line to provide daily support to thousands of people, re-focused Social Services to care for the most vulnerable people, constructed a new field hospital, procured PPE across the region, established food hubs and supported food banks, distributed food parcels and provided hot meals to vulnerable people, provided financial assistance to businesses across the region and secured additional emergency accommodation. We also established a Track, Trace and Protect service, supported the preparations for mass vaccinations and enforced Welsh Government regulations to ensure people were safe.

Our holistic and joint response to the immediate priorities presented by the pandemic, was only made possible by the re-focusing and re-deployment of staff, improved joint working between departments within the Council and working together with our partners and volunteers in our communities. For example, hundreds of Council staff employees were re-deployed into crisis response roles such as the COVID-19 helpline, the food administration team, and the Local Area Coordination team. Departments within the Council such as Education and Social Services improved

joint working through the development of shared criteria and understanding vulnerability with a Single Point of Contact in relation to vulnerable children accessing on site provision. Working with our Third Sector partners and hundreds of volunteers we established food distribution centres, delivered emergency food parcels and provided temporary accommodation to those households who would not normally be in priority need.

During 2021/22, we distributed over £293k to 97 projects via the Food Poverty Grant, Period Dignity in Communities Grant, the Household Support Grant and Men's Shed's funding to address poverty and social isolation. Partnership working and collaboration has been strong and has been demonstrated by the development of new partnership initiatives, such as a Fuel Poverty Voucher Scheme with Citizens Advice, a Community Calling Project with Hubbub, O2 and SCVS, a Community Coordination Programme with the Children's Society and various partners across Swansea and supported the launch of the 'Hope in Swansea' App led by Matthew's House.

Case study 1: Community Calling

Swansea Council and Swansea Council for Voluntary Service have supported the development of a Community Calling campaign run by Hubbub and O2. Around 700 donated phones have been distributed to people in Swansea who were digitally excluded, by O2 providing 12 months of free data and unlimited calls and texts.

So far, around 500 residents in Swansea have benefited from the project. The phones have been used by people to help stay connected with friends and support services, to look for jobs and training, access to English language courses online and access to other services such as online banking and health appointment.

The phones have been distributed through a referral process to SCVS with current referral partners including Swansea YMCA, Swansea Tenancy Support Unit, Hafal, Pobl, Swansea Asylum Seekers Support, Platform, Matthew's House, Family Housing Association, Women's Aid Swansea, Action for Children, the Wallich, the council's Employability Service, Swansea Working and the Council's Local Area Coordinators.

Case study 2: The Hope in Swansea App

The Hope in Swansea App was launched in August 2021. It is a free smartphone app which signposts users to a range of essential support services in relation to housing, mental health, food poverty, isolation, abuse, addiction and other issue people faces in a crisis. It was founded by Matthew's House and funded with support from Swansea Council, the Children's Society and the Friends of Matthew's House scheme. The App contains the details of more than 60 service providers and is a one-stop directory of services which includes information includes about local services, locations, opening times and emergency contacts. Local providers can register and upload or change their details for free aiming to ensure that the details are always up to date and relevant. The App is also designed for professionals, local volunteers and anyone who comes across someone on the street needing help.

Case study 3: Bed promise for rough sleepers in Swansea

Every rough sleeper in Swansea was offered a bed if they want one, the Council pledged. The long-standing promise was repeated in November 2021 to vulnerable people living in the city as the winter nights got colder and was boosted with another £370,000 of support. The place to sleep

promise was delivered by the council alongside local charities, health services and housing associations.

And it came as the number of people sleeping rough in Swansea had reduced to its lowest level on record during the pandemic. Although there were considerable challenges ahead, the Council pledged to continue the effort put in to support rough sleepers through the pandemic and help them stay safe and healthy.

Cllr Andrea Lewis, Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Service Transformation in 2021/22, said that extra funding from Welsh Government during the pandemic had helped the council speed-up its work to safeguard rough sleepers.

She said: "Our pledge is that there is a bed for anyone who needs one. Alongside our partners, we are getting the message out to rough sleepers that no matter how vulnerable they may feel, there is a bed available for them.

"Thanks to support from the Welsh Government and strong partnership working between local charities, health, housing associations and private sector providers, anyone found sleeping rough has been and will continue to be offered accommodation and the necessary support to maintain their accommodation

"Since the start of the pandemic we helped more than 400 single homeless people out of temporary accommodation and either into supported housing or a permanent home of their own.

"The extra funding of £370,000 from the council's budget means we can keep people safe from sleeping on the streets and provide help to access more permanent housing solutions."

As part of the council's homelessness strategy, services have been expanded at the Ty Tom Jones temporary supported housing service, which is currently delivered by The Wallich charity and supported by Pobl Housing and the Council.

Cllr Lewis said: "The award-winning Ty Tom Jones has been a real success story over the last year in supporting rough sleepers and single homeless people through the pandemic.

"Our aim is to make it part of a rapid rehousing programme that will help encourage hard-to-reach rough sleepers and single homeless people get the support they need by increasing the health, social, psychological and other wellbeing services on offer there.

"Before the pandemic hit the Council was already working hard to end rough sleeping. The further funding has enabled us to build on the success of what's been achieved with our partners, resulting in a reduction in rough sleeping in Swansea, to the lowest on record in the last 12 months.

"In that time we've learned a lot more about how we can continue to develop our services to directly meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

"With the extra funding we'll be looking to do all we can to continue to prevent people from sleeping rough."

We have built upon new ways of working during our recovery phase from the pandemic through our "Swansea – Achieving Better Together, Transformation Strategy & Programme Framework 2022 – 2026." Two of the key aims of the re-focus stage of the programme which started in March 2021, were to build upon collaboration with other Councils, organisations, community groups and residents and to improve engagement with our residents and community. The programme includes a community response workstream which aims to build greater collaboration and meaningful engagement with local organisations, community groups and residents by encouraging the continuation of community relationships established pre-Covid. Work to date has included the development of a process for Ward Members to report issues in communities, supporting community events such as Unsung Heroes, a Winter of Well-being for 50+yrs programme, a Summer of Fun programme and developing a Corporate Volunteering Strategy. Although the delivery of the Achieving Better Together programme is still in the early phases, the Council's internal audit team have examined the Achieving Better Together programme and awarded the programme a "high"

level of assurance indicating that “there is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve the programme objectives and the controls are being consistently applied’, with no recommendations.

Continue to implement the Poverty Strategy and ensure that tackling poverty is everybody’s business.

We are continuing to implement our Poverty Strategy and ensure that tackling poverty is everybody’s business. Swansea Council’s Poverty Forum meets on a monthly basis to facilitate cross departmental working and to share information and good practice. The Forum has been chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive with good representation from across the directorates in the Poverty Forum. We have also been working in partnership to reduce and prevent the impact of poverty through the facilitation of the Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum, the Financial Inclusion Steering Group, the Swansea Food Poverty Network and the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission. In addition to the Council’s Tackling Poverty Service, activities to address poverty are delivered by services across the Council such as Free School Meals by Education, the Council Tax Reduction scheme by Resources and Beyond Bricks and Mortar by the Place directorate.

We are currently in the process of reviewing the strategy to take into account the learning from our response to COVID-19 and the current social, economic and environmental context. Draft priorities have been produced and discussed with the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee, with a view to co-producing a new strategy with all key stakeholders in the near future. A cross section of Councillors have been involved in the development of new policies designed to tackle poverty, such as a Promoting Affordable Credit Policy and a Corporate Debt Policy.

Our approach to ensuring that tackling poverty is everybody’s business has been strengthened by the implementation of the new socio-economic duty and ensuring that socio-economic disadvantage is considered in every strategic decision made by the Council. In addition to rolling out training on the socio-economic duty for both Officers and Councillors, we have also revised our Integrated Impact Assessment process and guidance to ensure the implications for people living in poverty are considered in decision making.

Targeting resources to maximize access to opportunity and prosperity and focus on utilising data to target support, employability and financial inclusion.

We are continuing to target support to increase employability and financial inclusion. More people have secured employment in 2021/22 ($n = 481$) compared to previous year through our Swansea Working gateway. Partnership working between Swansea Working, Lifelong Learning, Employability Programmes and partners has continued to offer participants accredited training and qualifications to meet employment opportunities. The number of accredited qualifications achieved by adults with Local Authority support has increased in 2021/22 to 620 compared to 450 in 2020/21; although it has not reached pre-pandemic levels yet. There were 1250 unique learners on accredited and non-accredited Lifelong Learning courses during 2021/22, with 1792 enrolments onto courses, including digital literacy, Essential Skills and Learning for Life Courses (languages, well-being and arts).

Case study 4: Workways +

This year as part of the Council’s Economic Recovery Plan and in response to the impact of the pandemic, the Council offered more than 300 paid work placement opportunities to unemployed people through Workways+ and the employment scheme Kickstart. These opportunities were available across a range of roles in local businesses and organisations, with more than 100 positions

based at the Council itself. The Workways+ scheme offered training, paid work experience and volunteering opportunities to unemployed people over 25 to help them improve their lives and find employment. It has already supported more than 1,000 people living in Swansea. Some have benefited from paid work experience opportunities in the Council's Waste department. The UK Government's Kickstart has seen more than 20 new recruits join teams such as parks, building services, waste management and security.

In terms of financial inclusion, our Welfare Rights Team has continued with a Pensions Credit take-up campaign to ensure that eligible pensioners are maximizing their benefit entitlements. Working with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and other partners, our Welfare Rights Service launched a free phone number and supported more than 113 benefit claims which has resulted in an average weekly increase of £44 per claim for each eligible pensioner. Our Benefits Service have also continued to manage additional grants on behalf of Welsh Government. Over 18,000 applications for winter fuel payments were processed, resulting in payments totalling £2.7m. The team were also responsible for administering Covid Isolation Payments for which over 18,000 applications have been assessed and payments of over £5.6m were issued. The Cost-of-Living payment of £150 for eligible household started to be paid in April 2022 and the Unpaid Carers payment from May 2022.

Support the establishment of a Poverty Truth Commission to bring together key decision makers with people who have direct lived experience of poverty to work together to bring about change.

We have continued to work with partners to facilitate the development of a Swansea Poverty Truth Commission (PTC). The PTC places people with lived experience of poverty at the heart of decision making and policy development. The key principles of the PTC are based on learning from post-apartheid peace building in South Africa and aims to create a safe space for people with lived experience of poverty to tell their stories and build relationships with each other and key decision makers in the local area. Community Commissioners (people with lived experience of poverty) have equal status to Civic and Business Commissioners in terms of determining the focus and priorities for the PTC. Swansea's PTC is hosted by Swansea CVS and supported by two facilitators. Poverty Truth Commissions usually have a life span of between 18 months to 2 years.

Although progress with the development of Swansea's PTC has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, work to develop the PTC has continued virtually on-line and face-to-face when regulations have allowed. All Community Commissioners have been recruited and a launch event is planned for 2022. Although it is too early to evaluate the outcomes from Swansea's PTC, the model used in Swansea has been based on similar models of others PTCS across the UK. Evaluations conducted by other PTCs have demonstrated that they have helped bring about change for individuals, organisations and at a policy level.

Work with our Health partners to ensure that, through our Early Years Strategy, children in their early years and at Foundation Phase achieve their expected language, emotional, social and cognitive development and are ready for learning and for school.

We have continued to work with our Health partners to ensure that children in their early years and at Foundation Phase achieve their potential. During 2021/22, work has included the development of a co-ordinated Early Years Support System, improved access to Speech, Language and Communication Support and Early Years workforce with training to support a greater understanding of Physical Literacy for Pre School training, along with Early Help Hubs, ensuring early, timely and effective identification and interventions for children in their early years.

Data from our Flying Start programme shows that the proportion of children performing at their expected age in Personal and Social Development increased from 40% on entry to the programme to 72% on exit from the programme. Similarly, in Language and Communication, the proportion of children performing at their age expected outcome at entry to the programme increased from 22% to 51% on exit from the programme. In Mathematical Development, there was a 29% increase in the proportion of children performing at their expected age on exit from the programme compared to entry into the programme and a 20% increase in the proportion of children reaching the expected milestones in Physical development on exit from the programme, compared to entry into the programme.

Early years is one of four local well-being objectives of Swansea's public Services Board. The long term objective is to ensure that children have the best start in life and develop to their potential. This year we have worked with our partners to build upon our Early Years Integration Transformation – Pathfinder programme and have conducted a service mapping exercise across the domains of Childcare, Play, Family Support, Education and Health and conducted a Vanguard Systems review with a view to improving the integration and effectiveness of services. We have continued to develop our multi-agency Jig-so project (support for families and babies in the first 1001 days), breast feeding initiatives and access to speech, language and communications support. We have also reshaped family support services and developed Early Years Early Help Hubs in five community hubs across Swansea. The Early Years Help hubs aim to provide better preventative support for families by providing a single point of contact and a "seamless journey" for families.

The Flying Start programme, component projects, models and tools have been rigorously tested and evaluated nationally since its inception and has been demonstrated to be an effective programme. Local delivery has also been evaluated and has also been demonstrated to be effective, which is highlighted by annual performance data and outcomes from the programme. Although other early years work has not been subject to the same level of evaluation as Flying Start, many of the new approaches adopted such as Jig-so, have been informed by the development of other proven models and approaches. As a whole, our work for children in their early years and their families, has embedded a culture of self-assessment and improvement as demonstrated by our Vanguard systems reviews and continual review of feedback from service users and quality assurance processes.

Ensure that young people are able to access employment, education or training after reaching 16 years of age.

During 2021, Swansea's NEET Prevention Partnership (SNPP) was established under the auspices of Swansea's Skill Partnership. The purpose of the NEET Partnership is to provide coherence, coordination and clarity to the education, employment and training offer to young people. The partnership has focused on supporting prevention and early intervention. This year, work has centred on the revision of a vulnerability assessment profile and targeted work with schools to support vulnerable learners during their transition from school.

This year we have continued to identify those young people who were most at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) and provide them (and their families) through the Cynnydd project with the personal support they require to remain engaged with education, employment and training. The proportion of school leavers who were NEET in 2021/22 was 1.6% representing a small increase from 1.5% in the previous year.

Case study 5: Kickstart

The Kickstart scheme is a £2 billion UK wide initiative designed to create new 6-month job placements for young people, aged 16-24 who were on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Young people are paid the relevant National Minimum Wage for up to 25 hours a week and are provided with on-the-job training and experience, with a view to securing employment following the end of the placement. From the start of the scheme up until December 2022 the programme has provided more than 60 placements for young people within the Council and more than 250 placements with other employers across the Swansea area.

Following the end of Kick-start funding, the Council made a successful bid to the UK Government Community Renewal Fund. The pilot Pathways to Work project has been designed to provide pre-engagement support, employability support, skills support and opportunities to develop digital skills. The project aims to provide a more flexible approach to employability than pre-cursor programmes and involves 6 delivery partners including the YMCA, Barnardos, Gower College Swansea, Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) and Techno-camps. It is anticipated that the project will develop bespoke pathways including digital pathways into employment. The project has been designed to test how provision through partnerships could be shaped, prior to the announcement by the UK Government in the next few months in relation to funding for such provision from the new Shared Prosperity Fund.

Help to address the impacts of Welfare reform, such as supporting people to claim the full benefits they are entitled to so that they are able to maximise their income and promote access to affordable credit.

Our Welfare Rights Team has continued to provide advice and support on a range of welfare benefits, providing an advice line, holding joint appointments for complex casework and appeal representation. The amount of welfare benefits secured for Swansea residents in 2021/22 was £1,139, 249m. This represents a 24% decrease compared to the previous year owing to the pandemic and changes to the Benefits System. Although there was a decrease in the amount of welfare benefits secured in 2021/22, research into the multiplier effect suggests that every £1 increase in welfare benefit income, is worth £5 to the local economy. Therefore, the amount of welfare benefits secured for Swansea residents in 2021/22 represented £5,696,245m to the local economy.

During the pandemic, the Welfare Rights Advice Line was expanded to five days per week for 157 days. The Welfare Rights Team also produced 14 benefits updates for staff and partner organisations outlining benefit changes; including special updates relating to specific benefit changes. During 2021/22 the team responded to 817 benefit enquiries. Although there was a reduction in the number of appeals at tribunal owing to the pandemic compared to the previous year, the Team still provided 75 appointments for complex cases and represented 47 people at appeal with a 91% success rate. They also trained 231 support workers including 176 support workers on disability benefits and Personal Independence Payments and supported residents to address over £77k of personal debt.

During 2021/22, the Council's Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee developed a Promoting Affordable Credit Policy designed to promote awareness of affordable credit options and warn people against the risks of high interest lenders. Work is ongoing in relation to the development of a Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy, which aims to encourage people to

engage with the Council at an early stage in relation to debts and ensure that it treats all people with personal debts owing to the Council in a fair and consistent manner.

Support individuals to overcome their barriers to employment through co-ordinated person-centred employability support.

We have continued to support individuals to overcome barriers to employment by providing individually tailored employability support. Swansea Working is a single gateway which co-ordinates employability across associated employability support programmes including Communities for Work, Communities for Work Plus, Workways STU, Workways Plus and Cam Nesa. Support provided includes an initial triage and assessment, the development of a personal action plan, intensive mentoring, support to overcome barriers e.g. confidence building, signposting to training and qualifications, volunteering placements, paid work opportunities, support with job searching and access to online employability events and workshops

Since 2017, 2,504 people have been supported by Communities for Work / Plus, 994 people have been supported into work through Communities for Work / Plus, 1,186 people have been supported by Workways, 433 people have been supported into work over 16hrs through Workways and since April 2018, 6,842 people have been supported through Swansea Working. During 2021/22, the number of people participating in Employability Support increased to 481, compared to 453 in the previous year.

Swansea Working and Communities For Work have also worked in partnership to deliver bespoke initiatives with and for local employers, care leavers and prison leavers resulting in sustainable employment. They have also provided employability clients with welfare rights and financial inclusion advice and support in preparation for employment.

Case study 6: two new work schemes

Cabinet have approved two new work schemes targeted at graduates and unemployed people. The two schemes worth a combined £1.1m will provide training and work placements at Swansea Council for graduates and unemployed people. The schemes will be funded by the Council's Economic Recovery Fund of £25m, which aims to help the city's residents, businesses and communities, recover from the economic impact of the pandemic. Initially running for the next two years, the £500,000 graduate place training project will fund recruitment into a variety of training schemes, leading to professional qualifications and potential full-time employment in areas like strategic planning, regeneration and heritage, waste strategy, public health, highways and transportation, culture and tourism, and asset management. A £600,000 scheme running until 2024 is also planned to create a rolling programme of six-month employment placements for the unemployed and economically inactive people of all ages. Fifty placements are planned, enabling those who take part not just to earn an income but also to benefit from new skills and new work experience.

Provide art, culture and heritage opportunities in order to boost skills, confidence, self-esteem and aspiration.

We have continued to support and provide a broad range of opportunities in art, culture and heritage opportunities in order to boost skills, confidence and self-esteem. Our offer has been sustained through strong partnerships and a mixed economy of varying operating models, whereby Council funded facilities have been complemented by an array of privately owned and operated

facilities, alongside community-run and self-managed assets. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our offer; in March 2020 all the cultural venues, leisure buildings and free to access recreational and play areas as well as community buildings were closed and many staff were re-deployed into front line crisis roles. Although our offer was re-focused during the pandemic and was provided on-line and in person when safe to do so, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the sector. Our new cultural strategy aims to reduce the widening inequalities between different groups exacerbated by the pandemic.

In addition to our universal offer, we have delivered a number of targeted services. Our Passport to Leisure (PTL) scheme is available to those who qualify for means-tested benefits along with families in the care system, such as foster families, allowing for concessionary rates at a range of cultural and sporting venues. During 2021/22 there were 1,255 active PTL cards. The HYNT card is a Wales-wide scheme which allow disabled persons the opportunity to take a carer with them, free of charge, when attending events. Although the scheme is administered by CREU Cymru, the financial cost of using the card in our venues and facilities, is funded by the Council. A total of 2,451 HYNT cards have been issued in Swansea and since 2017; over 10,000 HYNT tickets have been utilised at the Grand Theatre and Brangwyn Hall at a cost of over £250,000.

During 2021/22 we have continued to deliver Fusion - a Welsh Government supported programme - designed to tackle poverty through better understanding of our deprived communities by tackling barriers to engagement in order to support people to improve their own wellbeing whilst gaining skills for life and employment. The programme in Swansea is coordinated through a networking partnership called the Swansea Creative Learning Partnership and is regularly cited as an example of best practice. Activities have included support to access volunteering, work experience, improving of digital skills, support for children in the early years, family learning and approaches to learning and wellbeing. A snap-shot of participation prior to the onset of pandemic (March 2020) showed that over 25,000 people had participated in the programme including unemployed people, refugee and asylum seekers and a range of other people with protected characteristics.

We have continued to implement our Diversity pledge, which includes all people with protected characteristics, as well as Welsh speakers and those living in poverty. We have built upon the Council's motion to express solidarity with Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Swansea, by reviewing Swansea's street names, places and statues and committed to recognising the contribution made to civic life by a greater diversity of Swansea's past residents.

Case Study 7: a Blue Plaque for Jessie Donaldson an Anti-slavery campaigner

Jessie Donaldson an Anti-slavery campaigner who bravely fought slavery in America around 170 years ago has been honoured by her home city of Swansea. After moving from Swansea to America, she provided sanctuary for slaves escaping from the southern US states to reach freedom in the north. Jessie emigrated to Cincinnati in her 50s and helped fleeing slaves during the American Civil War. She ran a safe house for fleeing slaves which was part of the famous Underground Railroad escape network. In subsequent years choirs and bands of freed slaves visited Swansea to perform abolitionist campaign songs, spirituals and gospel music.

A blue plaque has been installed by Swansea Council outside the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's (UWTSD) Dynevor building in the city centre to celebrate the actions of the campaigner.

We have also continued to support the development of a Digital and Cultural Hub at Swansea's Grand Theatre, which includes 24 ethnic minority organisations and aims to ensure a fair and equal cultural programming for our communities. In 2021 Swansea Council became a partner in The World

Reimagined, a UK-wide art education project working to transform our understanding of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its impact on all of us to help us make racial justice a reality. The project aims to support communities explore a range of themes and cultural influences to unite participants and audiences to positively understand our cultural influences, and celebrate the present and future opportunities for us all.

Other examples of targeted work include work undertaken by the Dylan Thomas Centre in partnership with West Glamorgan People First, to co-produce projects and interpretation and develop sensory bags. The Dylan Thomas Centre has also worked with the National Autistic Trust to deliver new accredited Museums qualification for autistic people. The Council regularly works with Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn on projects, including World Book Day, development of materials for the New Curriculum for Wales, and film and animation projects.

From its re-opening in May 2021, the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery (GVAG) has displayed a diverse range of exhibitions and programmes from Highlights including an exhibition programmed in partnership with Swansea Pride and participants from Swansea City of Sanctuary to celebrate Swansea 10th anniversary as a City of Sanctuary. In 2021, the GVAG became the first Gallery in the UK to be awarded Art Gallery of Sanctuary for our work with Refugees and people seeking asylum. During 2021/22, the GVAG continued its work with targeted groups for visually impaired people, children and young people not in formal education and older isolated adults in addition to the re-starting of weekend workshops. Swansea Museum and our libraries have also facilitated activities such as videos production working with young carers and young people with disabilities as part of our Winter of Well-being event and provided venues for groups to meet again.

Our Sport and Health service have continued to work with partners to deliver sport and physical activity projects across the City and County of Swansea and support the development of positive social interaction and community cohesion through formal and informal adult participation in sport. Working with partners such as Sport Wales, Disability Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and Street Games we have continued to target groups with low levels of participation such as young women, Disabled people and people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. We have also continued to work in partnership to develop capacity within local communities and develop infrastructure, support volunteering and share resources. During the summer of 2021, our school holiday programmes was expanded to cover activities for 16-25 year olds and older adults as well as the provision of whole family participation activities, which was piloted pre-Covid via programmes such as Us Girls, Parklives and Streetgames. During 2021 our summer school holiday programme welcomed over 1400 users, to over 150 sessions across 21 different venues, including leisure centres, parks, beaches, rivers and canals.

Case study 8: new children's play areas

During 2021 we have invested around £5m in a new generation of children's play areas in over 30 different communities and popular areas across the City and County of Swansea. The investment has been made by Swansea Council with support for funding from Ward Members, funding from community groups and other organisations, section 106 agreements with developers and the Welsh Government through Play Sufficiency grants. The scheme included the installation of new facilities and the upgrading and refurbishment of existing facilities. The features of each play area vary and have been designed in consultation with local children and their families. Example of new equipment include ziplines, mini trampolines, climbing frames, multi-play units for younger and older children, a range of swings, roundabouts, springers and play panels. Dedicated equipment for disabled children has also been introduced.

The quality of our cultural, arts, heritage, leisure and sports offer is generally good and demonstrated by our achievement of various accreditation, quality marks and national awards. For example, we are one of the leading Councils in Wales in achieving 18 Green Flag awards for our parks and 4 Blue Flag awards for our beaches. Our two Archives and all of our Museums and Art Galleries have achieved the UK Accreditation Standard. In 2020, the Dylan Thomas Exhibition's Literature and Trauma initiative won a prize in the Museums Association's Museums Change Lives award and Swansea Museum was included in a report by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales as one of the museums in Wales excelling at collecting stories from their communities. Our Us Girls project designed to increase and sustain young women's participation in sport and physical activity in most disadvantaged communities also won the Engaging Women and Girls Award at the National StreetGames Awards in 2020. The effectiveness of our offer is also demonstrated by good levels of attendance, participation and visits.

Invest to improve housing and build more energy efficient Council homes and support the building of affordable housing to help meet housing need, reduce fuel bills, regenerate estates and bring wider economic and employment benefits.

Demand for social housing remains high and there is insufficient supply to fulfil the needs of all households on the waiting list. A snap-shot of the Council's waiting list in September 2021, showed that there were 4,639 households on the waiting list (26% were households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness, 43% had other, less severe forms of housing need and 31% were council tenants who have applied for a transfer to another property/area). The private rented sector is increasingly unaffordable for people on low incomes and the Local Housing Allowance often does not meet the cost of private renting for many households.

The Council, in conjunction with its Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners has set an ambitious target to develop 5,000 units of new affordable housing in Swansea over a 10-year period (1,000 to be delivered by the Council through direct building programme, 4,000 to be delivered by Housing Associations). We have continued with our Council Housing Development Programme and building new Council homes, with a commitment to building energy efficient, zero carbon homes and to Lifetime Homes Standards to ensure they are suitable for the long terms needs of tenants.

During 2021/22, a total of 60 additional affordable housing units were delivered by the Local Authority (an increase from 44 in the previous year) and 129 additional affordable housing units were delivered by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) (a decrease from 203 in the previous year). The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon the development of new affordable homes and the pace of delivery has been slowed by challenges in the construction supply chain and a shortage of materials and labour.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard - which is the statutory standard for all social housing in Wales - currently requires all social housing to achieve a Standard Assessment profile (SAP) rating of 65 or above. Due to investment to improve the thermal efficiency and insulation of council properties, 100% of properties reached the average SAP rating of 69 (band C). There is a lack of robust information about house conditions in the private rented / owner occupied sector. However an estimate from data drawn from Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) between 2008-2021 suggests that there is a relatively low proportion of homes in the private rented/owner occupied sector with a SAP rating of (band C) or above (estimated at only 40% of private rented/owner occupied properties reaching this rating).

Prevent homelessness and support people to maintain their tenancies to help provide stability and security for families and communities by implementing the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2018-22.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in Swansea to lowest levels ever recorded, as a result of Welsh Government instructions to ensure all people who required it were provided with temporary accommodation during the pandemic. There was good partnership working between our Homelessness service, support Services, and accommodation providers which was demonstrated by the effective homelessness and housing support response to the pandemic, such as the development of Ty Tom Jones.

Around 2,500 homelessness applications are made in the City and County of Swansea each year. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, temporary accommodation is provided. The Council has its own temporary accommodation suitable for families and bed & breakfast (B&B) accommodation is only used as a last resort when there are no other options available. In the last five years, the annual number of families in temporary accommodation in Swansea has fluctuated between 22 and 41. Whilst the number of families in temporary accommodation fell during 2020/21, the number has increased in the first two quarters of 2021/22.

We have continued to implement our Homelessness Strategy 2018-22 and have adopted a new approach to combine strategic planning for homelessness with the Housing Support Grant Programme and to produce a new strategy for 2022-2026. We have received increased funding provided by Welsh Government to sustain additional homelessness services and new approaches to service delivery developed during the pandemic, through an uplift in Housing Support Grant allocated to Swansea of £4m. We are undertaking a large-scale systems thinking review of all Temporary Supported Accommodation Projects, which will identify how the sector and homelessness services in Swansea will transition to a Rapid Rehousing approach over the next 5 years, i.e. minimising time spent in temporary accommodation before moving on to permanent accommodation.

Explore creating our own energy venture to provide low-cost energy to homes helping to tackle high domestic fuel bills and fuel poverty. Support tackling climate change and help eradicate fuel poverty and boost economic development through the ARBED scheme and energy efficiency measures in social housing.

Although we have fully explored establishing an energy company to manage the new energy generating facilities, volatility within energy market coupled with price caps has made the option financially unviable. Other previous public sector energy companies have now ceased trading and been sold to private companies and the option is unviable for the foreseeable future. However we have progressed the concept and continued to explore this work through a revised proposal to develop a Tidal Bay Lagoon in the area. Pre-planning discussions have commenced on the Blue Eden project. Unlike the previous Tidal Lagoon concept, the project will not require public subsidy and will now include new additional features such as Housing, a Battery factory, an Oceanic and Climate Change Research centre, a Data centre and a Solar farm. The Blue Eden project is being led by Bridgend-based DST Innovations and their business partners from the private sector. It is anticipated that project will be delivered in three phases over 12 years and will create more than 2,500 permanent jobs and support a further 16,000 jobs across Wales and the UK, whilst creating additional jobs during its construction.

During 2021/22, we are continuing to address fuel poverty through the distribution of our fuel vouchers with partners, the construction of new energy efficient Council homes, retrofitting our

existing properties and ensuring all Council homes meet the band C energy efficiency rating. We have also continued to support community-owned renewable energy schemes to deliver clean energy and benefit local schools and community buildings and have adopted of a Climate Change Charter as part of a series of measures working towards becoming carbon neutral.

Continue to implement the Community Cohesion Delivery Plan to promote cohesive and inclusive communities in Swansea.

During 2021/22, our Community Cohesion team has focused on the social effects of Brexit, as well as the broader community cohesion agenda. A key element of work has included engaging with individuals and communities to ensure maximum uptake of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS). More than 9,000 EU citizens in Swansea have been supported to apply to the EU settlement scheme. Alongside community and stakeholder engagement, work has continued on tension monitoring within local communities, which have been reported via the weekly tension monitoring system. Regular engagement has been held with key stakeholders to share intelligence and concerns from, for example, students, BAME residents and refugees, and local Faith group leaders. Working with our partners, we are continued to monitor and respond to incidents of hate crime through the Hate Crime Stakeholder Group and the Safer Swansea Partnership.

During 2021/22 we have delivered a number of training programmes to staff and key stakeholders to understand the early signs of far-right influence and reporting mechanisms. Around a 100 members of staff completed the Hate Crime e-learning course and 44 people attended Victim Support virtual training arranged by Council in this period. We have continued to engage with relevant networks to address tensions / hot spots and raised awareness of Hate Crime by supporting the delivery of Hate Crime Awareness Week and a Hate Crime awareness programme in our schools in Swansea. Working with partners, we have also supported innovative campaigns to challenge myths and misconceptions, promote positive messages, celebrate diversity, and promote a sense of belonging including Eid in the Park, School Swap project, Interfaith week, Holocaust Memorial Day, Diwali, LGBT+ month, Windrush, Refugee week and Black History month. We have raised awareness and supported the reporting of anti-slavery / human trafficking in Swansea by establishing an Anti-Slavery MARAC to support the victims of human trafficking. We have continued to support our more vulnerable communities through our "Tell Me More" campaign which is designed to provide accurate and up to date information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

Although good progress has made in relation to tackling poverty, there are a number of potential areas for improvement. Firstly:

- the Council's Scrutiny Programme Committee in November 2021 recommended that the Council should clarify its aims and objectives in relation to tackling poverty and improve the ways in which it monitored and measured the outcomes of work.

Clarifying the Council's role and functions in relation to tackling poverty and the delivery of effective services to those people who need them most, perhaps takes on greater significance within the current economic situation and the cost of living crisis and the likelihood of increased future demand for support. Although the causes of poverty and the impact of poverty is multi-faceted, more work is needed to *demonstrate* the difference made in terms of outcomes and that services are reaching those most in need.

- Secondly, many of the Council’s activities to tackle poverty are reliant on grant funding, predominately from the Welsh Government. If grants cease, then the Council will not be able to deliver the same range of services effectively. A number initiatives are still funded by EU funds including the Communities for Work Employability programme of over £732,000 per annum which is due to come to an end in 2023. In addition to an over reliance on grant funding, greater flexibility is also required in relation to using funding in a way which best meets local needs in a sustainable way.

Other areas for improvement include the need to:

- complete the revision of the Council’s Tackling Poverty Strategy, complete and implement the Review of Employability and the Review of Financial Inclusion and to develop and implement the Corporate Volunteering Policy. Other areas identified for improvement by the Tackling Poverty Service include reviewing food poverty and community cooking and growing activities, reviewing employment support and access to Lifelong learning, developing evidence based outcome models for projects and developing a quality / satisfaction framework for services.

4. Conclusion - the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

A review of the evidence in relation to whether the Council is exercising its functions effectively in relation to its Tackling Poverty priority suggests that it is owning its ambition.

<i>Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Tackling Poverty</i>				x	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that the Council has made good progress in terms of taking actions to tackle poverty. There are a number of long established and well attended forums and groups working across the Council and in the local area with external partners from the statutory and Third sectors. The Council and its partners have also worked in partnership to harness and support community action. Overall, the Council has made good progress in terms of ensuring that poverty is seen as “everybody’s business”.

The evidence also shows that a large number of children in their early years and their families have benefitted from early intervention and co-ordinated support to reach age appropriate outcomes and milestones. The Council’s approach to employability has also provided a single coherent gateway to provide an individually tailored person centred approach to training, readiness for employment and

securing stable employment. Many residents have also benefitted from support to ensure that they realise their maximum benefit entitlement. The Council and its partners have worked in quick and innovative ways to secure grants and administer funds to support groups and people in crisis from the immediate impact of poverty such as food poverty and longer term consequences.

Wider support such as Social Housing (including energy efficiency measures) and our cultural and leisure offer and innovative use of grants and working with the Third Sector has also been good. *Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.*

The Council is working to maximise its contribution to the national well-being goals when meeting its well-being objective to tackle poverty:

- *A Prosperous Wales* – maximizing benefit take up and entitlement and providing a single gateway to employment support.
- *A Resilient Wales* – building more energy efficient Council homes and affordable housing to meet housing need, reduce fuel bills, regenerate estates and bring wide environmental, economic and employment benefits.
- *A Healthier Wales* – providing free or low cost art, cultural and heritage events at targeted communities through a wide range of talks, workshops and activities aiming to address health and wellbeing.
- *A more Equal Wales* – creating employment and training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive through community benefit clauses in Council contracts.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – implementing the Community Cohesion Delivery Plan to promote cohesive and inclusive communities in Swansea.
- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – helping Swansea's poorest communities tackle poverty by accessing arts, culture and heritage in order to boost skills, confidence, self-esteem and aspiration.
- *A globally responsible Wales* – measures contributing to tackling climate change including energy efficiency measures in housing and building more energy efficient Council housing.

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The council is working sustainably in line with the following five ways of working when meeting its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm:

- *Addressing long-term challenges.* Our work with children in their early years and their parents and carers, is based on approach which aims to improve the long term outcomes for children and young people and to ensure they fulfil their potential in the future. We have also been working to address the long-term challenges of reducing Swansea's carbon footprint by ensuring that new Council Homes are constructed to the Swansea Standard and we have been retrofitting existing home with energy efficient measures. We have also been working to help people secure employment and a decent standard of living in the long term by helping people overcome barriers to employment and getting people back into work.
- *Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.* We are continuing to prevent homeless at an early stage by encouraging residents to engage with our Tenancy support team at an early stage and by using a psychologically informed approach to deal with rent arrears and making innovative use of the Prevention fund to support tenants in the privately rented sector. We are also working to help prevent high fuel bills and the 'poverty premium' by building energy efficient Council homes and retrofitting existing homes.

- *Integration / joining things up and avoiding duplication.* Our single gateway approach to employability support integrates a number of different funding streams and programmes, providing single and clear pathways to training, employment and other forms of support. Our work with children in their early years and their parents and careers is designed to provide an integrated and holistic package of support to address a range of educational, health, social and developmental needs.
- *Involving people.* Our Poverty Truth Commission places people with lived experience of poverty at the heart of policy development and the re-configuration of services. They are equal to the Civic Commissioners in terms of determining the areas of focus and priorities. We are also working co-productively to review and develop our Tackling Poverty strategy.
- *Working in partnership* and collaborating with other organisations. Working in partnerships is at the very centre of our approach to tackle poverty recognising that reducing poverty is “everybody’s business. We are working across all departments within the Council and a range of external partners to mitigate the causes and impact of poverty.

Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what does success look like?

- We shall seek across the range of the Council's responsibilities, as appropriate, to maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, and improve our knowledge and understanding of our natural environment, thus benefiting our health and well-being.
- Swansea is one of the most ecologically rich and diverse counties in the UK. Its unique variety of habitats and species and wonderful range of parks, greenspaces, nature reserves, beaches and landscapes need to be maintained, enhanced and sustainably managed for the benefit of everyone now and into the future.
- Our future survival and quality of life is dependent on a healthy resilient natural environment and the multiple benefits it provides to society.
- Our natural environment and biodiversity is under threat and in decline due to unsustainable human activities. Habitats and species are being lost at an alarming and unsustainable rate.
- We urgently need to tackle climate change by reducing our use of carbon and by maintaining and enhancing resilient ecosystems and a strong green infrastructure network to help us mitigate for and adapt to the pressures of climate change.
- A Climate Emergency has been declared by Swansea Council formally recognising the need for action and reporting on progress via this well-being objective.
- We have a legal duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and under the Well Being of future Generations Act 2015 (Resilient Wales goal) to protect and enhance biodiversity and maintain resilient ecosystems, and to report our progress to Welsh Government.
- Evidence shows that contact with nature has significant benefits for people's physical and mental health; this has been borne out by anecdotal evidence emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic
- Our future prosperity and well-being is dependent on a healthy resilient natural environment.
- We need to work with nature to improve the quality of our air, water and soils.
- We want everyone to understand and appreciate the unique value and fragility of Swansea's outstanding natural environment and to play their part in looking after and enhancing it.
- Our ambition is for everyone in Swansea to have access to and to benefit from an ecologically diverse, attractive, well managed and resilient natural environment.
- We want to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity so that its contribution to Swansea's economic and social well-being is not lost or reduced.
- We aim to create a greener more sustainable, ecologically diverse and resilient county, where its unique natural environment is recognised as one of its most valued and distinctive assets.
- We have a moral responsibility to look after biodiversity for its own intrinsic value.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Develop, adopt and implement a Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan.

This Plan will be reviewed in line with Welsh Government's 3-year reporting cycle during 2022. At the heart of this progress was embedding the natural environment and biodiversity into the Public Service Boards (PSB's) Swansea Well-Being Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan. In addition, the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry, and its recommendations, has had a significant impact in terms of raising awareness of the Duty and highlighting areas for improvement.

Through the Swansea Well-Being Plan's 'Working With Nature' objective, delivery by key stakeholders and partnership working, much work is already being done: the Council has included a priority for nature recovery in its Corporate Plan and has established a Climate Change and Nature Recovery Programme Board to ensure that both issues are fully considered across all Service areas. Swansea's Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is active and well-placed with over 97 members from local wildlife and other organisations wishing to contribute to nature recovery, and together are preparing a local Nature Recovery Action Plan.

As Outlined in the Cabinet Action Plan: Scrutiny Inquiry into the Natural Environment, progress on meeting the corporate biodiversity objective actions are monitored and reported on a regular basis by means of the establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group (now formulated as the Climate Change and Nature Recovery Programme Board). This Group effectively supports and encourages all Service Areas to take ownership of Section 6 duties. This Group comprises representatives from all relevant service areas and is chaired at a senior level. Under the new business planning and reporting regime, all Service Areas will be required to report on progress made and planned future actions to meet the new Corporate priority for the Natural Environment and biodiversity.

Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

This guidance which was adopted by the Council in 2021, provides clarity on the interpretation of Local Development Plan policies in order to ensure development within Swansea maintains and enhances the County's biodiversity and delivers long term ecosystem resilience. This aligns with the Council's duties under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Resilient Wales Goal of the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015, and is consistent with National Development Plan (Future Wales) Policy.

It guides those submitting planning applications on how to consider biodiversity at each stage of the development management process. It provides the framework to demonstrate that proposals have responded to a robust ecological understanding of a site, and that appropriate ecological mitigation, compensation, enhancement and aftercare will be provided. The SPG recognises that applicants should provide measures in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience that are proportionate to the scale of the development proposed.

The Council's Nature Conservation Team are a consultee in the planning application process and will provide advice to the Development Management Team in relation to biodiversity matters.

Work with partners to develop and deliver a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy for Swansea.

Working in collaboration, Swansea Council's Natural Environment Section and Natural Resources Wales employed Green Infrastructure Consultancy (a world leading expert in the GI industry) to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy, *Swansea Central Area: Regenerating Our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife*. It has since been used to help deliver public realm enhancement schemes within the central area such as green roofs and walls on buildings and other structures.

This strategy sets out a vision for the central area of Swansea to be much greener and more biodiverse, creating green spaces and using a combination of street-level features such as street trees and rain gardens as well as vegetation on buildings, including green roofs and green walls. The intention is to double the amount of GI (with the exception of open water) within 10 years. Success will be measured via a number of performance indicators, which will work towards targets to double (from 13% to 26%) GI by 2030 and to increase tree canopy cover to 20-25% by 2044. The strategy

includes a Green Space Factor tool which is a simple user tool designed to guide improvements to the quality and functionality of green spaces. The strategy was adopted in February 2021. An Action Plan is in development to support the delivery of the strategy and address the key themes which came out of the engagement work: 1) governance and leadership, 2) skills and knowledge development, and 3) maintenance.

Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales have also started engaging on the development of a county wide strategy. This document will follow a similar developmental path as the Swansea Central Area strategy focusing on taking a strategic approach to multifunctional GI across the county. Supported by national legislation, local policy and guidance skills and knowledge, the aim is to ensure GI is an embedded guiding principle in all development and enhancement work in Swansea.

Some local examples of urban green infrastructure projects influenced by the Strategy include:

Swansea Environment Centre - An extensive green roof was installed in at the Environment Centre in March 2021 by The Urban Greening Company, funded by a Welsh Government Local Places for Nature grant. The green roof was planted and sown with 48 locally grown native wildflowers by Celtic Wildflowers and Environment Centre staff.

Coastal Offices High Street - A semi-intensive green roof was installed by The Urban Greening Company on the Coastal Office building High Street in March 2021, funded by the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Green Infrastructure Grant. Designed to bring coastal habitat into the city the green roof is a really good example of creating a city centre space for people and nature.

Coastal Housing, Potter's Wheel: Designed and installed by Scotscape, using Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Green Infrastructure Grant. The green wall was part of the refurbishment of 85-86 the Kingsway. The planting and breathable soil pouches filter particulates and vegetation provides food and shelter for birds and insects along with amenity value.

Coastal Park: Copr Bay's 1.1 acre coastal park is an intensive green roof, currently Wales largest living roof, including a green façade living wall running along the Oystermouth Road side of the new car park. The living wall provides year-round colour and amenity value, offers shelter and food for birds and insects, absorbs pollution and surface water run off providing summer cooling.

Develop and adopt a Council tree policy.

A suite of tree policies/protocols have been adopted during 2021/22 including: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Swansea Tree Replacement Standard, Tree Planting Guidance and a Management Strategy for trees on Council owned land.

The aims of the Swansea Council Tree Management Strategy 2021 in relation to Council owned land are to:

- Ensure risks from and to trees are adequately managed.
- Ensure the Council meets its biodiversity duties in respect of trees.
- Conserve trees of value.
- Maintain and expand tree canopy cover.

As at 2021, around 43,000 individual trees in Council ownership had been surveyed with more than 1439 woodlands and tree groupings plotted and surveyed containing an estimated 100k additional trees. However, significant areas of Council land ownership still remain to be surveyed.

Begin to map existing Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision, and identify areas, which provide the best opportunities for habitat enhancement/connectivity and improved recreational access with associated health and wellbeing benefits.

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) was commissioned in September 2021 by Swansea Council (specifically the Nature Conservation and Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Teams) to undertake a project to produce a map of ecosystem resilience for the Swansea Council area.

A key potential use of the mapped outputs is to identify locations where work could be undertaken to increase ecological resilience, through targeted works to restore or create habitats in locations which currently exhibit lower ecological resilience. Such work could form a very important component of building a "Nature Recovery Network" in the Swansea area and could be supported and directed through the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan.

Undertake a preliminary biodiversity audit of Council owned land and where possible manage our corporate assets for the benefit of biodiversity and natural resources.

A pilot project for improved management of corporate assets for the benefit of biodiversity and natural resources has considered all More Homes Council housing sites and advised on ecological surveys to be undertaken. Swift bricks (bricks that provide a mechanism for building nesting accommodation for swifts into brickwork) have been installed and will continue to be installed on all new More Homes properties.

Following on from the first Passivhaus pilot at Colliers way, the second phase of the More Homes project has been completed at Parc Y Helyg, and Colliers Way Phase 2. As part of this phase, 34 new homes are designed as 'Homes as Power Stations' using funds from a £1.5m Innovative Housing Programme grant from the Welsh Government. The homes have innovative features such as solar panels and battery-powered energy, as well as the inclusion of swift bricks to support biodiversity.

Two grant funded Community Greenspace and Nature officers have been appointed to begin the process of mapping existing biodiversity and green infrastructure assets within each ward and identifying opportunities for enhancement works with associated health and wellbeing benefits.

Work with partners to develop and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity and improve ecological connectivity.

To support working with partners to develop and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity, four permanent and three temporary grant funded posts have been created within the Council's Nature Conservation Team during 2021/22, including a Local Nature Partnership Officer, a Biodiversity (Section 6) Officer, a Woodland Officer, a Planning Ecologist, two Communities and Nature Project Officers and a Volunteer Co-ordinator. In addition over £1million of grant funding was secured by the Nature Conservation Team for delivering biodiversity and Green Infrastructure projects in 2021/22, with further bids worth £1.5 million submitted for 2022/23. Work has commenced on the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and a Section 6 Plan

As outlined in the Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Local Development Plan (LDP) has been informed by an assessment of ecological connectivity across the whole of the County. As well as mapping the existing ecological connectivity network in Swansea, this assessment also identifies locations where ecological connectivity has the potential to be enhanced.

Case Study 1: Plantasia

The Council has used funding from the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Fund to boost the biodiversity in this long thin wetland in Parc Tawe. Over 30 species of wildflowers were planted in the moat with the help of children from Leonard Cheshire and Admiral volunteers. These plants were provided by, and the day was overseen by, expert local business Celtic Wildflowers. The new improved moat will provide an important wildlife stepping stone for pollinators and other species, helping Swansea to become a more resilient city for people and nature.

Work towards creating a low carbon economy, which promotes renewable energy and takes actions to reduce our carbon footprint.

In taking action to reduce our carbon footprint, streams of work have been divided into a 2030 target of Net Zero emissions for Swansea Council and 2050 for Swansea as a whole. A Climate Charter and Pledge Wall have been developed to encourage Swansea groups, public bodies, businesses, schools and individuals to make a commitment to get to Net Zero by 2050.

Training and awareness campaigns have commenced with internal staff and work is underway to develop an awareness programme for the business sector. An Energy Awareness Hub has been piloted in the town centre, run by the Environment Centre, supporting citizens with help and guidance on energy provision, the paying of bills, renewables, etc.

We are continuing to implement agile working so that our workforce can reduce unnecessary travel and plans are underway to vacate the Civic Centre and establish a Central Public Sector hub; this process was accelerated with lockdown.

Swansea Council is seeking to receive accreditation for the work it's doing to reduce its overall ecological footprint. As well as decarbonisation, this covers buildings, travel, land use and waste as well as biodiversity and the impact on natural resources. The *One Planet Standard* recognises organisations who seek to respect Planet Earth's natural boundaries and capacities by adjusting the impacts of their activities to a level commensurate with what the planet can provide. At the same time, it can help to combat climate change and re-introduce more biodiversity and nature into our environment.

Case Study 2: Council unveils its Charter on Climate Action and Nature Recovery

Members from across Swansea Council's political spectrum have become the first signatories of the council's Charter on Climate Action. Other people and organisations around the city will also soon have the chance to sign the charter online. It is a visible public reminder that the Council aims to become net zero carbon by 2030 - and aims to make the city net zero by 2050. Political leaders were the first people to sign the charter in a socially distanced ceremony at the Guildhall. The Leader of the Council Cllr Rob Stewart said: "The charter demonstrates this council's commitment to do all we can to help fix the problems of climate change that recent generations have created."

“As a Council we've been very successful in cutting our carbon footprint year after year with almost 24,000 tonnes saved per year compared to 2009 emissions - a reduction of over 55%.”

“We've been on an ambitious path of carbon reduction since 2012, and are now leading Wales in so many areas of climate change, carbon reduction, sustainability and biodiversity, but we intend to do much more.”

Delivery of the Energy Strategy to reduce costs, provide cheaper energy and reduce our carbon footprint.

An Energy Strategy and Carbon Management Plan were approved in December 2021 and an Action Plan is in place to support delivery to reduce costs, provide cheaper energy and reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Swansea Council's Energy and Carbon Management Strategy is based on an Energy Hierarchy, indicating that reducing energy demand and increasing energy efficiency are the best starting points (Fabric First approach). Energy efficiency actions reduce energy demand and enable us to use energy wisely. Maximising energy savings and energy efficiency will be essential to the feasibility of increasing reliance on low carbon sources of energy.

Swansea Council procures its energy using Crown Commercial Services Framework Agreements, via the National Procurement Service (NPS), for the vast majority of supplies. All electricity procured via the NPS framework is from 100% renewable energy sources; 41% sourced from Wales (Apr 20 – Mar 21); Gas – Total Gas and Power (TGP) procured as new gas supplier (Apr 21 – Mar 22); Green Gas tariffs - dependant on viability and cost impact; pricing option available with TGP later in the year.

Case Study 3: Plans to establish a council-operated solar farm at Tir John

The Tir John scheme would see the council selling green electricity generated to the national grid and help reduce the council's carbon footprint by 3% a year until at least the year 2050. The 17-acre scheme would generate 3MW a year and make use of former landfill areas at the site. As a landfill site, the ground conditions are not developable. However, the 'capped areas' areas no longer being used for landfill could accommodate the solar farm. Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy in 2021/22, said the project would be another example of the council's commitment to playing its part in supporting the provision of clean energy to local communities. She said: "Councils around Wales are accessing Welsh Government funds to develop green energy projects that pay their own way and help cut carbon footprints." "This Solar Farm could play an integral part in our ability to achieve our goal of becoming a Carbon Neutral Council." "Over the lifetime of the project it should generate 101,302,731kw of energy. The Welsh Government has set out an ambition that 70% of energy consumed in this country should be from renewable resources by 2030. This project will help towards that ambition."

Regional collaboration has been established to support reductions across the West Wales region. The Council have continued to support community owned renewable energy schemes to deliver clean energy and benefit local schools and communities having successfully installed 900 kW of roof top Solar Photovoltaic systems across a number of schools.

Case Study 5: Swansea Schools take Climate Action

Egni has also established an ambitious education programme in partnership with EnergySparks and the STEM Ambassadors programme. The EnergySparks portal draws on actual electricity and gas consumption data, as well as solar generation, and enables pupils and staff to make energy improvements, which they can then look to measure in the data.

Rosie Gillam, Egni's co-director said "It shows what can be achieved through co-operative action. We now have 88 sites across Wales and they save about £108k/year on their electricity costs – and prevent the emission of over 1,000 tonnes of CO₂. Swansea pupils and staff have been so supportive and enthusiastic in helping to make these projects happen during a difficult time."

Act in response to the Climate Emergency.

Following on from the Council declaring a Climate Emergency in June 2019, a Nature Emergency was declared in 2021 and an Energy Crisis in February 2022. A Climate Change and Nature Recovery Strategy was approved in November 2021 and an Action Plan is currently being developed.

The council's Climate Survey, aimed at all residents of all ages and organisations of all types, represented the start a conversation as the council aims to create a strategic city-wide approach to achieving a net zero carbon Swansea. Results from the survey were published in November 2021, and included the following aspects:

- Covid Gaps – more targeted engagement with children, young people, business and face-to-face offline opportunities are planned. Members discussed the ongoing need for better engagement with children and young people, and how the Council can better engage with these groups.
- The survey took place between 15 February and 29 March 2021. After cleaning the data, 967 responses and 396 Twitter poll responses have informed reporting. A high number of qualitative comments in relation to every topic illustrates the depth of public interest in this agenda with the vast majority of comments demanding positive action and a small minority expressing negative opinion, concerns or alternatives.
- There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the Council's top ten proposed actions to ensure it becomes a Net Zero organisation by 2030. Positive support for each of the proposed actions ranged between from 80% and 98% (where respondents stated they strongly agree or tend to agree). The greatest strength of agreement was in support of 'tree cover and biodiversity' at 85% strong agreement.

Case Study 6: Swansea Market.

More than 40 photovoltaic panels have been fitted to the roof to increase the venue's green credentials, helping the city tackle the climate emergency.

The 80 sq m surface of the panels is expected to provide more than 5% of the market's power - and to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by three tonnes.

Other carbon-reduction measures already in place at the Swansea Council-run facility include LED lighting in the offices and in other locations plus recycling amenities for the treatment of waste.

Continue to participate in and support the Low Carbon Swansea Initiative.

The Council has maintained its membership of and commitment to the Low Carbon Swansea Bay (LCSB) network. Activities and events were once again disrupted by the pandemic this year, but

online webinars took place and the key focus for LCSB partners this year was the preparation of a Swansea Bay Healthy Travel Charter in collaboration with Public Health Wales and Swansea Environmental Forum.

The council continues to promote the use of Electrical Vehicles. Swansea Council already has around 60 electric vehicles in its fleet. A further 200-300 will be introduced in the next few years.

Other projects being rolled out by the council to help the city decrease carbon emissions include EV charging points. There are currently 12 council car parks offering electric vehicle charge points for use by the public. All of the charge points in council car parks provide users with 100% renewable electricity. The 12 sites offer a combined total of 32 'fast' charge points, meaning that the charge points offer 7-22kW power.

The Council aims to continue installing EV charge points across the local authority area. This will contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition in transitioning to a low carbon, low emission transport system in Wales, and align with the Welsh Government's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, and Llwybr Newydd: a new Wales transport strategy.

Case Study 7: Swansea Bay Healthy Travel Charter.

Following on from work done during 2021/22, the Swansea Bay Healthy Travel Charter was launched in May 2022, signed by 11 leading organisations from across the region.

Swansea Council Joint Deputy Leader, Cllr. Andrea Lewis, affirmed the Council's support for the Swansea Bay Healthy Travel Charter and the commitment to taking practical measures to promote active travel and sustainable transport. Cllr Lewis said "We're committed to working with local and regional partners to deliver the actions outlined in the charter. Excellent work is already underway, encouraging local people to consider more active and sustainable transport options, such as walking, cycling, using low-emission vehicles and using public transport."

Actions within the Charter include establishing a network of sustainable travel champions within each organisation, developing targeted communications campaigns for staff, offering and promoting the cycle to work scheme and promoting public transport discounts.

The public sector in Swansea employs over a third of working adults (over 42,000 people) so this commitment may have a significant positive impact on the environment as well as associated health benefits.

Support initiatives that will increase Swansea's urban tree cover.

A green artery has been created through Swansea City Centre with several green, tree-lined spaces integrated within the redevelopment of the Kingsway; doubling the number of trees in this area of the city centre, and adding large grassy areas with extra plants and shrubbery. The new trees (circa 170) include alder, birch, cherry, lime, maples and flowering pears.

Other city centre tree planting projects, such as the Boulevard and Westway, have seen the Council introduce significantly more street trees and other green areas than were previously present. This has created an attractive street scene and will encourage greater biodiversity.

Further extensive tree planting has been undertaken on Council land throughout the County including up to 1000 trees and 5600 whips, and the Council has been declared a Queens Green Champion City in recognition of its extensive tree planting projects.

Case Study 9: The Queen's Green Canopy

The Queen's Green Canopy announced that Swansea would be joining twelve other cities around the UK, including Manchester and Leicester, to help celebrate the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's 70th year on the throne.

Rob Stewart, Leader of the Council, said: "It is such an honour for Swansea to have been nominated a Queen's Green Canopy Champion City."

"It is recognition of what's been achieved in the last few years in creating a new city centre urban park - the first in Swansea for a century - and the planting of thousands of trees along key routes in Swansea."

"We're also being recognised for the work we have done with partners to plant even more trees around the city, including thousands of new trees at sites including Mynydd Newydd Playing Fields and residential areas such as Penlan."

The Kingsway has been re-fashioned into a refreshing city centre green space boasting more than double the number of trees and greenery than it had before. The Council has been consulting on doing something similar for Castle Square Gardens with news on proposals due in the next few months.

Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management, said: "The news of the city receiving this title is a real credit to the work we have carried out in recent years and also for the plans we have for the future.

"It clearly recognises the efforts we are making to improve the city's green infrastructure and improve our local environment.

"All of our new cycle routes are benefitting from additional tree planting. We have recently planted more trees in many of our parks. It's also important we recognise the work to manage our existing trees and remove diseased and dangerous trees and replace with more suitable species that we know thrive in urban areas."

Tree-planting season started last month and areas getting new trees will be the area around the new-look Broadway junction above Tycoch, Kingsbridge, Sketty Park, Ynystawe Park, Wind Street, Townhill and in Gorseinon. Off-road cycling and pedestrian routes are also expected to benefit from extra tree planting as well.

Swansea Council is also progressing a new concept for the city centre's Castle Square, introducing more greenery. The amount of space for people to gather, sit out and relax would remain the same. Green space would grow from today's 25% cover to more than 40%. Biodiversity would increase and most existing trees would remain, with new trees planted.

Improve awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events.

An annual programme of environmental events is published online to improve awareness and understanding of the local natural environment. An annual celebration of Wales' magnificent wildlife with a host of local, national and online events which highlight different habitats - woodlands, wetlands, meadows, peatlands, marine and coastal, and urban habitats.

Recent events have included:

- Nature Art at Bishop's Wood: A morning of discovery and creativity using what nature provides.
- Babell Graveyard Volunteer Morning: Helping to create a space for nature and people in the heart of Cwmbwrla at this much-neglected graveyard. Tasks include cutting and digging up brambles, litter picking and developing a garden area.
- Discover Oxwich National Nature Reserve: Warden-led walk around the dunes, across boardwalks to see wildfowl, a host of dragonflies and perhaps even an otter before investigating the adder bank to see snakes then journey through the dunes and back along the beach.
- Swansea Community Farm Volunteer Session: Opportunities to learn new things, connect with people and get active. Activities include mucking out the animals, organic gardening, taking part in nature and conservation tasks, building and construction or site maintenance,
- Reptiles and Wildflowers with Gower Society Youth: exploring the wildlife sanctuary at Nitten Field to spot reptiles and see the wildflowers in this unique location.

Case Study 10: Expert tuition is helping Swansea Council take more action than ever to help curb climate change.

A series of "carbon literacy" lessons and workshops for members and officers has seen them take key actions as the council works to make Swansea net zero carbon by 2050. The council itself aims to be net zero by 2030.

Andrea Lewis, the council's joint deputy leader and cabinet member for climate change and service transformation in 2021/22, said: "The council is committed to do all it can to tackle the world's climate and nature emergency - and we want to bring the rest of Swansea along with us.

"Offering carbon literacy courses to our staff and members is a small but important step. We plan to roll out climate training across the council."

Carbon literacy is an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability to reduce emissions.

Provide opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment.

A Covid interrupted programme of support for schools to help raise biodiversity awareness including on site activities and practical initiatives has recommenced.

The Council supports Foundation Phase pupils to study and learn outdoors, ensuring a respect for nature, biodiversity and ecosystems. In support of this the Council's Nature Conservation Team have provided opportunities for children and young people to engage with nature via a range of initiatives such as:

- Outdoor activities delivered at the Council's Activity Centres in Port Eynon, Rhossili and Bishop's Wood, Caswell.
- Regular field study visits and numerous public events at Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve.
- INSET days have been delivered to build capacity among teachers for working outdoors with pupils.
- Support also provided for Forest School and Sculpture by the Sea Activities.

Work within classrooms, through cross-curricular topics aligned to the science and geography curriculum is a key feature of sustainability education. Developing the outdoor environment and establishing links with projects and schools at an international level also supports learners to develop a better understanding of local biodiversity as well as global citizenship. Numerous Swansea

schools have been accredited with the Platinum Award for eco schools (42% of schools with Platinum and 23% with Green Flag awards).

Development of the natural environment within Swansea school grounds has seen vegetable gardens grown, bug hotels opened, raised flower beds sown, trees and orchards planted and literacy trails established. Consumption and waste reduction is also a key theme in Swansea schools. A strong willingness by schools to re-cycle and re-use is championed by eco school committee members across Swansea. Nearly all Swansea schools have developed their own eco code to support sustainability and the theme of developing 'ethical citizens' features strongly in the new Curriculum for Wales (2022).

Case Study 11: Bishopston Primary School

Swansea Rural Development Partnership are pleased to announce their support of the project Nature Area for Outdoor Learning delivered by Bishopston Primary. The Partnership has successfully allocated £5,000 of funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Hamish Osborn, of Natural Resources Wales and Chair of Swansea Rural Development Partnership said "the Local Action Group is pleased to be supporting the Nature Area for Outdoor Learning project. We see merit in developing spaces that will not only encourage biodiversity, but also provide a valuable learning tool for our younger generation to gain an understanding of the importance of caring for our environment".

Nature Area for Outdoor Learning project is a response to pupils of Bishopston Primary and local community who want to encourage Outdoor Learning, through the creation of a dedicated nature area, which can be used every day as a working area for children.

The school will contribute to the aims of Swansea Local Delivery Strategy by improving health, maintaining and enhance biodiversity; reducing their carbon footprint; and crucially improving knowledge and understanding of our natural environment.

Work towards improving access to and maintaining the quality of our parks and greenspaces.

The first urban park to have been created in the city since the Victorian era has been completed in 2022, adjoining the new Swansea Arena. Constructed above a new car park, the coastal park has been designed in a dune-like shape to celebrate its closeness to Swansea beach. A living wall features on the Oystermouth Road side of the new car park to complement new greenery that has been introduced.

Swansea Council has also secured grant funding worth over £240,000, obtained during 2021/22 to improve the quality of parks and greenspaces including tree planting schemes, whilst over £370,000 funding has been bid for 2022/23 to continue this work.

Continue to deliver a programme of wildflower planting and management.

The Council's wildflower planting programme has now extended to around 40,000sq.m (about 6 football pitches) of wildflowers across approximately 190 sites. In support of this new grant funded cut and collect machinery has been purchased to help better manage grass cutting and help boost wildflowers and pollinators by maintaining species-rich vegetation. Complementary training has also been delivered including grassland management of parks/verges; benefits of cut and collect; right tree in right place and nature emergency.

In June 2022, Swansea Bay News reported that *over the past few years the council has attracted pollinating insects to its roadside verges, roundabouts, parks and rough ground by allowing the grass to grow long in selected locations, which allows wildflowers to bloom, and by seeding formal beds with a colourful mix of flowers.*

The Council is now introducing native wildflowers at a dozen locations around the city which will continue to bloom year after year. Seeds specially selected from the National Botanic Garden of Wales' wildflower meadows in Carmarthenshire have been planted. The move supports the council's commitment to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss by promoting plant and insect life, on top of the new ways of cutting grass that is promoting pollinators and environmentally-healthy parks and verges.

Case study 12: new ways to cut grass.

Thanks to Welsh Government grants (Local Places for Nature) for new equipment and advice from eco-charity Plantlife, the Council is using new ways to cut grass that promotes pollinators, wildflowers and environmentally healthy parks and verges.

The move comes as part of the Council's commitment to playing its part in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss by promoting plant life and is on top of its hugely popular wildflower planting initiative.

Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management in 2021/22 said: "We led the way among local authorities with the wildflower initiative, creating insect havens that were also colourful additions to local communities and roadsides.

"At the same time, we also reduced the amount of grass cutting we do to allow insects and wildflowers to thrive in parks and on roadsides. Now we're aiming to boost local diversity even more with our new cut and collect grass management programme.

"Our new approach to grass cutting is in addition to what we're already doing and is the best of both worlds because it encourages the maintenance of species-rich vegetation in parks and verges. It also curbs the growth of invasive plants that can sometimes take over habitats.

"But the best thing about it is that we cut the grass twice in the season at specific times so that flowers can complete their lifecycles and naturally distribute seed ready for the next time.

"This cutting less and cutting later approach to grassy areas replenish the seed bank, restores floral diversity, and provides pollinator habitat across the county."

The Welsh Government has supported the scheme with grant funding for specialist cutting equipment and new machinery. It cuts and collects grass while at the same time carefully removing other dead vegetation to allow air and rain to get to the soil so that seeds have room to germinate.

Engage with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, collaboration with community groups and other partners has been maintained and increased over the past year including with the Swansea Local Nature Partnership, Clyne Community Volunteers, Rosehill Quarry, various Friends of Parks Groups and the Environment Centre.

A grant funded Natural Environment Volunteer Co-ordinator post has been created in 2022 to re-establish and support opportunities for environmental volunteering with such activities being curtailed by Covid over the past couple of years.

Take actions that help to control invasive non-native species.

The Nature Conservation Team is responsible for the management of 6 Local Nature Reserves and numerous of Council owned Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). It also provides advice to other Council staff with land management responsibilities. This involves the preparation of management plans and agreements, practical site management and maintenance work, tackling Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), managing contractors and supporting community and volunteer participation in biodiversity delivery.

It can take up to 5 years to clear INNS from a site and there are ongoing rolling clearance programmes focussing primarily within Council Housing Estates to improve the local environmental quality but also this year through successful grant funding bids extending into Gower AONB including a £10,000 project to eradicate Japanese Knotweed from Ilston Woods, as well as working with volunteers to remove INNS from managed sites such as Clyne Country Park.

Undertake a range of actions to improve air and water quality.

Swansea Council submits an Annual Progress Report (APR) to Welsh Government each year advising upon the assessment of ambient air quality in accordance with the EU objective concentrations.

The Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing Team continues to monitor air quality across the authority, working with other Council departments. Collaboration with the Council's Highways Service takes place to provide input and assessment of air quality impacts for highway schemes. As part of a collaboration with the Nature Conservation Team, a 'Green Screen' has been installed along Fabian Way.

Whilst Swansea is currently compliant with Welsh Governments' Air Quality Objectives, in-line with Welsh Government policy, the Council will continue to work towards reducing exposure where possible.

A multi-staged review and assessment of air quality within Swansea has been carried out to identify those areas that would exceed the national air quality standards and objectives. Real time air quality data is posted online and on site in relation to these locations (<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/airquality>).

Bathing water quality is monitored by Natural Resources Wales and Gower beaches easily surpass standards, however Swansea Bay is more complex and changeable throughout the day. The Council therefore post information up to 3 times a day on site and also broadcast on social media. (<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/bathingwater>)

Case Study 14: New 'green' bus shelters

Swansea Council is in the process of replacing more than 100 ageing bus shelters across the city, with many having been installed 30 years ago. The new shelters are being provided by Bus Shelters Ltd.

Part of the city-wide upgrade will include 10 new 'green roof' bus shelters, featuring natural plants on top, which can help filter out dust particles and contribute to better air quality.

The 'green' bus shelters will be installed along the roadside at Mumbles Road, Oystermouth Road, Quay Parade, Walter Road and St Helen's Road.

Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management in 2021/22, said: "Our current stock of bus shelters have been in place for many decades and are in need of upgrading.

"We're arranging for more than 100 new shelters to be installed during the next few months.

"We've also decided to introduce a number of environmentally friendly bus shelters along some of our busy bus routes in the city. While they may appear as a bit of a novelty to some - they will certainly help in our wider work to improve air quality and hopefully they will also help raise awareness of the importance of green infrastructure when the public see them.

"The new green bus shelters will also complement our Copr Bay Coastal Park development where we are introducing a green space for the public to enjoy."

The initial phase of this upgrade programme will involve the removal of existing bus shelters. New shelters will then be installed shortly after.

Undertake (selected or targeted) enhancements to greenspace as part of an environmental works programme to meet our commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Enhancement of greenspaces has been an ongoing process over the past 4 years as part of the environmental works programme to meet the Council's commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and to address deficiencies in access to natural greenspace.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/2907/Welsh-housing-quality-standard>

WHQS reporting to Welsh Government had been suspended in 2020 due to Covid. As at 31st December 2020 there were 7,753 fully compliant homes and there are 5,795 homes containing at least one acceptable fail in Swansea. This represents 57.2% fully compliant and 42.8% with acceptable fails. Fully compliant levels will rise and acceptable fails will reduce as the remaining improvement programmes continue.

Swansea Council has completed the retrofit project in Craig Cefn Parc in partnership with Cardiff University's Welsh School of Architecture. The Retrofit scheme is the first of its kind in Wales and consists of 6 bungalows which have had External Wall Insulation (EWI), new rendering, and new energy efficient windows and doors. Each property has been fitted with renewable technologies including ground source heat pumps, solar panelled integrated roofs, Tesla battery storage and Mechanical Ventilation Heating Recovery (MVHR) units.

This has transformed the bungalows into some of the most energy efficient homes in Wales substantially improving the warmth and comfort of the bungalows. Energy demand is significantly reduced thus reducing energy bills for the residents.

Minimise our use of non-recyclable products and materials, and recycle more waste.

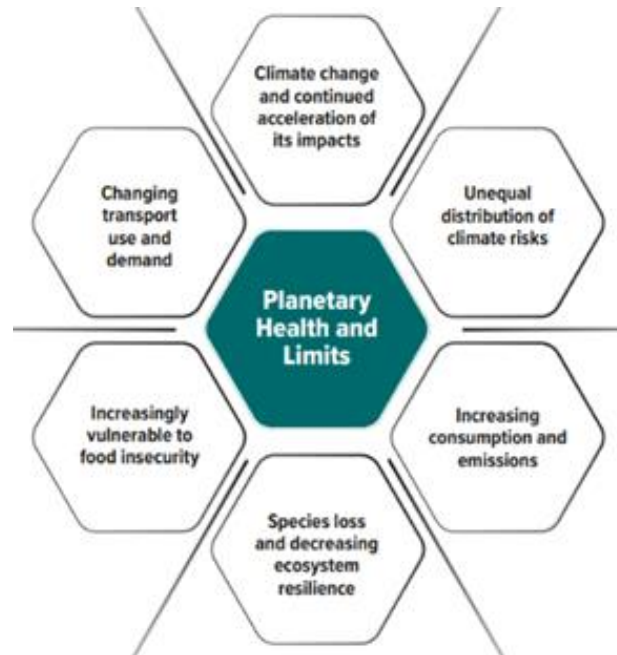
Provisional annual data for 2021 measuring the municipal waste collected and reused and/or recycled stood at 63.68%. The data is provisional due to the difference in reporting/data periods for Welsh Government. The comparative recycling rate is slightly down on last year's figures due to the ongoing impact of Covid, more black bags are being generated at the kerbside and commercial waste has now increased to near pre-Covid levels.

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

Required actions are primarily long-term objectives or ongoing actions that are measurable in some cases in decades e.g. net zero carbon by 2030, increasing specific tree canopy coverage by 2044, etc.

These are not suitable actions for monitoring on a quarterly or even annual basis in many cases. Whilst they must undoubtedly remain ongoing commitments there needs to be some specific targets that are SMART.

Using the Welsh Government Route map to net zero, Swansea Council will align with its principles, knowing what needs to be done now, by 2022-26 Low Carbon becoming the norm and by 2030 where choosing carbon zero is routine. This objective will be pivotal to reacting effectively to the identified trend within The Future Trends Report Wales – Planetary Health and Limits.



Based on the Future Generations Commissioners Report 2020 – Swansea Council will strive to focus on the following areas and should:

- Demonstrate global citizenship and leadership by supporting sustainable behaviour and making the connections.
- Play our part to ensure Wales is welcoming, safe and fair to all.
- Commit to fair and ethical investment and divestment - making the right financial decisions now to enable future generations to thrive.
- Ensure supply chains are fair, ethical and sustainable.
- Ensure that Swansea understands the importance of using the earth's resources efficiently in order to contribute to global well-being.

Within the Council, there is demonstrated a clear understanding of meeting the long-term challenges, for example:

- *Decarbonisation* - In October 2021 Swansea Council submitted its first emissions report to Welsh Government. Work will continue to deliver net zero carbon for the Council by 2030 and for Swansea by 2050. The Council prepared and submitted to Welsh Government in Dec 2019 a report (Section 6 Monitoring Report) outlining what it has done to comply with the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty. <https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/documents/s62825/11%20-%20Section%206%20Biodiversity%20Monitoring%20Report%20Dec%202019.pdf>

- *Climate Pledge* - Collaborative working to influence Swansea-wide behaviour change can be demonstrated through the introduction of a climate pledge, the sign up of large businesses across Swansea to our climate charter, ongoing work with PSB and collaborative working with an environmental partner, schools, community groups and businesses. Risks are monitored through the corporate risk register and Swansea had declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019, A Nature Emergency in November 2021 and an Energy Crisis Notice of Motion in January 2022.

How we will do better - We will

- Monitor the delivery of the Section 6 Corporate Biodiversity Plan, the Nature Recovery Action Plan and the Resilient Wales goal through annual business planning and reporting mechanisms up to 2027. We will report to WG every 3 years in line with our Biodiversity Duty.
- Embed a Climate Change and Nature Strategy and monitor the delivery of respective Action Plans up to 2027
- Continue to monitor air, water and soil quality.
- Monitor the delivery the Energy Action Plan targets proposed to 2027.
- Set out new measures for monitoring the impact of our Procurement of goods and services in line with eth emerging WG carbon measurement toolkit.
- Embed and deliver a Sustainable Transport Strategy to 2027.
- Continue to report the number of new homes constructed to net carbon zero standards and set out new measures of recording the decarbonisation of our existing stock in line with emerging WG guidance.
- Report on the delivery of a Waste Reduction Strategy.
- Secure grants and other external funding to help deliver the above.

4. Conclusion - the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

A review of the evidence in relation to whether the Council is exercising its functions effectively in relation to its Natural Resources & Biodiversity priority suggests that it is owning its ambition.

<i>Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Natural Resources & Biodiversity</i>				x	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

The evidence shows that the Council has made significant progress meeting the steps required to deliver this well-being objective and, at a strategic level over the past few years with its declaration

of climate and nature emergencies, the establishment of a related corporate programme board and member steering group. Scrutiny committees are overseeing progress in relation to addressing climate and nature issues and the Council now has a Section 6 Plan to ensure it meets its Biodiversity Duties. There is greater tie in with the work of the Public Service Board and other organisations with responsibility for climate and nature matters. Additional staff resources have been/are being made available to help deliver projects that tackle climate and nature emergency locally, whilst increased grants are also being made available by funding providers over longer periods in recognition that there is no quick fix.

Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.

Swansea Council is maximising its contribution to its Well-being Objectives and National Goals, embedding Nature at the heart of Swansea by ensuring that Green Infrastructure is a key aspect of service delivery and communities are enabled to shape their place. Partners are collaboratively acting to reduce carbon emissions through sharing assets and knowledge, in addition to joint working through local initiatives.

- *A Prosperous Wales* - The unique natural environment in Swansea and its Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty supports thousands of jobs in the tourism sector worth £440 million per annum to the local economy.
- *A Resilient Wales* - The resilience of our natural environment is improved by restoring degraded habitats and through habitat creation and improving connectivity.
- *A Healthier Wales* – Trees play an important role in relation to filtering air of harmful particulates reducing respiratory conditions, while natural spaces have a documented beneficial impact on mental health.
- *A More Equal Wales* - Involvement in environmental training and volunteering builds skills that are accessible to all.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – The social benefits that accompany improving the percentage of tree cover and natural open space within Swansea create welcoming communities where people are proud to belong and experience an improved quality of life.
- *A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language* – Accessible, managed green and beach space offers sport and recreational opportunities while Swansea’s physical geography and maritime location have inspired a rich local cultural identity.
- *A Globally Responsible Wales* – Reduces our impact on the planet, moving towards a ‘one planet’ Wales that does not use more than its fair share of resources.

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The Council is working sustainably in line with the following five ways of working needed for Public Bodies to achieve the well-being objective and national well-being goals.

- *Addressing long-term challenges* - We are working to better understand our carbon footprint, in line with emerging guidance for public sector greenhouse emissions reporting. We have reviewed council policies in relation to climate change and are integrating adaptation and mitigation strategies to inform all future work programmes between 2021 and 2030.
- *Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse* - Climate change and loss of biodiversity have been mitigated and adaptation measures taken by prioritising and investing in Green Infrastructure and low carbon design. This offers a preventative approach in reducing our carbon emissions and improves the economic prospects of the city centre by repurposing the area as a green destination. In order to understand long term impacts and

protect our environment and heritage for future generations, measures have been put in place and studies commissioned to measure and take action to reduce visitor impacts on biodiversity and the historic landscape, e.g. at Cefn Bryn and Port Eynon.

- *Working in partnership with others* - The Council has forged close relationships with both national organisations like Natural Resources Wales and the RSPB and also local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. The development of tools and strategic guidance for developers is resulting in closer working with the private sector.
- *Joining things up and avoiding conflicts* - The Swansea Central Green Infrastructure strategy was developed collaboratively with NRW to ensure the approach aligned with common objectives across the public, private and third sectors. This integrated approach is being expanded with the development of a county wide Green infrastructure Strategy where a variety of Public Services Board partners will be involved in ensuring a strategic approach is developed which aligns priorities and addresses potential conflicts. The Climate Change Programme Board provides a forum where Council policy overlaps, gaps and synergies can be identified in relation to Green Infrastructure and other climate and nature related activity.
- *Involving people* - In order to become a Net Zero City and County of Swansea by 2050, the Council recognises everyone will need to play their part and so started a long term engagement process during lockdown. This was the first time Swansea Council has specifically asked residents about their attitudes to climate change. The survey response rate was particularly high with over 1000 citizens participating in a survey, related Twitter poll and discussions. The overwhelmingly positive response indicating widespread concern about climate change and an appetite for action provides a firm foundation to take forward ongoing broader involvement activity.

Transformation and Future Council Development

1. Why this is a Well-being Objective and what does success look like?

- We want to modernise and transform the Council through our Achieving Better Together programme. In the short term this will focus on actions and interventions related to Covid-19, including how we emerge and recover from the pandemic. In the medium to long term the programme will build on what has changed as a result of the pandemic and how we can deliver services in different ways to help tackle rising demand and reducing revenue budgets.
- During the pandemic Council services were forced to shift to online and telephone. We want to maintain this approach where residents are able to use online channels first, reducing administration and back-office services. We will continue to provide wrap-around support where it is needed to ensure inclusion. We want to generate additional income to pay for services and help families earlier so that we can reduce costs later on.
- We want to improve efficiency and further reduce management and business support costs. We also want to continue reviewing all of our services to ensure they are delivered in the best way and saving money by working with partners such as the police and health, or preventing the need for people to access costly statutory services where need can be met elsewhere.
- We want the public to play their part by co-producing and helping to run services, such as the successful scheme where bowlers are maintaining their greens, or by increasing recycling at home.
- We want more people involved in the Council's business and in making decisions on things that affect them and their families and communities.
- We want to invest in our priorities like the city centre, improving classrooms, improving and extending our energy efficient housing stock, and delivering the City Deal with the potential to create 10,000 jobs.

2. How well are we doing – and how do we know?

Update the Council's transformation plan to the new Achieving Better Together programme in order to transform services and deliver better

We have continued to develop and implement the Council's Achieving Better Together programme. A new programme manager was appointed to oversee the development of the programme in June 2021. Recovery activities are well underway and the programme has shifted into the 'refocus' phase of the programme, looking forward into longer-term transformation. During 2021/22, the recovery activities focused on our staff and the organisation and included re-launching the Leadership hub and the Ideas hub to encourage staff engagement. We have also held a number of staff engagement workshops and developed a new Staff handbook. We have renewed our Agile Working Policy and continued to ensure that staff have a safe working environment at home, in our offices and buildings and in public spaces. We have also developed a programme timetable for our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and monitored the outcomes from our Economic Recovery Fund as we recover from the pandemic.

Recovery activities for our citizens have included the expansion our Local Area Coordination services across the County and the development of Volunteering Toolkits and training. We have continued to re-focus our back office services and increased our use of automation. We have continued to develop a joint and holistic approach to recovery through the development of closer working between departments such as Education and Social Services e.g. developing a shared understanding

of vulnerability criteria for vulnerable children and a single point of contact. We have also worked with a range of other partners and the third sector to develop innovative approaches, such as the Community Calling project providing smartphones and tablets to individuals without digital access. We have also developed a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan, which has supported local businesses, protected local jobs and secured new investment in the city.

Our Achieving Better Together programme has a robust programme management framework and governance arrangements in place. Recovery activities are managed and overseen by the Steering Group and strategic issues and risks escalated to a Board. During 2021/22, an internal audit took place to examine the effectiveness of governance and assurance arrangements of the programme and concluded that the programme demonstrated a level of 'high assurance' with a sound system of internal control designed to achieve the programme objectives. The Scrutiny Programme Committee also continued to scrutinise the effectiveness of the programme and examined progress in October 2021.

The programme has started to look beyond 2022, it will take account the priorities of the new Council, a new Chief Executive and Corporate Plan. During the preparation of the next phase and exiting delivery of phase 2 we will work towards:

- Developing the framework for the future delivery programme – Phase 3 of Achieving Better Together – Reshape.
- Ensuring Strategies and action plans (housing, Schools, economy, social care) are embedded and change is visible and increasing in pace.
- A reviewed and updated corporate plan.
- Ensuring the culture of the organisation is working to align to the delivery of the corporate plan.
- Ensure all priority service areas have new models of delivery maturing.
- Delivering a balanced budget and long term MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) that is sustainable.

When the new Cabinet is appointed in May 2022 we will “review the Achieving Better Together transformation strategy and programme goals”.

Feedback from leadership sessions and listening to work stream leads will influence a revised governance structure for the next phase of the programme. For example: the timeliness of meetings has been raised; this will be considered as part of the review.

It is important as we move forward, we ensure structures and governance help to avoid duplicating or confusing responsibilities and accountabilities or add unnecessary bureaucracy.

Implement the Council's Organisational Development Strategy to deliver transformed services, so that we have the right people with the right skills, particularly in light of Covid-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented pressures on the Council's workforce. A Scrutiny Working Group was established to review the changes and support that was required during the pandemic and as we recovered. During 2021/22 we continued to review our Agile working policy and work towards developing a hybrid model. We have also continued to improve our support for Agile working by providing 1-2-1 support to staff, teams meetings, equipment and information about how to claims back some of the costs associated with working at home.

During 2021/22, we continued to develop a comprehensive Workforce Strategy for 2022-27, following extensive consultation with Members, Senior Leadership, Trade Unions and a cross-section of the workforce from all Directorates. In addition to the continued development of our Workforce Strategy, we have re-structured all human resources functions under one Head of HR and Service Centre. Our Workforce Strategy is closely aligned to our Achieving Better Together programme and is part of the third and final re-shape phase of the programme. The Strategy contains four key themes; Leadership and Management, a Workforce Fit for the Future, being an Employer of Choice and Wellbeing and Inclusion and contains nine strands and associated actions. Progress to date includes the re-accreditation of our Disability Confident Employer status with a view to working towards Disability Confident Leader status in the future.

We have also continued to work with Trade Unions and held a workshop on the development of a Social Partnership workshop and reviewed our Dying to Work” charter. We have also established a new Workforce Equalities Group to support the delivery of Equalities activities, delivered a new mandatory e-learning package on Equalities and developed a proposed framework for Welsh Language skills. This year we have also developed a Coaching and Mentoring strategy and re-branded the Leadership Hub which provides staff with a range of different opportunity learn about leadership and organisational culture.

Although the number of sickness days per fte. has increased slightly during 2021/22, compared to the previous year, additional resources have been provided to human resources and organisational development and occupational health to manage absence and sickness. This year we have also appointed three Management of Absence Officers to support Directorates in the management of sickness absence and contributed to the reduction in the number of outstanding Early Retirement cases across the Council by 25%. In addition, we are working to recruit more Helping Hands Volunteers and develop a tailored package for schools based on the Helping Hands model and develop a range of resources for managers such as Mental Health First Aid Training, Stress Awareness sessions and other preventative workshops and toolkits.

Embed equality and diversity into service delivery through a network of Equality Representatives appointed in each service and produce a new Strategic Equality Plan 2020-23 for the Council.

We published a new Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2020-24 in 2020. During 2021/22 we have continued to implement the plan and reviewed our annual progress through our Annual Review of Equality and Diversity (ARED) 2020-21, in addition to reporting on the Gender Pay gap and publishing a Workforce report. Our Equalities staff representative group has continued to meet during 2021/22 and have discussed a range of topics such Easy Read documents, Plain English/Welsh, Welsh Language Standards and has continued to raise awareness and promoted a range of different equality events and groups and equality training. The group works under the auspices of the Equalities and Future Generation Board – a Strategic Board established to oversee the delivery of the SEP 2020-24. A co-ordinator for the Board has been appointed and is working towards Swansea becoming a Human Rights City. As part of our Workforce and Organisational Development strategy, we have also established a Workforce Equalities group, which is made up from staff with protected characteristics. This group has been established to address equality issues in the workforce such as improving the collection of data about staff with protected characteristics and to ensure we adhere to the Welsh Government’s Race Equality Action Plan and the LGBT+ Action Plan.

During the coming year the Strategic Equalities and Future Generations Board will be monitoring progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and will target areas for further development. Further improvements will include embedding the Race Equality Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan which

are both awaiting Welsh Government guidance. We are also progressing work on how we can move towards adopting the Social Model of Disability to help make our services more accessible by removing existing barriers. We will also be embedding Human Rights across the council to ensure we meet our obligations as a Human Rights City.

Case Study 1: Human Rights City

Swansea Council in partnership with Swansea's Public Service Board (PSB) are working towards declaring Swansea a Human Rights City in December 2022. It is our aim to create a city where everyone is equal. To empower people to understand their rights and respect the rights of others. A steering group was established in September 2021 consisting of a representative from each PSB organisation to drive this ambition, chaired by Cllr Louise Gibbard. On the 10th of December 2021, Human Rights Day, Swansea's PSB publicly declared their intention to become a Human Rights City. Extensive engagement has taken place across Swansea to share the ambition and to gain support. In October 2021 we launched a survey to learn about what residents and visitors of Swansea think the priorities should be when becoming a Human Rights City and to capture a baseline awareness of Human Rights knowledge and awareness in the City. A PSB Partnership Forum event took place in November 2021 with the focus of Human Rights City. Over 60 representatives from private, public and 3rd sector organisations who operate across Swansea took part, including representatives from different services within Swansea Council. An action plan has been developed where we will focus on the priorities that emerged from the engagement. Work is on-going to establish what programmes, initiatives and policies happens already in each PSB organisation across Swansea in relation to each priority.

Review the Council's approach to procurement to secure local economic and community benefits, in line with sustainable development principles.

During 2021/22, we have continued to build upon our approach to sustainable procurement and the incorporation of sustainable procurement principles based on revised Wales Procurement Policy issued in 2021. Our approach enables our Procurement Officers to engage with services at the very earliest stages of procurement and to consider value from every stage of a project from planning, inception and to completion. In addition, our approach to procurement takes into account wider social values such as safeguarding, equalities and environmental issues, in addition to financial costs and traditional value for money criteria. This year we initiated a pilot project to further review enhanced Social Value based on the 2021 report into public procurement produced by the Future Generations Commissioner. The pilot programme aims to test a number of tools / methodologies of analysis (e.g. the Themes And Outcomes model developed by the independent 'Social Value Portal' with input from the WLGA) and consider if there is further best practice that can then be integrated into our procurement model. It is anticipated that the pilot project will finish at the end of this year with recommendations to be taken forward for review and consideration. The steering group for the pilot program is led by Commercial Services and includes representatives from Corporate Building Services, Highways and Transportation, City Centre and Planning including the Council's Community Benefits team. In addition to the inclusion of community benefits and social value clauses in our contracts, we have also been working to ensure that potential contractors have policies to consider issues such as Modern Slavery, Equal Opportunities, the Welsh Language and Safeguarding.

Our Community Benefits Policy has built upon the success of our Beyond Bricks and Mortar initiative which has realised social value through construction and regeneration activity to encompass all Council procurement projects. Our Beyond Bricks and Mortar Team and our Corporate Procurement Team have worked to identify the community benefit requirements of all Council projects, with

procurement forming part of the Council's sustainability risk assessment, thereby helping to set appropriate targets that focus on recruitment and training, supply chain initiatives, the Welsh Government community benefit tool and other community benefits. During 2021/22, there were 21 projects with social benefit clauses and Beyond Bricks and Mortar criteria incorporated within their contracts and over 7,800 targeted recruitment and training weeks were created.

We have also revised our Constitution to place greater emphasis on using local suppliers to meet our need for goods and services and encouraging local companies to bid for certain projects and maximize the value of the Swansea Pound through the development of the Foundational Economy. The Council also took part in Welsh Government's pilot to develop the Foundational Economy, working on issues related to local procurement and focusing on the construction sector. Lessons learnt from the pilot included changes to the Council's overall procurement approach to ensure that small and local businesses can bid for Council contracts and increasing the money spent by the Council locally.

Continue to embed a "Digital First" strategy so that citizens can access more Council services and information on-line.

We have continued to implement our Digital First strategy to ensure that citizens can access Council services and information in a timely manner to suit their needs. During 2021/22 we have revised and updated our Digital First Strategy to take into account learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and new ways of working. The strategy lays out the roadmap for the next four years and draws on the Welsh Government, Central Government, and Local Government Digital Strategies.

The use of the website, online forms, online payments, and the new Customer Account has significantly increased in recent years, especially during 2020/21. The shift to digital channels continued to grow during 2021/22. The number of online payments and the number of forms completed online for fully automated processes has increased year on year, compared with pre-pandemic levels. Although the total annual number of forms completed online during 2021/22 was lower than the previous year, the number is still higher than the pre-pandemic total. The decline is to be expected and as a result of requests during the height of the pandemic where usual collection services such as libraries were closed.

Automation continues to help with routine tasks and staff capacity, e.g. customers accessing Education, Customer Services and Planning services are all using new automated processes for straightforward enquiries. This year we have continued to upgrade the delivery of Swansea Customers Accounts by enabling people to apply for free-school meals and uniform grants on-line. Our Oracle Field Services have developed an on-line process for people to book appointments for housing repairs and for tenants to provide feedback upon completion of work.

Case Study 2: Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

RPA and workforce automation is software that mimics the behaviours of humans in order to execute office-based work. Virtual employees are 'trained' on how to use systems and applications. Procedures are replicated in workflows and the virtual worker will execute them on demand or predefined schedule. RPA is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to complete high volume, repetitive, mundane tasks giving human staff the ability to focus on more complex tasks. So far we've achieved savings of 3.85FTE or around £128k - more than it cost to develop the platform. These time savings allow staff to carry out more meaningful tasks or allows us to avoid costs associated with having to draft in extra staffing. The process has helped the Welsh Translation team to process translation requests. This was an early 'proof of concept' process to prove the technology

and test the 'art of the possible'. Using the 'Déjà vu application', this is being used alongside the traditional human translation team to support the delivery of the demanding workload. We have also automated the ordering of recycling bags by residents using the 'Civica Flare' application. We have also updated Education's Special Educational Needs statemented pupil records automatically using CapitaONE records, saving over 600 hours in time and updated planning application software (Idox DMS) for the public to leave comments related to planning applications, saving the department 10 to 15 hours of work per week.

Our e-democracy project is progressing well and the Council Chamber in the Guildhall is now live. A review is being undertaken to map and forward plan CCTV and Ward WiFi. This year we have also developed a Breathing Space app – to help the Council support customers with debt across the Council and improved secure communication between social workers and foster carers as well as providing a digital solution for the entry and approval of daily recording information. We have also replaced contact centre kiosks for public self-service use, developed digital signage for the Grand Theatre and made a number of improvements to the Council website including improved search and accessibility tools and book and pay modules. The Council has continued to work with Swansea Bay City Deal partners. As part of the City Deal Digital Programme, we are working with partners to identify and target future infrastructure opportunities, starting with public assets and buildings. We are also working on the Internet of Things project to improve services to residents across Swansea.

Promote Digital Inclusion and access online services by providing citizens with lifelong learning opportunities to undertake free computer courses and training.

We have continued to promote Digital Inclusion and access to online services by providing a range of learning opportunities. During 2021/22 we used a blended learning approach to Digital Inclusion training and support. During this year there were 1250 unique learners registered on Lifelong Learning Courses including Digital Literacy, Essential Skills and Learning for Life. This year the Lifelong Learning Service (LLS) created a new event booking system and continues to offer a daily telephone IT Support service, which was introduced at the beginning of the pandemic. The telephone service supports residents to access online services and signposts individuals to other support organisations where required.

We have continued with our Get Swansea Online programme and basic Digital and IT courses to assist beginner and low-level learners, who may find accessing online delivery difficult. During 2021/22, 196 people participated in the Get Swansea Online programme. We have offered courses at entry level through to Level 2 for individuals wishing to achieve an accreditation or improve their Digital Skills for work and life. The Lifelong Learning Service (LLS) has worked with employability partners to develop bespoke Digital delivery courses and workshops to members of the public interested in developing their Digital skills to support employability prospects.

A number of Digital classes have also been delivered in the community to support people using their own tablets or devices to access services and improve digital communication and collaboration skills. We have also continued to offer IT equipment on a loan basis to individuals wishing to access our programme of learning. The loan scheme has been highly beneficial to individuals enabling access to learning opportunities, support and accreditation. Our LLS have also worked with our Employability Team, our Tackling Poverty Service and Third Sector Partners to support the distribution of refurbished lap tops and smart phones with pre-paid credit to vulnerable people in the community.

Explore opportunities to collaborate with other local authorities and partners and share services, including back office, to save costs and improve services to citizens.

We have continued to explore opportunities to collaborate to share services, save on back office costs and improve services. A regional partnership between Swansea Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and Neath & Port Talbot Council was successfully awarded the next round of Digital Transformation Funding to develop Internet of Things capability. The Digital programme aspect of the Swansea Bay City Deal continues to make good progress with partners taking part in a 5G workshop facilitated by Deloitte, and collaborating on a Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) bid. In April 2021, the Digital Programme received endorsement from both the Welsh Government & UK Government. Work is ongoing in relation to updating and refining the Business Case and the latest updated version was presented to and endorsed by the SBCD Digital Infrastructure Programme Board in April 2022.

Case study 3: Major digital boost for Swansea's 'smart city' vision

Swansea's vision to become a super-connected 'smart city' is picking up pace, thanks to a multi-million pound funding boost. The UK Government and Welsh Government approval of the £55 million Swansea Bay City Deal digital infrastructure programme means Swansea can further build on significant connectivity improvements made in recent years. City Deal investment will help Swansea Council introduce full-fibre connectivity in business parks and areas of the city centre. This will help businesses make the most of latest digital technologies, while helping mobile users stream content and access information quicker. A long-range, open access wireless network will also help make the most of the 'Internet of Things' by connecting technology such as sensors to the internet, which will enable better decisions and improved efficiencies. This could accelerate the use of sensor technology in Swansea to improve traffic flows, monitor when bins need emptying or highlight when elderly or vulnerable people need help at home. Swansea Council could also use City Deal funding to boost the take-up of broadband voucher schemes in rural communities which would give households and businesses there better internet connection.

Undertake targeted and effective engagement to develop more collaborative and partnership working with the third and private sectors to achieve the Council's and shared priorities and outcomes.

Data from the Third Sector Data Hub, WCVA showed that there over 2,100 voluntary and community organisations operated in Swansea during 2021/22 and that 28.5% of residents in Swansea reported that they were volunteers. We have continued to support and build upon our work with the Third Sector through our Compact Liaison group. The Compact Liaison Group is comprised of relevant Council Officers and representatives of the Third Sector. The Group is not a decision-making body but reviews and advises on policy issues affecting both the Statutory and Third sector. During 2021/22, the Compact Liaison Group played a key role in the development of the Council's Achieving Better Together programme by supporting the development of Volunteering toolkits, infrastructure and training. As part of the arrangements, the Council have administered a large number of grants to Third Sector organisations to support community based services, resources, such as grants for Food Poverty, Period Dignity, Mens' Sheds, community based events such as Winter of Well-being and Summer of Fun and provided grants to support services for Children, Young People and their families, Carers, Victims of Domestic Abuse and people living in Rural areas.

Review work with communities, organisations and 'friends' groups to encourage and enable greater community ownership of assets and services and to ensure their long-term sustainability.

We have continued to work with communities, organisations and ‘friends’ groups to encourage and sustain greater community ownership of assets and services. There are currently 37 constituted Friends of Parks groups registered with the Council. The network of volunteers is a far-reaching and invaluable asset. Friends groups commit to promoting inclusive practice through their constitutions. Adults of all ages participate and also provide opportunities for children and young people. Vulnerable groups are also supported to participate (e.g. City of Sanctuary working with Friends of Ravenhill Park). There are currently approximately 630 volunteers who help run the 40 community buildings across Swansea East, Swansea West and the city centre.

Community Asset Transfers have been successfully undertaken in all three electoral constituencies across Swansea; Swansea East (Jersey Park Bowling Pavilion; Trallwn Sports Pitch and Pavilion), Swansea West (Gwent Amateur Boxing Club; Green Space at Y-Llwyni) and Gower (Graig Y Coed Playing Fields; Underhill Park). We have also entered into a Charter with Community / Town Councils (C/TC) which sets out the way in which they aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising their respective responsibilities as statutory bodies.

Respond to the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 and continue to modernise public engagement in local democracy and Council decision making through accessible meeting times, web broadcasting, electronic voting and e-petitions.

During 2021/22, we have been working to implement the new duties on Local Authorities, as a result of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Preparation work undertaken has included raising awareness and understanding of Part 6 of the Act, reviewing best practice on self-assessment, establishing a self-assessment steering group and establishing a corporate approach to self-assessment. We have also held Briefings with both Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee on the new performance requirements. As a result of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, we have amended the Council’s Constitution to reflect change in the terms of reference, role and memberships and name of the Audit Committee to Governance & Audit. During 2021/22, we also established the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee and held two meetings – as required by the new legislation.

We have continued to work towards modernising public engagement in Council decision making. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 along with earlier Covid Regulations allowed all meetings to be held remotely during 2021/22. They are working well and developments are underway in the Guildhall Council Chamber and also in the Gloucester Room, which will be a significant step forward to assist with the Council’s commitment to multi-location meetings. Hybrid meetings have enabled both councillors and members of the public to participate in meetings when they are unable to be in physical attendance in the building i.e. whether for covid or other reasons. eVoting has been established for Council and for Cabinet Meetings (it is not required for the other Committees given their relative small size). Preparation for the creation of ePetitions has been undertaken and will be enacted as of May 2022. Public engagement has been encouraged with public questions at Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny. We have also put in place arrangements to extend voting for 16 to 17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens. We are also preparing to develop a public participation strategy and work is underway in relation to an e-petitions scheme both of which will facilitate wider public engagement.

Overall, there is good evidence of effective work programmes, scrutiny meetings and activities, good levels of Councillor engagement, positive feedback internally and externally and increasing media coverage and public involvement. Cabinet Members have been held to account through a range of activities through the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Task & Finish Inquiry Panels, ongoing Performance Panels, and one-off Working Groups, including pre-decision scrutiny, with

recommendations made to Cabinet Members through letters and reports. The work of Scrutiny is transparent and accessible. Scrutiny agenda packs are available on the Council's 'agenda and minutes' webpage. Also, there are all scrutiny letters sent to Cabinet Members following meetings and responses.

Continue to strengthen the Welsh language service and language services generally offered by the Council by providing basic language training for front-line staff.

In June 2021, the Council published its annual Welsh Language report, highlighting examples of good work achieved alongside recommendations to strengthen Welsh Language promotion and compliance across the Council. Work has also been undertaken in relation to the development of a proposed framework for Welsh Language and we have recruited a Standards Officer to lead on promoting the Welsh Language and work with the Welsh Language Commissioner. We have established a Welsh Language Training Group which has identified training needs in support of the Welsh language. This has included the development of a mentoring scheme to support Welsh learners. Courses have been run at Mynediad Level 1 (years 1 and 2) and Sylfaen level 2 (year 1). During 2021/22, we also ran introductory "Taster" session has been run to encourage future participation and work is underway in relation to assessing the potential for "face to face" courses for non-IT User front-line staff. We have also continued to promote the Welsh Language and reviewed the Council website to improve access to information, online forms, and payments for residents and ensured the information is available in Welsh and English.

Make community budgets available so that local people can decide together with their representatives what their local priorities are.

During 2021/22 each Ward Member had a Community budget of £10,000 per annum to support the delivery of small local measures that are a priority for individual Councillors and their local community but are not funded by any other Council budgets. The scheme provided each Councillor with a budget currently set at £10,000 per annum and has been divided equally between all 72 elected Councillors to use on supporting initiatives within their Ward. Examples of work carried out include repairs to bus shelters, donations to their local schools or community charities, the installation of defibrillators in public places, repairs to minor footpath or road improvements, floral displays, tree planting, re-instating or providing extra street lights as well as a range of equipment in local parks.

Provide the opportunity for local citizens to influence how policies are written and services are delivered through the development of a Corporate Co-production Strategic Framework and a revised Consultation and Engagement Strategy

A draft revised Consultation and Engagement strategy has been produced; however consultation is ongoing in relation updating the strategy to reflect the lesson learnt from COVID-19. The strategy was informed by the Recovery and Future Generations Policy Development Committee and is closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Framework on Co-production. Good progress has been with the development and implementation of the Council's Regional Co-production strategy developed for Social Care. Work in underway to build upon this approach and to secure funding from the Economic Recovery fund to further develop our corporate approach to co-production and build capacity across the organisation.

We have continued to support public engagement in decision making through public questions at Cabinet, Council, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees. The majority of Council meetings are open to the public and anyone living or working in Swansea can suggest a topic for scrutiny.

There are also opportunities for anyone to suggest questions, and submit views. We have a good social media presence and publish a monthly e-newsletter as well as maintain a public blog, improving public information and awareness of scrutiny and making it easier to connect with us.

The Consultation and Engagement Strategy is due to be adopted in the next few months which, when adopted, will provide services with greater clarity on the principles they need to follow when undertaking consultation and engagement. This should result in more opportunities for the public to shape council services and policies. During the coming 12 months we will work with Co-production Wales to develop and deliver a co-production strategy that can be adopted by all services. When adopted the strategy will provide clarity and opportunities to work with communities and groups in developing policies and services in a co-productive way.

3. What and how can we do better (now and for the long-term)?

Although good progress has been made with the delivery of our Transformation and Future Council priority, there remains a number of areas for improvement and development. The increase in demand for public services has resulted in an increase in demand for customer services. Although our Digital programme and the increased use of automation has produced some efficiencies and greater capacity, customer demand and the complexity of demand is increasing. The average number of calls and emails through the Council's call centre received per month during 2021/22 was over 15,000 and 6,000 respectively – an increase on the pre-pandemic levels. Responding to the pandemic has diverted resources to new activities and supporting customers in different ways. There is a need to review customer service delivery and standards and accelerate the development of a multi-skilled customer service team. Some customers still need support in using on-line channels and the development of Community Hubs across Swansea is a key priority over the coming year. Although the delivery of our Digital programme has made good progress as evidenced in relation to meeting key performance indicators and demonstrating greater efficiencies, challenges still remain in relation to staff capacity and staff retention in a highly competitive market. We also need to review the design and accessibility of online services, not only those belonging to the Council but nationally and those of our partners. Online services need to be easy to use for our residents, otherwise this increases demand into the Council's contact centre and libraries from people face-to-face and over the telephone. The aim would be to involve feedback from our service users in this review.

Looking to continuously improve, we will explore ways in which technology and automation can provide greater back-office efficiency, enhanced user experience and a more modern working environment for our workforce, both employee led and manager led. Our investment in the Oracle Fusion product for HR, Payroll and Finance functionality needs to be strategically reviewed and maximised where possible to ensure value for money and digital progress as the world of work continues to evolve and adapt. Providing all workforce groups with access to digital content relating to their employment is a future priority, as is a revised attraction and recruitment tool that enables us to promote Swansea as an employer of choice through a modern and tailored application process.

The Service Centre manually processes over 4000 workforce related changes each year, and recruitment activity has doubled to 1600 new hires per year since 2021. Improving electronic workflow, automation and licensing authority will enable us to reduce manual intervention and transform our service from a processing centre to a systems development function where monitoring, auditing and shaping the platform will provide value adding activity for the benefit of the workforce and our suppliers.

Our Workforce and Organisational Development strategy needs to address the recruitment and retention of staff in key areas which are critical to the future transformation and development of the Council. The Scrutiny Inquiry into Procurement that took place in 2021/22 found that good progress had been made but identified challenges still remain in terms of developing the approach to cover all areas of the Council’s procurement. More information on this can be found in Part 2 of the Review.

4. Conclusion - the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

A review of the evidence in relation to whether the Council is exercising its functions effectively in relation to its Transformation & Future Council priority suggests that it is owning its ambition.

<i>Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
<i>Transformation & Future Council</i>				x	

This means that the Council is stepping out of a ‘business as usual’ mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

We came to this conclusion because:

Progress meeting the steps to deliver the Well-being Objective

Overall good progress has been made with the delivery of our Transformation and Future Council priority. Our Achieving Better Together programme has achieved a high level of assurance from our Internal Audit and the majority of aligned plans and policies such as the Workforce and Organisational Development plan are making good progress and are on target.

Our Digital programme has enabled the transformation of many customer transactions and the delivery of services, ensuring our residents can access information and services in a timely and efficient way, at a time and in a place which suits their needs. The increased use of automation for standardised procedures has created additional capacity, freeing up staff time and resources. Our Digital Inclusion programme offers support to a range of different customers in different ways and settings to ensure that as many of people can benefit from the digital transformation of our services. Technology has also transformed our workplace, affording some employees greater agility in the workplace and the benefits from remote working, closer to residents and the communities they serve. This change has also enabled some employees to have a better work/life balance and or help with caring responsibilities and thus contributing to greater overall employee retention.

Overall, the Council put in place good arrangements to supports it workforce during the pandemic and through recovery. Scrutiny identified a number of examples of good practice in terms of supporting the well-being of staff through the expansion of the Helping Hands service, the development of Mental Health First aid tool kits and other preventative measures, which are currently being revised and tailored to other specific sectors of the workforce such as Education and Schools. Good progress has also been made with the development of the Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy, the establishment of issue based working groups e.g.

Equalities and investment and the restructuring of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Occupational Health functions.

During 2021/22, a detailed Scrutiny Inquiry into Procurement concluded that the Council's approach to procurement was good and had not only built on many years of good practice, such as the award winning Beyond Bricks and Mortar, but had also evolved to incorporate new sustainable procurement principles and had taken into account wherever possible wider Social Value Benefits and other potential benefits such as the Foundational Economy.

- See Part 2 – Areas for Continued Improvement

Contributing to the achievement of all the national well-being goals.

The Council is working to maximise its contribution to the national well-being goals when meeting its Transformation & Future Council well-being objective:

- *A prosperous Wales* – Supporting and training the Council's workforce to deliver transformed services that provides the most sustainable outcomes for residents.
- *A Resilient Wales* – The Managing the Present and Shaping the Future, Swansea Council – From Recovery to Transformation Strategy underpins our recovery from Covid-19 and aims in order to transform services, deliver better outcomes for residents and achieve financial sustainability with reduced carbon footprint.
- *A Healthier Wales* – Encourage greater community ownership of parks and work with 'friends of parks' organisations to ensure the long-term sustainability and control of parks and public spaces.
- *A more Equal Wales* – Providing the opportunity for local citizens to influence how policies are written and services are developed through the development of a co-production strategy.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – Making community budgets available so that local people can decide together with their representatives what their local priorities are.
- *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – Continuing to strengthen the Welsh language service and language services generally offered by the Council by providing basic language training for front-line staff.
- *A globally responsible Wales* – Continue to modernise public engagement in democracy and Council decision making through accessible meeting times, web broadcasting, electronic voting and petitions.

Working sustainably when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective:

The council is working sustainably in line with the following five ways of working when meeting its well-being objective to safeguard people from harm:

- *Addressing long-term challenges.* Our Achieving Better Together programme has moved from the 'refocus' phase of the programme, looking forward to meet internal and external challenges in the longer term. The development of our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy the Council aims to address the predicted long term needs and gaps in the workforce and how this can be addressed. The Council's procurement work aims to find ways to support and nurture the local supplier community so it resilient in the longer term. Our digital programme aims to deliver more digital projects that help residents access services 24/7 through digital channels, whilst supporting the most vulnerable in the future.

Our approach to the Welsh Language aims to increase the number of Welsh speakers and promote the use of Welsh both across the Council and in communities by 2050.

- *Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.* Our Achieving Better Together programme aims to prevent problems from escalating and has been designed to ensure the long term resilience and delivery of Council services. The development of our Workforce and Organisational Strategy has also been designed to anticipate workforce planning challenges e.g. recruitment and retention. Our Digital Inclusion approach aims to support residents get online and access a range of services and information at an early and prevent problems from escalating.
- *Integration – joining things up and avoiding duplication / conflicting priorities.* Our Achieving Better Together programme adopts a corporate cross-cutting approach to change and transformation and has not been developed in silo. The development of our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy has been undertaken by working across all Directorates and has taken a corporate holistic view of the workforce, internal and external environments, partners and regulators. There is a close correlation many of the steps to deliver both the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Strategic Equality Plan. Our Digital programme flows from the Digital strategy which places technology as a key enabler of integration, reusing technologies across multiple services, resulting in economy of scale and avoiding duplication.
- *Working in partnership with others.* Our Achieving Better Together programme aims to learn from the best practice of other organisations and many of the projects involve multiple partners to deliver integrated outcomes. We have worked other local authorities and the Welsh Government to establish the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee to bring coherence to regional governance and deliver regional functions, including strategic development planning, regional transport planning and to promote economic well-being.
- *Involving people.* Our Achieving Better Together programme takes a user-centred design approach wherever possible, so that services reflect the needs of residents and / or staff. The development of our Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy has involved a wide range of staff, Trade Unions, Senior Managers and Councillors. Our procurement work has included a series of consultations with potential external suppliers to revise and develop our approach to procurement and relevant policies and guidelines. During the development of our Strategic Equality Plan we sought to involve people that reflect the diversity of our communities including those with protected characteristics.

Consultation outcome

The council undertook a survey of the public, local businesses, Council staff and trade unions in 2021/22.

There was a low response rate to the survey – under 100 responses - despite the Council doing its best to publicise the survey, including sending direct emails to stakeholders. The low response rate to the survey might have affected confidence in the results.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that Swansea Council as a whole does its job effectively?

Almost 40% of respondents (39% $n = 26$) agreed that as a whole Swansea Council did its job effectively. However a similar proportion 39% ($n = 11$) disagreed that Swansea Council did its job effectively. A further 21% ($n = 15$) neither agreed nor disagreed as to whether they thought Swansea Council did its job effectively.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that the Council has been is making good progress towards meeting its objectives; safeguarding people from harm, improving education and skills, transforming our economy and infrastructure, tackling poverty, maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and bio-diversity and the transformation and future Council development.

The largest proportion of participants agreed that we had made good progress in relation to transforming our economy and infrastructure (42% $n = 30$), followed by maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and bio-diversity (38% $n = 27$), and safeguarding people from harm (34% $n = 14$). Almost a third of participants (32% $n = 23$) thought that the Council has made good progress in relation to improving education and skills and just under a quarter (23% $n = 16$) thought the Council has made good progress with transformation and the future Council development. The smallest proportion of people (20% $n = 14$) thought that the Council had made good progress with tackling poverty.

Areas for continued improvement

- Look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process and improve response rates for the annual self-assessment.

Conclusion to Part 1

The Council is effectively delivering its functions. The evidence in Part 1 of this assessment shows that the extent to which it is delivering its functions is that it is **owning its ambition** in the delivery of its well-being objectives, which are the councils key priorities for delivery. This means that the Council is stepping out of a 'business as usual' mind-set and acting to change how things are currently done. It is signalling early progress to wider change with more parts of the Council and organisations becoming involved. The Council is taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The Council defines its approach as ambitious and staff work across sectors and help influence change.

Part 2 – How the Council uses its Resources

The Council has a duty to the public to use its resources wisely. This means making economic, efficient and effective use of the resources at its disposal. In other words, providing value for money to the public; but it also means doing so in a way that is fair and sustainable so that services are available to all without compromising the needs of future generations.

When we talk about the ‘resources’ that are at the Council’s disposal, we are generally referring to the Councils budget, its workforce and its other assets, such as buildings. The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively when:

- It is minimising the resources used (Economic).
- The intended results correspond to the actual results (Effective).
- There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).

These resources are used through the following areas:

- Financial Planning.
- Workforce Planning.
- Procurement.
- Performance Management (and benchmarking).
- Asset management.

This part of the Annual Review of Performance is an assessment on the extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. It will do so by critically reviewing and evaluating how these resources were used through financial and workforce planning, procurement, performance management and asset management. Part 1 of this assessment, which looks at how effectively the Council is delivering its functions, is also a measure of the effective use of resources, i.e. the extent to which the intended results correspond to the actual results and should also be read as such.

How well and we doing and how do we know?

The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its use of resources and governance arrangements in place. The assessment looked at what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence.

	Evidence & effectiveness of delivery	Extent of evidence & effectiveness
1	Not in place	No evidence of effective delivery.
2	Limited application and effectiveness	Some evidence of application, but the effectiveness of delivery is limited.
3	Mixed Application and effectiveness	Mixed evidence of effective application, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence.
4	Strong Application and effectiveness	Clear evidence of effective application.
5	Embedded	Clear evidence of effective and embedded application

The use of resources – strategy and vision

The Council’s self-assessment tested whether there is sufficient strategic planning in place to ensure the effective use of resources.

Criteria				
There are comprehensive plans / strategies in place for workforce, finance, procurement and assets. These plans are sustainable and contribute to the Council’s objectives.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The Council has a Corporate Plan, which describes the Council’s six well-being objectives. The well-being objectives are the Council’s key priorities and are aimed at maximising the Council’s contribution to the national goals set by Welsh Government and to improving the well-being of the people of Swansea in a way that is sustainable and meets the needs of local people without compromising the interests of future generations.

The Council has a complimentary set of financial plans, including the Medium Term Financial Plan, Revenue Strategy and Capital Strategy, each aligned to providing a sustainable budget and revenue cash limits for directorates and services to deliver the Corporate Plan over the short, medium and long term. These then align to departmental service plans for delivery of the services to meet the objectives of the corporate plan – See Financial Planning section below for further details.

The Council developed a new Workforce Strategy for 2022 to 2027, which accounts for corporate and service level plans, council vision and key objectives. The strategy has been developed taking into consideration the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Council's Achieving Better Together Transformation Plan to support a workforce that is fit for the future and has the capability and capacity to deliver the Council's objectives. The workforce strategy will be monitored and reviewed for effectiveness against objectives following roll-out from April 2022 – see Workforce Strategy section below for further details.

The Council’s Procurement procedures follow the relevant rules set out in constitution. Sustainable procurement principles as set out within the revised Wales Procurement Policy Statement issued in March 2021 underpin the Council’s procurement practice. The Council’s procurement strategy was reviewed for effectiveness against intended objectives at scrutiny during 2021/22 – see Procurement section below for further details. The Council has an adopted Asset Management Strategy. Collaborative working is an increasing feature of how we manage our estate. The Local Property Board enables public bodies to work together to find solutions that safeguard assets for the benefit of our communities in the long term.

Financial Management

Criteria				
There are robust mechanisms in place to deliver the budget with strong and effective budget monitoring and control.				
Budget setting and savings proposals are monitored to identify any adverse impact, including adverse impact on equality and on the well-being of current and future generations.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

Budgets are set at Council each year following an extensive budget setting process, which includes widespread public consultation. The Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2021/22 were approved by Council on 4th March 2021. They continued to set out an ongoing ambitious programme of approved capital spending plans and future capital spending plans sustained by unsupported borrowing. At the time, there was continuing uncertainty surrounding the ongoing impact from COVID-19 on the scale of additional spending, the loss of income, and the funding arrangements for reimbursement in part, or in full, that the authority faced in responding to the pandemic.

The Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2022/23 were approved at Council on 3rd March 2022 where the unsupported borrowing to fund the approved and future capital spending plans is now fully externalised at fixed rates for up to 50 years de-risking general fund exposure to future interest rate movements, though of course future investment and borrowing decisions will remain exposed to the now much higher interest rate environment. Existing commitments would require only modest budget savings to be delivered to help facilitate that major capital investment and economic regeneration stimulus; these plans are likely to still be affected by ongoing ripple effects of COVID-19. New investment decisions, requiring materially more expensive borrowing, will be consequentially significantly harder to achieve at the same time as the outlook for public finances in real terms, after inflation, has deteriorated very rapidly.

Once set, the budget is then monitored at a number of governance and assurance groups, committees and meetings. At a corporate level quarterly budget monitoring reports are produced for the Council's Corporate Management Team and Cabinet. These budget monitoring reports are scrutinised by senior management at monthly Performance & Financial Monitoring Meetings, at the Council's Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel and at Governance & Audit Committee. Rigorous spending controls are in place as part of budget monitoring arrangements to contain, reduce, defer and delay spending as far as possible, having due regard to the existing agreed budget and political priorities to nonetheless seek to limit service overspending and take corrective action.

The quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2021/22 consistently identified some service revenue budget overspends at year end, driven especially by Covid spending, albeit reducing throughout the year. Towards the year-end the pace and scale of reimbursement of costs and lost tax and service income from Welsh Government became increasingly clear and as a result at several verbal updates on third quarter position to Cabinet, Council, Governance & Audit Committee and scrutiny panels,

the S151 Officer advised an overall significant outturn underspend was expected. Total service underspending has now been confirmed (at just over £41m) and is an extremely good outcome. The net overall underspend at year end is the result of both the services forecast and planned underspending together with a number of late additional funding streams from the Welsh Government including Revenue Support Grant, Council Tax shortfall funding and the Cost of Living Support scheme for 2022-23 as a one off contribution which the two latter are included as part of "One off corporate costs/income".

Decisions on budget savings are taken by Cabinet and Council irrespective of the officer advice, which is weighed by Members when making decisions. Budget savings are subject to consultation with trade unions, staff and the public. All savings are documented, directorate budgets are frozen and savings are highlighted in officer financial advice. Savings targets are monitored and reviewed at the Reshaping and Budget Setting Board established as part of the Council's Achieving Better Together transformation strategy. In addition, monitoring and reviews at monthly Performance & Financial Monitoring meetings identify any issues with savings or income generation and puts corrective action in place. During 2021/22, as a result of COVID-19, the Council dis-continued the use of a tracking mechanism in order to monitor progress against the specific savings proposals contained within service and overall budgets proposals. The tracker was not completed during the various lockdowns and emergency response to the COVID 19 pandemic as part of pragmatic and practical reprioritisation of essential work (focus on outturn, closure, statement of accounts, maintaining supply lines for payroll, accounts payables, receivables and distribution of emergency grant aid). It is clear however that some additional compensating savings were made in year where specific savings had been delayed or had not been achieved. In addition, all directorates underspent in 2021/22 at outturn and so equal or equivalent value savings were delivered including some specifics. Savings tracking and the review of effectiveness will recommence in 2022/23.

Local Authorities have a corporate responsibility to operate within available resources and to remain financially sound over the short, medium and longer term. One of the key tools available to Authorities in managing its affairs is the creation and use of both General and Earmarked reserves to assist in delivering services over a period longer than one financial year. Borrowing and unplanned use of reserves is kept to a minimum in line with good governance. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), via the Local Authority Accounting Panel, issued a bulletin in July 2014 (LAAP 99) intended to give guidance to Local Authorities on the management and review of reserves; this bulletin is considered best practice in terms of Local Authority financial administration and effectively must be followed. Within the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of Chief Financial Officers to advise Local Authorities about the level of reserves that should be held and to ensure there are clear protocols for their establishment and use. Reserves should not be held without a clear purpose. It is the duty of the Chief Financial Officer to specifically report on the robustness of estimates and reserves when the Council considers its budget requirement; as such the Revenue Budget approved by Council in March 2021 made specific references to the adequacy of reserves at that time. Notwithstanding that specific statutory requirement, it is the duty of the Chief Finance Officer to regularly review the position regarding available reserves. This is monitored through Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, Governance & Audit Committee and Scrutiny as part of corporate overview when reporting on budgets and the Medium Term Financial Plan. In addition, any changes to reserves is reported through the appropriate committee / Cabinet.

The written report on the Review of Reserves was presented to Council on 7th October 2021, which provided a strategic and focussed assessment of the current year's financial performance and an update on strategic planning assumptions over the next 3 financial years. The conclusion of the Statement was that the Council could potentially struggle to deliver within the overall resources

identified to support the budget in 2022/23 and beyond unless the local government settlement was much enhanced and preferably multi-year. The quantum was duly confirmed much enhanced by March 2022 and pleasingly was a three year settlement albeit heavily front loaded then dropping off significantly. The effects of this significant dropping off in cash terms will be magnified substantially by much higher than expected inflation, higher than expected pay awards, higher borrowing costs, and potentially fixed or now even lower cash support from government. The likely projected outturn was dependent upon the ability of the Council to reduce and restrict ongoing expenditure across all areas, its ability to recover expenditure and lost income from Welsh Government and continued reliance on active capital financing strategies to maximise the short term savings to enable the capital equalisation reserve to be bolstered for the medium to long-term, recognising the major future capital commitments already irrevocably made by Council decisions on the size of the capital programme and associated borrowing.

The report to Council in October 2021 reviewing reserves proposed no additional transfers, at that time, between reserves to those highlighted in the quarterly monitoring reports. Based on the net Revenue position arising out of the actual final outturn position, however, the equally fully planned substantial continued underspending on capital financing and contingency, central inflation and other corporate items including additional Welsh Government Covid grants has enabled sums to be added to the recovery reserve, the capital equalisation reserve, the general reserve and some to be carried forward once again on contingency, which is a prudent way of planning for and addressing some of, the future certain increased costs of financing the ambitious mid-term capital programme and the uncertainty of COVID-19. The Section 151 Officer in the same report stated that it was his opinion that there is no scope within General reserves to fund any additional expenditure of the Council given the current risks facing the Council in terms of ongoing spending pressures, inflation and the uncertainty of the real terms value of future Welsh Government funding streams. That means that all spending must otherwise continue to be wholly contained within existing budgets or met by the specific and already very substantial earmarked reserves set up as part of the outturn report.

All budget proposals and budget savings are subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment and there is extensive consultation with the public, trade unions and council staff. Integrated impact assessments (IIAs) are a legal requirement within both the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being and Future Generation Act 2015 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure. The IIA assesses budget and savings proposals to examine whether there is a risk that they would affect any person or persons adversely. Swansea Council's IIA has been enhanced to take into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

It is known from previous years that, due to the scale of budget reductions, those with protected characteristics are likely to be affected. In assessing the impact of the budget proposals, the Council continues to attempt to ensure that any effect is not disproportionate and that there is a continued focus on mitigation wherever possible. In this context the following should be noted: where IIAs show potential significant impact with no possible mitigation, these proposals are referred for further consideration; for those IIAs where potential significant impact has been identified and mitigation has been possible, the associated action plans are monitored and reviewed. The Council continues to deliver a wide range of services for all the citizens of Swansea. Many of these are of particular benefit to the areas covered by our IIA process. The Council is committed to protecting the vital frontline services that matter most to the people of Swansea, tackling poverty and looking after the most vulnerable in our communities. The Council will continue to do everything it can to meet this challenging commitment given the financial constraints it faces. However, services may be

provided in a different way in line with the ‘Swansea – Achieving Better Together’ transformation strategy.

Areas for continued improvement

- Continue to contain, reduce, defer and delay spending as far as possible, having due regard to the existing agreed budget and political priorities to nonetheless seek to limit service overspending and take corrective action.
- Re-establish tracking (suspended as a result of Covid) to ensure that savings targets are monitored and reviewed at the Reshaping and Budget Setting Board established as part of the Council’s Achieving Better Together transformation strategy.

Procurement

Criteria				
The procurement strategy and approach seek to maximise the social, economic, environmental and cultural impact of spending decisions.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Council spends some £290 million a year on a diverse range of goods, works and services from our external partner organisations. The Councils response to Covid 19 not only met the challenge of sourcing essential PPE and other supplies effectively, working to support the Council’s care infrastructure – both our suppliers and workforce - and Neath Port Talbot Council, but also assisted departments in accessing Covid relief grants, prepared a large range of contract variations due to the massive disruption caused by Covid-19, and so supported our social care and regeneration throughout.

Important changes that assisted in responding to the pandemic, but which also create a more robust and sustainable service, include the a new low value self-service procurement process, with pack and guide for departments to self-manage low value contracts and the introduction of DocuSign software, which (for example) enables electronic contracts to be issued and signed by suppliers direct. This has resulted in 24,000 less pages being printed in Commercial Services alone with associated benefits and enabled the critical continuity of service during the pandemic.

Sustainable procurement principles as set out within the revised Wales Procurement Policy Statement issued in March 2021 underpin the Council’s procurement practice. Procurement officers work with services at the earliest stages of the procurement process so specifications can be developed by managers that consider value-for-money on a whole-life basis (costs relating to maintenance, disposal and consumables are taken into account). This includes work undertaken on a Procurement Guidance Document on The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Procurement, which provides practical advice to staff ensuring they consider the Sustainable Development Principle at the earliest opportunity. Supplier Suitability Questionnaires also include a section on sustainability focusing on environmental issues, but also address equalities and safeguarding in addition to more traditional technical and economic criteria. This social value work, which includes a

focus on the development of local suppliers, is a key development piece for the Service and a new model of social value consideration is being developed, working with the WLGA and Welsh Government, with further details below.

Beyond Bricks and Mortar is an award winning initiative led by the Place Directorate, which secures social benefits from construction and regeneration activity across sectors in the City & County of Swansea for the lasting benefits of the community. Our Community Benefit Policy has broadened this approach to encompass all Council procurement projects. This makes the most of opportunities to achieve added value and to maximise contribution to the Well-being Goals as a result of public sector spending in Swansea. Additional steps have also been taken towards integrating a circular economy approach with a review undertaken with WRAP, working with Commercial Services.

The Council has modified its Constitution to place greater emphasis on using local suppliers to meet our need for goods, services and works by ensuring local companies are invited to bid for certain projects; and we have also sought to maximize the value of the Swansea Pound through the development of the Foundational Economy. The Council also took part in Welsh Government's pilot to develop the Foundational Economy, working on issues related to local procurement and focusing on the construction sector. A pilot approach to the design and specification of contracts for the Council has allowed small businesses to bid for public contracts and increase the amount of money spent locally by the Council. The pilot focused on changing the procurement approach for 3 construction based contracts; the learning from that process is being used to change the overall procurement strategy within the Council. The 'Foundations for Local Success' seeks to develop contracts with local suppliers to supply and install Solar PVs, supply and install air source heat pumps and undertake external environmental works.

Ongoing initiatives are being carried out in conjunction with the External Funding Programme Officer to encourage more local SMEs to tender for work for the Council. This entails speaking to local contractors to establish any perceived barriers to them tendering, splitting contracts into smaller lots to be more attractive and relevant to SMEs and simplifying documentation.

The Council is currently working to further embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act into all Council procurement. As an example, an exercise was carried out on the More Homes Parc yr Helyg contract to establish the distance from site of all the suppliers and sub-contractors that were utilised on the project; and we are working to review how we can further embed additional social value, creating an enhanced system to integrate such value. Whilst the Council seeks to give sufficient weight to biodiversity, natural environment and culture and health considerations, further consideration is being given to how this approach can be expanded in line with social value principles.

In addition to the inclusion of community benefits and social value clauses in our contracts, the Council has also been working to ensure that potential consultants and contractors evidence commitment to, and have company policies in-place for: Modern Slavery, Equal Opportunities, the Welsh Language and Safeguarding (Cohesive Communities). We have continued to host Meet the Buyer events and Swansea hosted the first virtual MTB event of its kind in Wales, paving the way for other Local Authorities to follow suit using the model that Swansea created with the Welsh Government funded portal for all procurement opportunities in Wales known as Sell 2 Wales.

The Council held a scrutiny inquiry into procurement during 2021/22. The inquiry looked into how the Council is meeting its duties under legal frameworks and to ensure it is working to procure locally, ethically and greenly whilst being cost effective and transparent in its processes. The Panel was satisfied that procurement is clearly built into the Council's recovery planning moving forward,

with its procurement activity aligned to the Council's key objectives. The inquiry did recommend that Cabinet develops a mechanism for measuring the impact of spending on policy commitments in relation to, for example, social benefit, local procurement, natural environment and climate change. It also recommended that Cabinet works with the Welsh Local Government Association to press the Welsh Government to develop ways for the impact of key national commitments to be measured across Wales and the sharing of procurement good practice across Wales.

The Inquiry recognised that a vast array of procurement activity takes place across the many Council services and therefore wanted to ensure that the Council is getting the best spend from the public purse. This should include not only value for money but in the quality of services or items we procure. The Panel were satisfied that part of the central procurement team's role was ensuring that value for money is achieved and that purchasing power is optimised between quality and cost when procurement activities are undertaken. The Inquiry was pleased to find that getting best value for money in procurement is not just restricted to getting the lowest price and that the Council evaluates tenders and quotations based upon set evaluation criteria that depend on each contract and that can be by price/cost, quality or by price/cost and quality.

The Inquiry highlighted the longer term and therefore unknown impacts of leaving the European Union on the cost and availability of materials as well as on the workforce locally, which have been compounded by the Covid pandemic; the Inquiry emphasised the importance of continuing to consider and monitor this risk.

The Inquiry considered that evidence suggests that in Swansea there is clear commitment to, and development of, the local economy with support for local suppliers being evident for a number of years. The Panel heard that the Beyond Bricks and Mortar initiative was developed back in 2009 with a view to securing added benefits from regeneration projects led by the Council. These take the form of community benefits derived from suppliers and are articulated through contracts. Such community benefits include identifying training opportunities and apprenticeships, the development of more local supply chains and wider community benefits, e.g. engagement with schools, colleges and participation in community events.

The Inquiry was told that the Council regularly reviews its processes so that it can get the balance right between probity and procedure and not having unnecessary barriers to some smaller contractors. The Leader, Councillor Rob Stewart told the Inquiry that the localism aspect will continue to be a key focus in order to ensure the monies we spend stay as local as possible and it is a key aspect of the Council's procurement strategy. The Panel heard about 'meet the buyer' events that are held to encourage engagement from providers on main Council contracts and to support market development. The Panel would like to see the number of open days expanded to encourage local firms to tender for council works and encourage supplier feedback. They also felt that the events could be done in a number of ways depending on the requirements of, for example, the contract and could include for example contract and/or trade specific events, roadshows and webinars etc. It was recognised that local businesses are not always aware of potential open days or events, so the Council needs to develop and maintain direct links with local businesses including developing appropriate communication channels to alert them of up-coming procurement opportunities. The Inquiry welcomed the new supplier guide for potential suppliers that has been developed to assist with the understanding of the Council procurement processes. The Inquiry heard that the Council has also updated its external website to improve supplier engagement and access to information. The Inquiry recognised the improvements made in this area but emphasised the need to continue to review documentation and contract design regularly to further encourage small and medium-size businesses to tender for council works.

Whilst excellent work is being done in Swansea in improving community benefit and local procurement, the Inquiry hoped pending changes in legislation will allow Councils to build upon this local procurement activity; that we consider how we work with the third sector, especially the smaller organisations, and the difficulties they may experience should be recognised and considered in our procurement process were possible. The Inquiry heard the regulation and policy relating to procurement is about to go through a period of significant change with an expected reform of the UK Public Contract Regulations; this may allow more flexibility for the Council to consider, for example, enhanced social value criteria. The Inquiry also heard that the impact of the UK Government's Procurement reform is currently an unknown factor; the published Green Paper indicated the removal of the light touch regime from the new rules, which may put additional pressure on the Council's procurement resources and that these should be reviewed accordingly.

The Inquiry heard Swansea Council is committed to 'A more equal Wales', this being a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstance. The Equality Act 2010 requires purchasers to ensure they do not discriminate in the provision of goods or services. The Inquiry was reassured to hear compliance with the Act is embedded in all the Council's tender documentation and frameworks. This includes the frameworks used for contractors which set out clear requirements to evidence commitment to, and maintenance of, policies for both equal opportunities, as well as for community benefits/social value, modern slavery, Welsh language and safeguarding.

Evidence to the Inquiry suggests there is a Council vision in relation to environmental and ethical practice with aims and objectives within the Council's corporate plans, which are acted upon daily in departmental procurement activities. The Inquiry was satisfied that there was good environmental and ethical practice in place, which could be built upon and embedded further. This included considering how the Council's approach to social value, localism, biodiversity and the natural environment could be further integrated and expanded in line with key principles and the current Council pilot reviewing this matter; investigating how the impact of a contract's carbon footprint can be measured, and; increasing the use of nature-based solutions in the Council's procurement practice.

The Panel was pleased to see evidence that suggests the Council does indeed work across departments, with its partners and others in the pursuit of benefits from economies of scales, achieving efficiencies in the use of resources whilst in some cases being able to realise savings. The Inquiry were pleased to hear the positive comments from Swansea Council for Voluntary Service about how the Compact arrangements are becoming a strong forum for the third sector. The Inquiry wanted to see this expanded further and the good practice learnt shared and used elsewhere in the Council where appropriate.

The Inquiry were of the view that effective procurement needs a good framework for monitoring performance and measuring success essential for continuous improvement. The Inquiry was keen to see the information collected and then reviewed and used to continually improve.

Areas for continued improvement

- Respond to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Inquiry into procurement - including a focus on enhanced social value considerations in procurement in line with new legislation that the UK and Welsh Governments are developing (once that legislation is published and its impact becomes known), to include considerations of sustainable development, development of the local supplier base and co-production activity, i.e. involving citizens in decision-making, and also a focus on any areas of non-compliance in procurement activity.

Workforce Planning

Criteria				
A workforce strategy enabling a workforce that is fit for the future, flexible and resilient and with sufficient capability and capacity to meet current and future demands.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

Emergency structures were established and resources prioritised towards Covid-19 activities during the pandemic whilst also having to sustain many business-as-usual activities. Staff, in the main, have returned to their substantive roles as services have resumed although it is recognised that there may be a requirement for further workforce activities in the event of future Covid disruption.

A Workforce Working Group was established in 2021 to support the governance arrangements and review this, which culminated in reports presented in March 2021 and an update report in February 2022.

Prior to the pandemic Swansea Council had already begun the successful implementation of an agile working strategy. This enabled an almost seamless transition to working from home for the vast majority of staff during Covid. A revised agile working policy gives greater power to the employee to work in a flexible manner, whilst ensuring the needs of the business continue to be met. This is now informing decisions on the future accommodation strategy, which will continue to see a reduction in the office estate but ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of the evolving hybrid working model. The Scrutiny Working Group heard that staff who found this difficult were supported and that managers have retained regular contact with their staff through team and one-to-one meetings. Lots of information has been provided on working from home and up-to-date equipment has been provided. The Scrutiny Working Group were also pleased that information on how to claim money back from the tax office for working from home is made readily available to staff in various ways.

In the first nine months of the 2020/21 and up to December 2021, headcount and FTE had increased in all Directorates, mainly as a result of the pandemic. This included an increase in traineeship roles (especially in Waste Management), additional TTP (Test, Trace, Protect) and vaccination-line staff recruitment, school catering and cleaning staff and social care staff, including social workers; recruitment and retention in social services remains a challenge. The Scrutiny Working Group heard that a recruitment and development policy has been developed for Social Services, which is not just about pay but also about using different channels for recruitment, working on staff morale and offering a healthy work/life balance and flexibility.

The pandemic did not have any significant impact on the age or gender profile of the workforce. The age profile remains skewed to the 40 to 59 year age brackets; this will be addressed through the new workforce strategy. Excluding Chief Officers, Heads of Service, Soulbury and centrally employed teachers, 60% of posts are occupied by women, 40% occupied by men. The numbers in grades 5 and 6 are almost equal. The only grades with more men than women are Grade 7 and Grade 12 (but it is almost equal split).

The Scrutiny Working Group heard that the use of agency workers in some circumstances had increased during the pandemic. Officers stated that there will always be a need for some agency staff to cover sickness in essential services, but measures are being taken to reduce the numbers of agency workers and they will have the opportunity to apply for traineeship roles and other roles if they desire. The Scrutiny Working Group also heard that the Governance and Audit Committee has been assured that line managers are complying with the agency workers policy and that this is being regularly reviewed.

Specific dedicated resource is now in place to support managers in the management of sickness absence cases. The number of working days/shifts per full time equivalent lost due to sickness absence improved from 11.85 to 9.23 in 2020/21 but has increased to 12.66 in 2021/22 due to Covid and stress related absences. Additional resources has been provided to human resources & organisational development and occupational health to support and advise in managing sickness cases. During the pandemic the Occupational Health and Stress Management and Counselling services continued to be delivered remotely to support the workforce, in line with national guidance. The Scrutiny Working Group heard that the occupational health team is being strengthened with extra funding being made available.

The occupational health corporate action plan for 2022/23 aims to recruit more Helping Hands Volunteers across the Authority. In addition, they are working with the Education Directorate to provide a physiological support pilot, increased access to counselling, a specialist website and network of volunteers (Helping Hands Model) across all schools. It is also the intention to source Stress Management Advisors & Counsellors to deliver: mandatory Mental Health First Aid Training days for Managers per annum; Stress Risk Assessment sessions and reports; Employee Health and Wellbeing training days; a proactive range of prevention workshops and activities to reduce stress and improve employee wellbeing through the Helping Hands Service within available resources; Menopause Support Cafes; Health fairs per annum to improve wellbeing, awareness and provide signposting to specialist services.

During the course of 2021/22 a Staff Survey was undertaken. 993 people completed the survey providing a 14% response, which is 10% less compared with a 24% response rate last time. This drop in response rate could be the result of more staff working from home and feeling less connected to the Council. It could also be a result of workload issues as we recover from the pandemic. Measures to increase the response rate to future surveys will need to be explored. Meetings with the trade union representatives took place to discuss the low response rate to the survey and get their views on how this could be improved in the future. Staff were asked to rate their wellbeing before and after Covid: 57% said they were happy, contented, relaxed compared to 63% prior to Covid. The results also revealed: a huge shift to home working as a result of the pandemic, which is to be expected; that some measures need to be put in place to increase staff confidence in returning to work in the office/on-site; 96% compared to 92% in 2020/21 felt trusted to do their job. Overall the number of staff who state they have experienced harassment, bullying or abuse had decreased compared to the last survey.

The Scrutiny Working Group were also pleased to hear that human resources functions will be brought together under one Head of HR and Service Centre. The Workforce Strategy has 4 Key Themes and 9 Key Strands. Underneath each Strand there are a series of agreed activities with key milestones and success criteria identified. The Strategy contains a specific Strand on "Workforce Development" and progress has already been made on activities, such as the development of a coaching framework. A coaching framework has been developed to give opportunity for staff to undertake coaching and mentoring and help re-enforce good practice and development. The

Leadership Hub has been rebranded to “Let’s Talk” and offers staff an opportunity to hear from leaders and learn about leadership, values and behaviours in a safe environment. The Authority has co-produced training and development opportunities with Gower College and supporting the development of apprenticeships in areas across the council, to help grow our own workforce. The Scrutiny Working Group heard that the workforce strategy includes a specific Strand on “Equality in the Workplace”, which has seen the establishment of a Workforce Equalities Group to progress and deliver on improvements to workforce equalities issues. A further key strand on “Supporting our Workforce” will deliver on and monitor improvements to workforce wellbeing issues.

The Workforce Strategy has been developed following thorough consultation with elected members, leadership teams, Trade Unions and employees and has accounted for corporate and service level plans, council vision and key objectives. Following receipt of the Staff Survey results, Focus Groups were held with Trade Union Representatives and a cross-section of employees on each of the Key Themes. There were also consultation sessions with elected members through the Equalities & Future Generations Policy Development Committee. The key messages from these exercises were as follows:

- Employees welcomed the engagement and want more of it.
- The Key Themes and Strands identified in the Workforce Strategy are the right ones.
- There was a recognised need for the Council’s Principles, Values and Behaviours to be reviewed and refreshed.
- Workforce Planning was seen to be key to the development of the future workforce, particularly in succession planning.
- There was need for consistency in applying good leadership practices across the Council.
- Better and more consistent performance and development discussions need with staff.
- The opportunity should be taken to seek cross-Council efficiencies in organisational structure.
- Pay and grading was a key issue in that we were not competitive or attractive and the current job evaluation scheme needed to be replaced.
- Recruitment practices and processes would be improved. We don’t sell ourselves well.
- Greater investment and consistency needed in Learning & Development provision.
- Recognised need for investment in health and wellbeing- not pro-active enough during Covid.
- Greater engagement need with equalities communities.

All of these comments are being taken into consideration in development of the Workforce Strategy.

Areas for continued improvement

- Respond to the key messages from engagement exercises and finalise the Workforce Strategy.
- Seek to improve the number of responses to the staff survey.
- Reduce staff sickness.

Asset Management

<p>Criteria</p> <p>Assets are managed and utilised to maximise the economic, efficient and effective use of resources to achieve aims and objectives and maximise social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being now and in the future.</p>

Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

A new Asset Management Plan 2021/25 was adopted at Council on 1st July 2021. The new plan represents a corporate approach to asset management and is a development of the previous Asset Management Plan that covered an extended 4-year period 2017/21. The Asset Management Plan is underpinned by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and it supports the delivery of the Council's well-being objectives in its corporate plan. Assets will be managed for the long-term benefit of people and communities and they will be involved in decisions on their use.

The key aspects of the Asset Management Plan are contained within 6 priorities.

- Corporate Landlord
- Disposals
- Property Investments
- Regeneration and Economic Development
- Capital Programme
- Collaboration

The Council has made significant progress in each of these 6 priorities over the last 4 years and the new Asset Management Plan maps out how they will be taken forward over the next 4 years. The Council continues to hold a large and varied portfolio of considerable value, but also, in practice, a considerable liability. The financial position of the Authority continues to be one of expected longer term constraint of capital and revenue but opportunities will continue to be maximised to take forward asset usage, transformation and investment in the nearer term relying on especially advantageous rates of borrowing, resilient specific reserves, grant funding and partnership opportunities. The Council's wider portfolio assists the wider Capital Programme, but also has continued liability of capital investment. The revenue budget is assisted with the income producing assets raising for the Council circa £7.4m, but there remains a challenge over the ongoing reduction of the revenue commitments for the wider operational portfolio. As a result of the disposal of larger sites temporarily on hold pending decision on appropriation of sites to the HRA to enable the More Homes Project, there is likely to be an affect profiling capital receipts in the short term within the disposal programme.

Corporate Landlord

In recent years the roll-out of the Agile Working Programme has created a flexible workforce and as a consequence the Council has been able to decrease their footprint within the Civic Centre. The current pandemic has intensified the pace of these new ways of working and as a result has decreased the need for traditional office space longer-term. This reduction in space has allowed the Council to capitalise on commercial opportunities and accommodate tenants, providing significant financial benefits. It has been important to be able to accommodate many of these tenants since the current proposal is that they will relocate with the Council to a new Public Sector Hub, making the business case for a new development more feasible.

The focus of the accommodation strategy for the next 12 months will be to complete the roll out of Agile working at the Guildhall in line with the revised agile working policy and continue to explore commercial opportunities in the Civic Centre. In addition, there will be the development of Public Sector and Community Hubs within the city centre to potentially house the library, family history and Archives along with an employability hub and the Council's contact elements currently in the Civic Centre.

Disposals

The Council's approach to disposals has been to take a commercial approach, maximising returns whilst also supporting the Council's 'More Homes' initiative to build more Council housing. The primary activity involves providing greater certainty over expected capital receipts and to ensure maximising returns and minimised delays in completion. Additional disposals have been targeted through the identification of relevant sites within the deposit draft LDP and working up the stage feasibility and site investigations to enable timetabled disposal within a four-year programme. The wider universal review identified a number of smaller scale opportunities, which whilst producing lower capital receipts, will also reduce revenue commitments.

Further planned improvement will be to investigate, report and agree the opportunity for the council to act as developer, which whilst removing some sites from the disposal programme, will add value through the recovery of any developer's profit.

Property Investments

A major piece of work undertaken related to the independent review undertaken by JLL, which validated the current approach with regards to the investment portfolio. The main findings of the report were that the current estate management strategy was sound and demonstrated large areas of good practice. This review also identified a property investment fund be created to maximise the Council's strategic position. The creation of a fund, building on the knowledge of the Swansea property market coupled with the ability to borrow at beneficial rates, would place the Council in an advantageous position. This has been set up and good progress has been made in identifying opportunities and progressing negotiations. Since its inception in 2017, the Council has acquired three investment properties at a cost of £8m whilst returning £660k of annual income. All investments purchased to-date exceed the cost of borrowing and provide a net contribution to the overall revenue budget. Now that the investment model is proven, a review of the initial £5m mandate is required so that the Council can pursue larger lot sizes which can often yield better returns.

Regeneration & Economic Development

Copr Bay works have continued to make significant visible progress. Work has been completed on the construction of a 3,500 capacity arena alongside the completion of the Copr Bay site. The Ambassador Theatre Group has been awarded the contract to operate the Arena. The new bridge over Oystermouth Road, a new MSCP and the 1.1-acre coastal park have also opened to the public. Other components of the scheme, including the residential block, North MSCP, and church hall are all significantly advanced and nearing practical completion.

Works have also now commenced on the Kingsway Employment Hub building to construct a major new high-tech office development that will provide space for 600 jobs in Swansea city centre. Set for completion in early 2023, the five-storey development will include 114,000 square feet of commercial floorspace, providing flexible co-working and office opportunities for innovative tech, digital and creative businesses. The development will be carbon zero and worth £32.6 million a year to Swansea's economy. It will feature state-of-the-art digital connectivity, a roof terrace, greenery and balconies overlooking the city centre and Swansea Bay.

Substantial progress has also been achieved at the Hafod Copperworks Powerhouse project with shell and core works completion targeted for July 2022. The iconic Musgrave Engine House has been restored and Vivian Engine House repairs are underway. Work has also continued on the 110 year old Bascule Bridge working closely with Cadw. The historic but derelict Palace Theatre was acquired by the Council both saving a part of Swansea's heritage and acting as a regeneration catalyst for the Upper High Street; grant funding was secured and design and refurbishment works are underway. The innovative digital workspace will offer a home for growing businesses in the tech, digital and creative sectors; Heads of Terms have already been signed with the lead tenant Tramshed Tech.

Capital Programme

There has been a significant increase in the budget allocation both from within the Council and from Welsh Government which has resulted in a reduction in the backlog maintenance for education establishments. In 2018 Faithful & Gould advised that the Education backlog maintenance figure was approximately £43 million; over the last 3 years circa £15 million has been spent on educational properties indicating the current backlog maintenance figure is approximately £30 million. Similarly the Housing Capital maintenance budget has increased year-on-year allowing the authority to concentrate on the issues of homelessness, climate emergency and decarbonisation. All projects within Band A of the QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and three projects (the new PRU and two Welsh-medium primary school builds) from Band B have been delivered. A Welsh-medium secondary is due for completion in May 2022, and an English-medium secondary by May 2023 to ensure more learners benefit from schools of a 21st century learning standard that are in good condition and with suitable buildings and appropriate outdoor spaces.

As of February 2021, the backlog maintenance within Swansea Council assets is in the region of £211M. Projects will be selected on a priority basis. The criteria for selection (unless otherwise stated) were based upon condition rating, legislative compliance, health and safety indications, likelihood of failure and business continuity. The Asset Management Group will review and inform the emerging Capital Strategy.

Collaboration

The work of the Council has seen the co-location of Housing/Library Services in Gorseinon; a trial of Clydach Hub identified lessons learnt to inform the new City Centre Community Hub. The Council acts as lead body for Ystadau Cymru in Swansea Bay; and Community Hub and Public Sector Hub opportunities are being promoted to ensure landmark collaborative schemes.

Next stages include the formalisation of the Community Asset Transfer Policy and continued negotiation around ongoing CATs. The co-ordination of the Local Property Board, as part of the Ystadau Cymru initiative to ensure linkages with the vision, remains to ensure sustainable and improved access to Council services using existing local assets "differently"; this is helping empower citizens to provide and support them in what they need within their community. This includes the completion of the City Centre Community Hub to inform the model and branding for a network of Community facilities tailored to meet the specific needs of those communities. All buildings identified will be operated within the adopted Community Hub model to be effective within the life of the Asset Management Plan. A review of the CAT policy will also take place to ensure it is aligned with the land transaction rules.

Covid-19

On the 15th October 2020, Cabinet approved the strategy on the initial re-mobilisation of the Council and the immediate priorities from the COVID-19 crisis, the longer term plan from recovery to framework to replace Sustainable Swansea Strategy with Swansea – Achieving Better Together.

Many aspects of the Asset Management Plan 2021/25 will ensure continue support for resilience within Council Services with a particular emphasis on the built environment and the regeneration of the wider economy. Changes will be needed to react to the challenges of the uncertainty, in particular around the economy and the local financial position.

As a result of the COVID pandemic, the Council’s commercial rents dropped significantly during the period 2020/21, which was primarily due to the volatility within the local property market and the general inability for tenants to trade. In order to support its tenants, the Council offered financial support during this period (for qualifying tenancies) in the form of rent-free periods to ensure tenant failure & associated voids were minimised, whilst also trying to protect jobs for the local economy. The Council’s financial stimulus resulted in an overall reduction in income received from the commercial property portfolio but was necessary to protect long term income streams. Although the immediate risks have been mitigated, the short/medium term impacts of COVID are still relatively unknown and therefore it is very difficult to forecast the impact this may have until the market has an opportunity to recover. As a significant amount of the Council’s commercial portfolio is leased on a long-term basis, the revenue it receives through the Head lease gearing/turnover is not within the Council’s immediate control and therefore it is anticipated that the level income will likely fluctuate for the foreseeable future.

Climate Change

In June 2019, Swansea Council declared a climate emergency. In response to this a programme of activity is being developed to support the delivery of Net Zero Carbon Council by 2030 and Net Zero Swansea by 2050. In order to achieve net zero by 2030 the council needs to reduce or offset its current total emissions which equate to 27,500TCo2 for 2019/20. This includes: Council Buildings – the Energy Strategy and Carbon Management Action Plan, approved by Cabinet on the 19th November 2020, details initiatives to support the net zero carbon journey e.g. increase the pace and scale of the Re:Fit Cymru programme, with the provision of available resource and finance; a commitment to construct and build new schools and future civic buildings to net carbon zero. The combined effect of these two commitments could equate up to a 20% reduction in emissions equivalent to 20% or 4000T Co2. The intention of increasing tree cover and other measures as part of the council’s biodiversity plan, such as the installation of a new green infrastructure, will also support the offsetting of carbon emissions.

Areas for continued improvement

- Implement the Asset Management Plan 2021/25 and monitor and report on progress.

Performance Management

Criteria				
There are a complimentary set of corporate and service-level plans and strategies in place which set out a Council vision and key objectives				
Performance targets and outcomes to deliver corporate and service aims and objectives are identified and measured with democratic oversight to drive improvement actions				
Performance and outcomes are benchmarked with appropriate comparators to ensure value for money and continuous improvement.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence

The City & County of Swansea published its corporate plan in 2017 as required by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which included a summary of its well-being statement and key priorities, known as ‘Well-being Objectives’; the corporate plan has been refreshed each year since then. The council’s corporate plan describes the steps being undertaken to meet our Well-being Objectives and contribute to the seven national well-being goals outlined in the Act.

The Plan also sets out how we are maximising our contribution to our Well-being Objectives and national goals through the way in which we work, which is in line with sustainable principles as follows:

- Looking ahead to the medium and long-term challenges.
- Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse.
- Ensuring our objectives do not contradict each other and complement those of other public bodies.
- Working in partnership with others.
- Involving local people.

Our corporate plan demonstrates that all of our Well-being Objectives taken together and the steps that we are undertaking to deliver them shows our contribution to all seven national goals and to the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Swansea and Wales.

Our contribution to the national goals and well-being of Swansea and Wales is not just expressed in our corporate plan. The corporate plan describes our key Well-being Objectives and contribution but it forms part of our wider Performance Improvement Framework, which includes departmental Service Plans; the Corporate Plan taken together with Service Plans describes our full contribution.

Performance is measured via corporate performance monitoring reports. Quarterly and annual Corporate Performance Monitoring Reports to the councils Corporate Management Team and Cabinet track progress meeting the Council’s priorities (Well-being Objectives) set out within the Corporate Plan; all quarterly and annual performance monitoring reports are reviewed at Scrutiny as part of the democratic oversight of performance and improvement. Benchmarking performance data at a service level is done through membership of Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) performance networks. Opportunities for other national comparisons were limited following the removal of the Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) by Welsh Government. Data Cymru are currently working with local authorities in Wales to produce a self-assessment performance dataset to help try and plug this gap.

Corporate performance monitoring and reporting was suspended in March 2020 whilst officers were otherwise engaged or impacted following the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recovery took place in June 2020 but was subsequently suspended again in January 2021 following the publication of the Q1 2020/21 Performance Monitoring Report as a result of the second wave of COVID-19. Performance reporting was recovered again in time for Q1 2021/22 but performance targets were not set, the existing performance indicators were retained and not reviewed whilst the Covid pandemic was still in progress. Measuring improvement assessed against the previous comparable reporting period was however maintained when reporting recommenced.

The Local Government & Elections Act 2021 was introduced during 2021/22. As part of the new duties introduced by the Act, the council strengthened and put in new arrangements for self-assessment. The aim of self-assessment, culminating in the annual self-assessment report, is so that the Council continually challenges itself to do better and builds the learning into its plans and arrangements, helping to drive continuous improvement. The approach Swansea adopted was to integrate self-assessment into existing improvement and assessment activity, including within the quarterly and annual performance monitoring reports through the introduction of a self-reflection Tool, adapted from the tool developed by the Future Generations Commissioner, at Q2 and end of year. The advantage of this approach is that it avoids establishing a new and separate, parallel process for corporate self-assessment and instead builds it into what already exists, which is set out as desirable within the statutory guidance.

The information derived from this integrated approach will be used each year to develop the Council's Annual Governance Statement and Annual Review of Performance, which incorporates both the Annual Well-being Report required under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Self-Assessment Report as required by Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act.

The outcome from the self-assessment process undertaken at half-year and at year-end concluding in the annual report should, through the performance management and scrutiny process, seek to determine how effective are the Councils arrangements and identify ways to improve them. The learning from this process should then be fed back into plans and into improving the effectiveness of arrangements.

Audit Wales recently undertook a review of the arrangements all Councils have in place for responding to the requirements of the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021. Audit Wales concluded that Swansea Council's approach has several positive attributes including:

- the modification of the Future Generations Commissioners Self-Reflection tool to support an integrated approach to the gathering evidence to determine progress against the Council's well-being objectives and to fulfil its new self-assessment responsibilities;
- clear corporate and Member awareness and buy into the proposed new approach;
- enhancement of the Council's Annual Governance Statement process into a Service Assurance and Management process;
- utilisation of SWOT analysis within its Annual Service Planning to provide additional evidence for the Self-Assessment process;
- the integration of the final self-assessment output into the Council's annual review of its well-being objectives, this being its Annual Review of Performance due to be published in October 2022;
- a clear time frame for completing the self-assessment and for how and when governance, oversight and scrutiny will be involved in design and sign-off.

In terms of improvement, Audit Wales noted that the response rate to the public consultation survey was low and that there were a number of challenging results to some of the survey questions, such as those around the Council having good governance arrangements. The low response rate might have skewed the results of the survey. Audit Wales reflected that it will be important to ensure that the output for the Council's self-assessment reflects the feedback from the whole survey. Audit Wales noted the Council's intention to undertake an evaluation of the process at the end of the first iteration and to learn any lessons and improve the approach. This includes looking at the consultation activity and work to improve the amount of review, scrutiny and challenge to the self-assessment process.

Following the local government elections in May 2022, the development of a new Corporate Plan for the 2023/27 period will take place during 2022 and will also entail a review of the corporate performance indicators to help measure progress. It is expected that the new Corporate Plan and associated performance indicators will be in place by 1st April 2023. In the meantime, the current suite of corporate performance indicators for 2022/23 reporting will be reviewed for continued relevance, making only essential changes whilst work takes place on the new corporate plan and associated performance indicators; annual performance targets will also be re-established for 2022/23 end-of-year reporting.

Areas for continued improvement

- Review the current suite of corporate performance indicators for continued relevance for 2022/23 reporting and set annual targets for end-of-year reporting.
- Develop a Corporate Plan and associated performance indicators for 2023/27.
- Look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process for the annual self-assessment.
- Review and work to improve the amount of review, scrutiny and challenge to the self-assessment process.

Consultation outcome

The council undertook a survey of the public, local businesses, Council staff and trade unions in 2021/22.

There was a low response rate to the survey – under 100 responses - despite the Council doing its best to publicise the survey, including sending direct emails to stakeholders. The low response rate to the survey might have affected confidence in the results.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that Swansea Council uses its resources effectively to deliver value for money for local taxpayers?

Almost a third of respondents (29%) agreed that Swansea Council used its resources effectively to deliver value for money for local taxpayers. However, over a half of respondents (58%) disagreed with the statement. A further 13% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed as to whether Swansea Council used its resources effectively to deliver value for money for local taxpayers.

Just under half of all respondents (49%) responded to an open ended question about what more the Council could do to use its resources more effectively to deliver value for money to local taxpayers.

Suggestions given included: focusing on more front line services, improving consultation and engagement with the public, investing more in housing, roads, tourism, focusing on deprived parts of Swansea and improving public transport.

Areas for continued improvement

- Look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process and improve response rates for the annual self-assessment.

Conclusion to Part 2

The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively when:

- It is minimising the resources used (Economic).
- The intended results correspond to the actual results (Effective).
- There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).

The evidence in Part 2 of this assessment shows that:

There is a **strong application and effective use of resources** around financial management, procurement and asset management.

There is a **mixed evidence of effective application**, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence regarding workforce planning and performance management.

Part 3 – the effectiveness of the Councils Governance arrangements

The Council is required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 to undertake a review of its governance arrangements, at least annually. The review is intended to show how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance.

The review of governance is brought together in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is to accompany the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. The AGS is a key document informed by a number of both internal and external assurance sources.

This part of the Annual Review of Performance is not meant to replicate the AGS but should be read in conjunction with it. This part of the review is intended to assess and evidence the effectiveness of the Councils governance arrangements in helping to deliver its functions and provide value for money.

The Council has effective governance when it effectively applying the core principles of good governance are set out by CIPFA / SOLACE in *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*:

- A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.
- B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C - There is a positive relationship between the resources used and outputs / outcomes, i.e. both the economic and effective criteria are met (Efficient).
- There is equitable access to services and needs are met without compromising the needs to future generations (Equity and sustainability).
- D – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

These core principles are applied in the Council through the following governance arrangements:

- Vision, strategy and performance.
- Organisational Governance, Ethics and Values.
- Organisational leadership.
- Customer & Community Engagement and Involvement.
- Risk Management and Business Continuity.
- Partnership / collaboration governance.
- Internal Control Environment.
- Fraud & Financial Impropriety.
- Programme and Project Assurance.
- Innovation & Change Management.

How well and we doing and how do we know?

The Council undertook a self-assessment and assurance of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The assessment looked at what arrangements were in place during 2021/22, how effective they were and the evidence.

	Evidence & effectiveness of delivery	Extent of evidence & effectiveness
1	Not in place	No evidence of effective delivery.
2	Limited application and effectiveness	Some evidence of application, but the effectiveness of delivery is limited.
3	Mixed Application and effectiveness	Mixed evidence of effective application, with some good evidence and some gaps in application or evidence.
4	Strong Application and effectiveness	Clear evidence of effective application.
5	Embedded	Clear evidence of effective and embedded application

Vision, strategy and performance

Criteria				
There are a complimentary set of sustainable corporate and service-level plans and strategies in place which set out a Council vision and key objectives				
Performance targets and outcomes to deliver corporate and service aims and objectives are identified and measured with democratic oversight to drive improvement actions				
Performance and outcomes are benchmarked with appropriate comparators to ensure value for money and continuous improvement.				
All staff have had induction training and an annual appraisal and are clear as to their objectives and training and development needs.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The Council has a corporate plan that contains a well-being statement, which sets out the council's six key priorities, or well-being objectives, and its values and principles. The corporate plan covers a five year period and is refreshed each year to ensure it remains current. Each well-being objective is delivered through a number of steps, which are aimed at maximising the council's contribution to improving well-being in Swansea and Wales. The council maximises its contribution to improving well-being by working sustainably to deliver the steps. It does this through long-term planning, preventing problems from occurring or from become worse, working collaboratively with others, avoiding duplication and conflict with other priorities and involving others. The corporate plan involved engagement with a number of stakeholders during its development, including people with protected characteristics.

The delivery of the corporate plan is measured through the quarterly and annual performance monitoring reports and through its Annual Review of Performance, which meets its duties to produce an annual self-assessment report and annual well-being report under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 respectively. See Part 1 – performance - for the council's self-assessment on progress delivering its functions meeting its well-being objectives in the corporate plan; and Part 2 – performance management - for more information on the extent to which the council effectively uses its resources.

Each service has a plan that expresses its own priorities and shows how each service is contributing to the Corporate Plan. Service plans are reviewed each year and progress is reviewed by services and helps inform appraisals and one-to-one meetings through their own arrangements. There is no corporate oversight of the delivery of service plans; but a self-assessment was built into the service planning process during 2021/22 as part of the wider effort to develop self-reflection arrangements, which allows services to reflect and identify successes, barriers and areas for improvement. The annual appraisal process was paused as per corporate guidance during the pandemic but staff continued to have one-to-one and team meetings; the appraisal process is being restarted and is being reviewed as recorded in the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22.

There are a set of complimentary strategies and plans to the corporate plan. The “Swansea – Achieving Better Together, Transformation Strategy & Programme Framework” aims to ensure that the council is sustainable, efficient and effective in what and how it delivers its services. As well as identifying the priorities in the short and medium term, the Achieving Better Together framework aims to set the foundations for establishing the longer term shape of the council, looking ahead to the next 20 years to 2040. The programme is split into three phases: phase 1 remobilise after covid; phase 2 refocus (up to May 2022), and; phase 3 reshape (after May 2022). Progress is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis by the Recovery, Reshaping and Budget Strategy Board. The Re-focus phase has set the 2022/23 budget and refreshed the MTFP – see Part 2 Financial Management. The phase 3 - Reshape will look beyond 2022 and will be subject to the new corporate plan 2023/27.

The council’s budget and MTFP and associated financial planning are well-embedded and links to the corporate plan, Achieving Better Together, national settlement, grant terms and conditions and other council plans – see part 2 Financial Management. The Council developed a new Workforce Strategy for 2022 to 2027, which accounts for corporate and service level plans, council vision and key objectives – see Part 2 Workforce Planning. The Asset Management Plan is underpinned by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and it supports the delivery of the Council’s well-being objectives in its corporate plan – see Part 2 Asset Management.

Areas for continued improvement

- See Part 2 – including financial management, performance management and workforce planning.

Organisational Governance, Ethics and Values.

Criteria				
There are comprehensive and maintained frameworks and codes in place for governance, ethics and values that are applied and observed consistently				
The application of ethics and values is evident in the way options are appraised and decisions are made.				
There is productive working with external regulators and sound compliance with their recommendations and proposals for improvement				
All decisions are assessed for impact and documented to give due consideration to equality and the sustainability of services and encompass the needs of future generations and people with protected characteristics.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence

Governance ethics and Codes are set within the council’s constitution, Corporate Plan and Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Council also follows best practice in terms of statutory functions, such as CIPFA for financial management and Audit. The behaviour and expectations of officers/members is set out in the Constitution, Member Code of Conduct and Officer/Councillor Relations Protocol. The Monitoring Officer provides training on the code of conduct and ensures the highest standards of conduct by the authority, members and officers – including use of Council resources. The Standards Committee is responsible for monitoring and scrutinising the standards of Members.

The constitution outlines Member-led authority principles with training to senior officers and Cabinet members. The Constitution sets out requirements as to gifts and hospitality and there are regular reminders circulated to both officers and members. There is a member/member dispute resolution protocol which has been adopted. The Constitution contains comprehensive Procurement and Financial Procedure Rules.

The Statutory officers and Members ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements via a robust framework including the scheme of delegation, induction training, standing procedures and rules set out in the Constitution. Reports to Committees have legal/finance clearance and must be subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment to assess the implications of decisions for people with protected characteristics and future generations. There is a robust Scrutiny and Call-In function and challenge from Governance & Audit Committee. External challenge is in place from auditors, Ombudsman and other external agencies. The Monitoring Officer ensures the Council complies with statute and reports on any maladministration.

The Standards Committee Annual Report 2020/21 was presented to Council on 2 December 2021. The Report reflected the Committee’s view that generally the conduct of members was high with the Committee only having to consider one complaint against a community councillor.

In their Annual Audit Summary 2021, Audit Wales concluded that the Council had met its duties and requirements. The Governance & Audit Committee however were concerned in 2021/22 to ensure that all Audit Wales recommendations are recorded and tracked for an appropriate response in a consistent way.

Areas for continued improvement

- Put arrangements in place to ensure that Audit Wales recommendations are recorded and tracked in a consistent way.

Organisational leadership.

Criteria
There is strong and effective political and professional leadership and working relationships.
There is an organisational operating model and a preferred working culture, which is effective
There are arrangements and training in place to develop leadership capacity and capability to meet present and future needs and demands and which supports sustainable ways of working
Self-assessment

1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

Cabinet and corporate management team work closely together. There are excellent working relationships between the service and Cabinet members and Group leaders and wider elected members. The relationship between officers and members and their roles and responsibilities are documented in the Constitution and through the procedure rules. Member/ officer relationships has been subject to recent discussions enabled by an external party; this focused on optimising the understanding of political and officer roles.

Senior officers meet weekly as a Corporate Management Team. CMT comprise those officers with statutory functions who provide a professional lead. Appointments to professional posts i.e. heads of service and above, are made on merit and are dependent on appropriate qualifications. Heads of service are appropriately equipped to provide professional leadership for their staff. Corporate management team and heads of service work closely together and collaborate in leadership team meetings. Monthly one-to-one meetings take place between directors and/or heads of service and cabinet members.

There is a joint cabinet and corporate management team meeting every two weeks. The boards or steering groups, such as the Achieving Better Together transformation board, are chaired by political leaders. The corporate plan and associated plans and strategies, such as the workforce strategy, engage members in their development, such as through the Policy Development Committees, and are signed off by the cabinet or council.

The cabinet is aligned to the various directorates and services and reports are signed off by cabinet members and directors. Cabinet members provide leadership and direction early on collectively at CMT/Cabinet Away days and in one-to-one meetings with directors and heads of service. Cabinet members lead on reports at cabinet meetings. There are clear links from the service through to political leadership both in regular meetings with cabinet members and the Leader and also through the democratic processes.

Clear officer advice is provided formally in all reports. Clear formal and often informal advice is given by officers in strongest terms to members. Ultimately members decide but the advice of statutory officers, such as Directors, the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and responsible staff is delivered openly with no fear of speaking out. Staff surveys and feedback indicate that the majority of staff feel valued, managed and well-led by the senior leadership team.

Open productive honest relationships with all members and often very frank exchanges of views takes place, albeit more often informally than in formal evidenced sessions. When the formal officer advice is needed to be given, it is in formal reports to cabinet or council; examples include the annual budget and MTFP.

There is a clear operating model within the council, based on the corporate values and governance requirements. There is a management structure embedded. The management structure is

embedded in the constitution and has been subject to recent review by the Chief Executive / Council.

Arrangements for training are in place. All officers are required to undertake mandatory training and e-learning as defined within their job role. In addition, any professional officer required to undertake continuous professional development to maintain their qualification is supported to do that. There is a limited training budget available across the council and this is an area that requires review.

A coaching development framework has been adopted to enable support and development across the council. Internal advice and awareness training is given to staff e.g. completion of integrated impact assessments, risk control measures and socio-economic duty awareness sessions. Several members of staff have been on leadership training and opportunities are taken to develop staff by deputising etc. for senior colleagues.

There are informal training plans but these are not well documented and Covid limited the opportunities for development; the workforce strategy should help the council to take this forward. There are opportunities for training, although this is subject to budgetary constraints. Each service unit encourages training and training needs are picked up in appraisals and one-to-one meetings. The staff survey did highlight some concerns on training opportunities, which is an area that will be addressed through the workforce strategy.

Training of decision makers including CMT, Leadership Team and Members has taken place on the socio-economic duty. The training programme for elected members after May 2022 has been updated to reflect the training requirements, along with the various committee who have been directly affected by the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act, such as Governance & Audit Committee. Training on the Well-being of Future Generations Act is incorporated in the action plan to deliver the workforce strategy.

Areas for continued improvement

- See Part 2 – workforce planning.

Customer & Community Engagement and Involvement.

Criteria				
There are comprehensive and maintained strategies / plans / policies in place for customer and community engagement and involvement.				
Customer and community feedback and involvement are effectively used in reviewing performance and shaping services.				
There is good engagement with stakeholders, including people with protected characteristics, in framing policy and in the making of key service policy decisions				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The Council has appropriate structures in place to encourage public participation which is used to inform proposals and key decisions including:

- A Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
- A Co-production Framework.
- “Have your Say” consultations on website.
- The Scrutiny Programme Committee invites stakeholder contributions and participation.
- A Staff Survey with responses considered by CMT/Senior Management.
- A Complaints Policy and Annual Report to assess organisational learning and change.
- The appointment of Councillor Champions who provide a voice for under-represented groups.
- An Integrated Impact Assessment to assess the equality, socio-economic and sustainability impacts on people with protected characteristics and future generations.
- A new Public Participation strategy under development.

There is appropriate consultation and engagement supporting the decision making process including annual budget consultation, co-production, engagement with trade unions and engagement with disability and LGBT communities. The results of consultation exercises are fully considered by decision makers with consultation responses set out in reports. The council undertook consultation on its performance and on its corporate plan in 2021/22, which included the public, people with protected characteristics, local businesses, council staff and trade unions. There was a low response rate to the survey but the results of the survey are being reflected within this report and ways to improve the response rate will be reviewed.

Performance is monitored through the complaints comments and complainants being reported through to departmental management and performance and financial management meetings. Specific customer facing departments undertake surveys or monitor standards. Some internal customers are also surveyed for satisfaction, e.g. Digital Services service desk performance is reported monthly, which gives performance against key performance indicators and customer feedback and compliments; the scrutiny team regularly send out questionnaires to those using the service as to how they have done. Complaints targets are stipulated in the policies and are reported as part of the annual complaints report. Customer Services targets were under review in 2021/22 as a result of the pandemic, which altered the way customers access services. Feedback from customers with regard to processes and ways of working are fed back to services.

The Corporate Complaints Policies were reviewed to ensure they were in line with the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 and the Welsh Language Standards. The Annual Complaints Report 2020/21 was presented to the Governance & Audit Committee in December 2021 as a result of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to provide assurance around the Council’s complaints handling processes. The Committee welcomed the report but noted that it was important not to overlap the work of Scrutiny Committee. The report was presented to the Scrutiny programme Committee on the 15th March 2022. In addition, the Ombudsman’s annual report was presented to Cabinet in November 2021. The Annual Complaints Report reflects the continued emphasis on prompt resolution of complaints and includes compliments about services. 73 complaints were made to the Ombudsman including corporate complaints and Social Services (there were 92 cases received in 2019/20). 67 of which were closed within the year, and nine of which received intervention (early resolution / voluntary settlement (5) or were upheld (4)). PSOW complaints reduced compared with the 92 closed in 2019/20. There was an assurance that there were no s16 Public Interest reports during the year.

Areas for continued improvement

- See Part 2 – performance management.
- Continue the development of a Public Participation Strategy, as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Risk Management and Business Continuity.

Criteria				
There is a comprehensive and maintained risk management policy and framework in place.				
All relevant risks are managed in line with the Council’s approved Risk Management Policy and Framework.				
Business Continuity plans are in place and are regularly updated and tested.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

A Corporate Risk Management Framework was approved by Cabinet in August 2017 and a new Risk Management IT system was introduced across the Council in 2020/21. All corporate, directorate and service level risks are recorded in the corporate risk register. Risk is a standing item on monthly departmental and performance and finance meetings. A monthly report on risk is reported to the corporate management team and a report on the status of corporate risks in the council is reported each quarter to Governance & Audit Committee. The Council’s Risk Management Framework requires all Risks to be reviewed and the Red/Amber/Green status updated every month. Risks are “deactivated” within the Risk Register by Responsible Officers when necessary, and this can only be actioned by officers with appropriate system access; reasons for deactivating risks must be provided.

An internal audit was undertaken on corporate risk management in 2021/22. The findings report confirmed that reports on risks had been reviewed every month by CMT during 2021/22 and they represented a comprehensive review of the status of all Risks in the Council’s Risk Register, which includes risk escalations / de-escalations. It was also confirmed that reports on Corporate Risks had been presented to the Governance & Audit Committee for all of the completed quarters of 2021/22. A review of all of the Corporate Risks as at March 2022 (18 in total) revealed that all had been updated within the last month as required. All 18 Corporate Risks were also checked to determine whether updates were recorded every month in the last three months. This revealed that 17 out of the 18 risks had been updated; while 1 out of the 18 had been updated in February and January 2022, prior to that it had not been updated since October 2021. A check was carried out to confirm that where Risks had been deactivated, a reason had been provided. All were examined and it was found that a reason had been provided in each case.

Concern was expressed by the Governance & Audit Committee at its meeting in February 2021 on the adequacy of the Control Measures recorded in the register for Corporate Risks. As a result, during 2021/22, Directors have been required to attend the Governance & Audit Committee on a rotational basis to outline the governance and risk management controls within their directorate; additional training on Control Measures has been provided to Directors and Heads of Service and all

Responsible Officers in 2021/22. The Control Measures for all Corporate Risks were also reviewed in January 2022 and feedback provided to corporate management team on whether they are “SMART” – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. As part of the audit a test was carried out on all of the Control Measures for all of the Corporate Risks to confirm that they were appropriate, complete and were “SMART”; all were found to be satisfactory other than 3 risks.

The Internal Audit Section operates a system of Assurance levels which give a formal opinion of the achievement of the service’s/system’s control objectives. The Assurance levels vary over four categories: 'High', 'Substantial', 'Moderate' and 'Limited'. Based on the audit testing undertaken, it was found that almost most procedures were operating satisfactorily, with only a small number of matters requiring improvement. As a result, an Assurance Level of ‘**Substantial**’ was given. This indicates that ‘There is a sound system of internal control but there is some scope for improvement as the ineffective controls may put the system objectives at risk’.

Project risks are managed and monitored through their Boards / steering groups or governance arrangements. Business continuity plans are in place and are reviewed annually.

Areas for continued improvement

- Implement recommendations from 2021/22 Internal Audit Report on risk management to continue regular updates and ensure control measures remain SMART.

Partnership / collaboration governance.

Criteria				
There is active and effective governance arrangements and engagement in partnerships and collaborations helping to achieve corporate aims and objectives.				
The key partnerships and collaborations for which the service / council is (co) responsible perform well against their aims and objectives				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The council is involved in over a hundred active collaborations but there are five key and significant Partnerships and collaborations: the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC); Swansea’s Public Service Board (PSB); the West Glamorgan Regional Health and Social Care Partnership; the Swansea Bay City Deal (SBCD), and; the regional educational partnership Partneriaeth.

A report providing an overview of the governance and assurance arrangements of these five significant partnerships and collaborations, including work that had been undertaken during 2021/22, was presented to Governance & Audit Committee in July 2022; the committee were also provided with at the same meeting a specific report on progress establishing the CJC. The CJC is a new regional partnership established by Local Government & Elections Act 2021. The aim is to bring coherence to regional governance. The CJC has limited functions: strategic development planning; regional transport planning; to promote economic well-being. Although treated as separate

corporate bodies, they should be seen as ‘part of the local government family’. Swansea Council is a member of the South West Wales CJC, along with Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot Councils – plus Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire National Parks.

A number of things were resolved at the first meeting of the South West Wales CJC in January 2022:

- The Leader of Swansea Council was appointed Chair.
- A constitution was approved.
- Standing orders to govern the CJC were adopted.
- Appointments to statutory roles were made: Chief Executive (Neath Port Talbot Council – to rotate); Section 151 Officer (Carmarthenshire Council); Monitoring Officer (NPT Council).
- Sub-committees were created.
- A Governance & Audit Committee was established.
- An Overview & Scrutiny Committee was created.
- NPT Standards Committee was designated to act for the CJC.
- Members Code of Conduct were approved.
- Rules of Procedure were approved.
- Access to Information Procedure Rules were agreed.
- A draft budget and Service Level Agreements were established to deliver corporate support services.

The CJC has set a zero financial budget for the 2021/22 financial year and agreed that no levy be raised against constituent councils for that year; but that to ensure fairness and equity across the region the regional funding of the CJC would be set through a levy apportionment by population size. Swansea’s share of this equates to £200k and was budgeted for accordingly. The financial position of the National Parks is yet to be determined but it should be noted that their financial contribution extends only to supporting the strategic planning aspect of the CJC. During the course of 2022/23 the forward programme for 2023/24 will be developed and this will in turn link in directly with the future budget requirements.

The West Glamorgan Regional Partnership was established in 2016 and was formerly known as Western Bay. It is a statutory partnership introduced by Social Services & Well-being Act 2014 and is a collaboration between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Councils and the local Health Board. The collaboration sees partners working together to ensure there are good health and social care services across the region. The Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021/22 outlines that the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership now focuses on three areas of ‘transformation’, all with associated projects and work streams being delivered in the context of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. These are:

- The Adult’s Transformation Board (the key priorities of which include Older Adults, the Commissioning for Complex Needs Programme, Dementia, the Mental Health Strategic Framework, the Learning Disability Strategic Framework).
- The Children and Young Adults’ Transformation Board (key priorities of which include the Multi Agency Placement Support Service, Children with Complex Needs and the Regional Strategic Development Plan).
- The Integrated Transformation Board (the key priorities of which include Carers, Digital Transformation, Transformation in Networks and the Welsh Community Care Information System).

The Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021/22 report describes how safeguarding remains the top corporate priority and this is at the heart of how council services are prioritised. The report

states that the council has fully embraced the need for the council to work even more closely and effectively with statutory and third sector partners to ensure safe and effective delivery of health and care services. The report goes on to say that this collaborative ethos informs both the council's local partnership work and its commitment to working with and through the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board.

A report to the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel in March 2022 provided an update on the work of the West Glamorgan programme since March 2021. The report describes that in June 2021 West Glamorgan Regional Partnership entered a period of recovery from COVID-19 arrangements and the Transformation Programme was re-started to support the regions stabilisation and reconstruction. During September 2021, it was agreed by the Transformation Boards that the agendas would be more flexible and move to a two weekly timetable. This would allow all Transformation Programmes to report fortnightly on how they are responding to the emergency through the Winter Period. It was agreed to reconfigure the current RPB transformation programme to focus on emergency (including Winter planning) with a focus on actions that will best support the population and our health/ social care system over the next 5 months. It was agreed from the outset that the region had learned lessons from the first wave of the pandemic and agreed to include all cohorts in the development of and planning for the Emergency / Winter.

It was agreed to establish a pooled fund to support the winter / emergency plan initiatives, utilising any un-allocated regional funding. The main focus of the Transformation Board since November 2021 has been to predominantly work to stop community services failing; this includes meeting twice weekly via the Transformation Board and a Community Silver Meeting. The Community Silver meeting concentrated on the Regional Integrated Escalation Framework, which highlights in detail the pressures and issues across Community Services. During December 2021, the pressures escalated cumulating with a decision at the Transformation Board on 21st December 2021 that the meetings would remain weekly but only concentrate on the Winter and Emergency Pressures to allow for scenario planning for the most extreme complications and to allow the group to concentrate further on developing capacity to support people to remain in their own homes. In addition to working on the emergency the West Glamorgan Transformation Office is focussed on developing Business Cases for the programme in line with the new funding regime for Regional Partnership Boards announced by the Minister for Health and Social Care for the next 5 years which starts in April 2022. In October 2021 the Regional Partnership Board agreed the new governance framework with amendments to the Terms of Reference.

The revised Regional Governance Framework for the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership was approved in February 2022; this includes terms of reference, appointment of Board members and the various roles and responsibilities. Citizen and Carer Representatives are actively involved and engaged in the work of the Regional Partnership Boards and should be able to demonstrate how they have engaged with citizens and carers at all levels including assessing need, strategic planning, service design and delivery. Third Sector and Care Provider representatives are also engaged and able to influence and be involved in the design and delivery of integrated services.

The Swansea Bay City Deal (SBCD) was signed off in 2017; it represents a £1.3 billion investment in the regional economy. The partnership includes Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils. It is made up of 9 programmes and projects, including Swansea City and Waterfront Digital District project led by Swansea Council. A joint UK Government and Welsh Government Board – the Welsh Cities and Growth Implementation Board - oversees progress. A Joint Committee has been established to monitor the SBCD. A Joint Committee Agreement was made between the partners to work together to discharge their obligations to one another. The Joint Committee is chaired by the Leader of Swansea Council. A Programme Board oversees the

operations of the SBCD. An Economic Strategy Board is a private sector advisory body which acts as the voice of business.

A Joint Scrutiny Committee provides advice, challenge and support to the Joint Committee and is made up of two elected members from each of the four regional local authorities. Swansea Council hosts the Joint Committee and all Legal and Democratic services (and provides the Monitoring Officer). Carmarthenshire Council has the responsibility as the accountable body for the entire portfolio ensuring outcomes are delivered (and provides the Section 151 Officer). Pembrokeshire County Council has responsibility for all audit activity for the holistic portfolio. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has regional responsibility for scrutiny of the portfolio and its constituent programmes and projects. A City Deal Portfolio Director and City Deal Portfolio Management Office ensures smooth operation and sound governance. A risk register, monitoring and implementation plan and other plans are in place to ensure delivery and governance.

The report to the Governance & Audit Committee in July 2022 heard that the Swansea specific elements of the city deal programme are progressing well with the Swansea Arena complete and operational and with the remaining aspects due for completion later in 2022/23. Work is also progressing well with 71/72 Kingsway digital district and the aligned projects being carried out by University Wales Trinity St David's also making good progress. The Council is also actively involved in the regional project of talent and skills, Homes and Power stations and the digital strand of the SBCD programme.

Partneriaeth is a new partnership established in 2021 and commenced in April 2022, following the demise of ERW, new regional partnership arrangements for education improvement. Membership consists of Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils and operation is governed by a legal agreement. The partnership is overseen by a Joint Committee over the constituent members. The Leader of Swansea Council is a member of the Joint Committee. A Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group has been established. Services are also provided to local authorities which are not party to the legal agreement: namely Neath Port Talbot, Ceredigion and Powys Councils. A Strategic Group will have responsibility for undertaking some operational matters and will report to the Joint Committee. An Operations Group and a Stakeholder Group shall report to the Strategic Group. The Joint Committee will have the responsibility to establish Sub-committees, establish terms of reference and membership as it sees fit within the confines the legal partnership agreement. A Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group will be established to provide an informal scrutiny function to ensure greater public accountability over decisions made by the Joint Committee and any of its sub-committees.

The Public Services Board (PSB) was established as a result of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015: it aims to improve well-being in Swansea. The PSB revised and agreed its terms of reference in April 2019. Statutory Membership of the Board includes: Swansea Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Natural Resources Wales. Invited participants include: Welsh Ministers, the Chief Constable of South Wales Police, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, the Probation service, a representative of voluntary organisations and any other persons who the Board may be required to invite under regulations made by Welsh Ministers. Invited participant are not members of the Board and are not required to accept the invitation. The PSB is chaired by the Deputy Leader of Swansea Council Cllr Andrea Lewis.

The Joint Committee oversees the delivery of the PSB Well-being Plan through 4 workstreams, each led by one of the statutory members: Early Years – ABMU; Live Well, Age Well – Swansea Council; Working with Nature – Natural Resources Wales, and; Stronger Communities – Fire and Rescue. Task and finish delivery groups deliver each workstream. Swansea Council provides administrative and

democratic services support to the PSB. The majority of work carried out by Swansea PSB is carried out within the existing budgets of the Statutory Partners and subject to individual organisation's arrangements. A grant is provided by Welsh Government to help fund some costs. A Partnership Forum provides a mechanism for a range of interested parties from the public, private and voluntary sector to engage in the work of the PSB.

Swansea Councils Scrutiny Programme Committee (SPC) scrutinises the work of the PSB. The SPC made a number of proposals for improvement during 2021/22, which includes: improving the performance framework to better evidence the tangible difference the PSB is making (including better measurements of progress in the delivery of well-being objectives); improving the clarity of action and outcomes from PSB meetings; improving public visibility / messaging about the work of the PSB (as part of strategy for public engagement); reflecting on PSB governance in light of lessons learned from the pandemic.

The PSB Annual Report 2021/22 was published in August 2022; the report provides an update on the work undertaken in 2021/22, including progress against each of the well-being objectives described in the PSB Well-being Plan. Much of the local focus and partner resource around well-being measurement during 2021/22 has been on Swansea's second Assessment of Local Well-being, which was completed and published in May 2022 to meet legislative requirements. The document provides an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in Swansea and will be used to inform the next local Well-being Plan in May 2023.

Areas for continued improvement

- Continue work to address all proposals for improvement to the operation of the PSB made by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

Internal Control Environment.

Criteria				
Strong Internal Control systems are in place and applied throughout the Council				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

Assurance on the application of the Local Code of Corporate Governance in the council is provided through the production of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which is reported for assurance to Governance & Audit Committee each year. The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The City and County of Swansea annually reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. It does this through: Statements from Corporate Management Team (CMT), Statutory Officers, the Internal Audit Manager and the Governance & Audit Committee; external organisations i.e. Audit Wales and regulators, and; core evidence mapped to Council, Cabinet and Committees. This information is used to compile the AGS. Based on the programme of audit work undertaken in 2021/22, the Chief Auditor’s opinion set out in the AGS on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and internal control is effective with no significant weaknesses identified in 2021/22 that would have a material impact on the Council’s financial affairs or the achievement of its objectives.

Fraud & Financial Impropriety.

Criteria				
The Council has robust controls in place to prevent and promptly detect fraud, bribery and corruption.				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The Council is dedicated to tackling fraud and corruption and has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy. The Governance & Audit Committee receives an annual report on the fraud function and Anti-Fraud Plan. The Internal Audit Plan is approved by Governance & Audit Committee. On 20th April 2021 the Committee received the 2021/22 Fraud Function Annual Plan. The 2020/21 Anti-Fraud Annual Report was received at the meeting in July 2021. An additional report was presented to provide the Governance & Audit Committee with an update against progress being made against recommendations in the Audit Wales report ‘Raising our Game - Tackling Fraud in Wales’ in March 2021 with an update on progress in November 2021. The Committee noted that some further work was required to address all those recommendations. The council has a corporate level risk on reducing and tackling fraud on its corporate risk register, which includes a number of mitigations and control measures that are reviewed each month.

Areas for continued improvement

- Continue work to address all recommendations in the Audit Wales report ‘Raising our Game - Tackling Fraud in Wales’.

Programme and Project Assurance

Criteria
All programmes and projects are managed using robust project and programme management methodology and in accordance with corporate guidelines and procedural rules with appropriate highlighting of potential risks/breaches
Self-assessment

1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

Large or high risk projects and programmes follow agreed methodology starting with the initial business case approved by the Senior Responsible Owner or CMT/Cabinet (dependent on the size of the project), governance structure, risk log and reporting process.

The council's transformation programme Achieving Better Together (ABT) has a highlight report, which is presented at a steering group and then a further highlight report from the steering group presented to the ABT Board along with additional areas of strategic importance, risk and progress. A report to the Governance & Audit Committee in April 2022 demonstrated that the refocus phase of the programme was well underway and that the working groups were in place and working through the actions associated with their agendas. The paper to the committee concluded that the reporting mechanisms and governance boards are in place and were working well.

All business cases to access funding under the 21st Century Schools programme are effectively developed to gain appropriate Welsh Government approval at outline and full business case stages. All business cases are robustly scrutinised and positive feedback continues to be received from WG officials who consider them as examples of good practice. Benefits both financial and non-financial are clearly defined in business cases, and monitored throughout project life cycles. Post Occupancy Evaluation is now a developing piece of work. Governance arrangements for the QEd programme have been repeatedly scrutinised (including Estyn and Audit Wales and an external Gateway review) and is recognised as effective by Welsh Government generally, as well as specifically as a key element of the 'five case business model' that is required to gain approval to capital funding for specific schemes.

A report providing an overview of the governance and assurance arrangements of the five significant partnerships and collaborations, including programme and project management arrangements for the established partnerships, was presented to Governance & Audit Committee in July 2022. The overarching transformation of health and social care programmes are facilitated through the infrastructure of the Regional Partnership Board. A robust and consistent project management methodology is adopted at both a regional, local, directorate and service level with dedicated specialist resources allocated to ensure project initiation, delivery against intended outcomes, risk management and transition to business as usual is properly managed. Regional and local investment in project management capacity has demonstrably paid off and proved particularly valuable in supporting rapid change to health and care services to mitigate the extreme impacts of the pandemic.

The Swansea Bay City Deal (SBCD) adopted a new Portfolio Risk Management Strategy in 2020. They also established a Portfolio Risk Register and Issues Log, and regularly report on prioritised risks through the governance structures. Key risks are captured in a SBCD Portfolio Risk Register. The Portfolio Office regularly reviews and monitors the risk management process. In order to further support the management of risks and potential associated issues, the Portfolio Management office developed a change control in February 2021. The SBCD developed a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in June 2020. Project teams contribute to monthly highlight and quarterly monitoring reports, an

annual report and planned milestone evaluations. These reports outline planned and completed activity, key deliverables, risks, issues and finances at project, programme and portfolio levels. All nine SBCD projects and programmes have also established Integrated Assurance and Approval Plans, which are regularly updated and shared with the SBCD governance boards and committees. The SBCD Portfolio and projects are also subject to OGC (Office of Government Commerce) Gateway Reviews to assure successful progression and overall delivery of the portfolio and associated projects and programmes. Gateway reviews are instigated and led by the Portfolio or Project/Programmes. All Welsh Government sponsored Programmes and Projects are mandated by the Welsh Government Permanent Secretary to complete a Risk Potential Assessment form for review/appraisal by the Office of Project Delivery.

Innovation & Change Management.

Criteria				
The Council has a proven track record for innovation and change management				
Change and transformation programmes are making the Council fit for the future and are contributing to the Council's aims and objectives				
There are arrangements in place and evidence to show that staff, customers and stakeholders can and are making innovations and suggestions for improvement				
Risks and impact from transformational activity are monitored to identify any adverse impact, including adverse impact on equality and on the well-being of current and future generations				
Self-assessment				
1. Not in place	2. Limited Application and effectiveness	3. Mixed Application and effectiveness	4. Strong Application and effectiveness	5. Embedded
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence

The COVID-19 pandemic brought huge challenges and changes to the Council, its services and workforce. The Council has never undertaken such change in such a short timescale and in such challenging circumstances. A number of non-essential services were suspended in order to redeploy resources to areas where they were most needed. In summary, since March 2020 the Council has transformed the way it works to manage the impact of the pandemic. Thousands of staff were successfully mobilised to work remotely and/or from home within a matter of weeks. This took a massive effort from our ICT team to provide the necessary changes enabling staff and councillors to have full network links at their preferred location. Other changes include:

- Being one of the first councils in Wales to move meetings, committees and council online.
- Rolling out agile working, which supported the transition to working from home and agile working for the whole workforce during the pandemic.
- Supporting the Welsh Government's Shielding Programme by setting up a new call centre and providing daily support to thousands of vulnerable people.
- Focusing social services care on the most vulnerable, re-opening a care home and supporting the private care sector.
- Overseeing the planning and construction of the Bay Field Hospital on Fabian Way.
- Remodelling schools into care settings for key workers' children.
- Providing meals to care settings and delivering free school meals.
- Providing food banks across the city and county.

- Providing financial support in excess of £100 million to thousands of businesses.
- Setting up a Track, Trace and Protect function and providing community testing centres.
- Preparing for mass vaccination in our communities.

A report to Governance & Audit Committee in April 2022 provided a progress update on the Council's Achieving Better Together (ABT) corporate transformation programme. The main purpose of the ABT Programme is to ensure the council is sustainable, efficient and effective in what and how it delivers its services with the citizen at the heart. As well as identifying the priorities in the short and medium term, the ABT framework aims to set the foundations for establishing the longer term shape of the council, looking ahead to the next 20 years to 2040 - first recovery, then refocus and then reshape the council.

The committee heard that the work of both the Remobilise and Refocus phase of the ABT programme continued throughout the pandemic and that the council, not only maintained services throughout the pandemic, but is well underway on its journey to the second refocus phase. The Refocus phase has set the 2022/23 council budget and refreshed the council's MTFP. Phase 3 - Reshape - will look beyond 2022, it will be subject to the 2022 elections and priorities of the new council. The report concluded that the refocus phase is well underway and that the working groups are in place and working through the actions associated with their agendas. The ABT Programme is contributing towards the achievement of the national well-being goals and corporate well-being objectives in the corporate plan. The council's Policy Development Committees provided support to the programme and work-streams; the Recovery & Future Generation PDC supported the overarching ABT work programme. The Recovery & Future Generation PDC's have recently received a session on co-production, an update on the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and a workshop on the Workforce work-stream during 2021/22; these are all projects within the Workforce & Equality work stream. The work-stream leads worked closely with other PDC's on their individual projects, plans and policies.

The ABT programme has a risk and issue log that is flagged at both the Steering group and at the ABT Board; any issue also escalated to CMT or onto the risk register if required. The governance and assurance within the project management framework for each transformation includes a risk matrix and escalation process. All transformational activity is submitted to an Integrated Impact Assessment to ensure there are no negative impacts on people, including future generations. Swansea Council's internal audit team carried out an examination of the programme, governance and structure during 2021/22. A 'High' Level of Assurance was awarded. This indicates that 'there is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve the programme objectives and the controls are being consistently applied'. There were no recommendations following the examination.

The Workforce Strategy has been developed to meet the council wide requirement for recruiting, retaining and developing staff to enable flexibility and fit for the future. This includes proposals to improve and develop staff engagement and innovation. The council has an Ideas Hub; the Ideas Hub is an online platform that provides opportunities for staff to put forward innovative ideas to Achieve Better Together. The 'Let's Talk About' initiative introduced in 2021/22 building on the previous Leadership Hub community delivers monthly workshop events that combine presentations and interview style conversations from leaders with a wide range of experiences across different organisations.

Consultation outcome

The council undertook a survey of the public, local businesses, Council staff and trade unions in 2021/22.

There was a low response rate to the survey – under 100 responses - despite the Council doing its best to publicise the survey, including sending direct emails to stakeholders. The low response rate to the survey might have affected confidence in the results.

Respondents were asked to what extent do you agree or disagree that Swansea Council is well governed. Just under a third of respondents (30% n= 21) agreed that Swansea Council was well governed. However over 40% of respondents (n = 29) disagreed that it was well governed. Around a fifth of respondents (20% n= 17), neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and a further 2 respondents (2.9%) didn't know whether it was well governed, or not.

Just over 40% of participants (n= 30) in the survey responded to an open ended question about how the Council could improve the way in which it is governed. Suggestions included: improving Council culture IT systems, increasing the efficiency of staff, linking more departments together, more consultation with public and staff, keeping more services “in-house”, improving communication, reducing management and re-prioritising resources.

Areas for continued improvement

- Look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process and improve response rates for the annual self-assessment.

Conclusion to Part 3

The Council has effective governance when it applying the core principles of good governance are set out by CIPFA / SOLACE in *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.

The evidence in Part 3 of this assessment shows that:

There is a **mixed application and effectiveness of governance** around vision, strategy & performance.

There is a **strong application and effectiveness of governance** in all of the other areas.

Where to find additional information

If you have any questions or comments on the content of this plan, you can contact by: Email to improvement@swansea.gov.uk Telephone 01792 637570.

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: SDU

Directorate: Corporate Services

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services
- Other

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 – this report meets our duty to report on progress in 2021/22 meeting the ‘steps’ described in the Corporate Plan to deliver our well-being objectives and on extent to which a local authority is: exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and; is governing itself effectively in securing the above – as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 respectively.

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further Investigation	No Impact
	+	-	+	-	+	-		
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Q3 What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches?
Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement**

Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 requires the Council to consult on its performance each year. The council undertook a survey of the public, local businesses, Council staff and trade unions in 2021/22. The results to the consultation are included in the Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 – as is an area for continued improvement to look for ways to improve the consultation and engagement process and improve the response rates for the annual self-assessment.

Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan’s Well-being Objectives when considered together?
 Yes No

- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
 Yes No

- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
 Yes No

- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
 Yes No

Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes No If yes, please provide details below

Q7 Will this initiative result in any changes needed to the external or internal website?

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details below

Q8 What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?

(You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups/ communities more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making. For example, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.)

Outcome of Screening – this report meets our duty to report on progress in 2021/22 meeting the ‘steps’ described in the Corporate Plan to deliver our well-being objectives and on extent to which a local authority is: exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and; is governing itself effectively in securing the above – as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 respectively, so there is no direct impact on people or communities.

Q9 Please describe the outcome of your screening using the headings below:

- Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)
- Summary of involvement (Q3)
- WFG considerations (Q4)
- Any risks identified (Q5)
- Cumulative impact (Q7)

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the ‘Integrated Assessment Implications’ section of corporate report)

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: R Rowlands
Job title: Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager
Date: 05/09/22
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Lee Wenham
Position: Head of Communications & marketing
Date: 05/09/22

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Equalities

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel– 8 Nov 2022

Report on Welsh Public Libraries Standard response for Swansea Libraries for 2020-21

Purpose	To brief/update the Scrutiny Committee on the feedback from the Welsh Government on Swansea Council Libraries performance in relation to the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) 2020 - 2021
Content	This report presents an overview of the Welsh Public Libraries Framework and feedback on Swansea Library Services submission for the period 2020-21 and commentary and feedback from Welsh Government
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor	Elliott King
Lead Officer	Karen Gibbins
Report Author	Karen Gibbins and Karen Davies
Legal Officer	Tracey Meredith
Finance Officer	Aimee Dyer
Access to Services Officer	Catherine Window

1. Background

- 1.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 makes it a statutory duty of all local authorities to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.

In order to help define the terms “comprehensive and efficient”, and to encourage and facilitate a development strategy for Welsh public libraries, the Welsh Government embarked on a series of assessment frameworks. This report is a response to the 6th quality framework, “Connected and Ambitious Libraries 2017-2020. (Appendix B). This Framework has been temporarily extended to 2021-2022 period to give time to develop a new post Covid Framework.

The impact of Covid and the temporary closure of many libraries and the disruption to services due to the pandemic made it impractical to continue the normal reporting exercise during this period 2020-21.

Therefore a reduced amount of data was collected and reporting concentrated on qualitative information and case studies. It does not compare the response of individual services to the pandemic recognising the wide range of responses across local authorities in Wales

- 1.2 Local Authorities were asked to
 - 1.2.1 Summarise their provision against the 12 core entitlements listed in the Framework
 - 1.2.2 Recorded achievements against 6 quality indicators instead of 16
 - 1.2.3 Demonstrated the impact of library services on people through the pandemic by providing case studies
- 1.3 The annual report from the Welsh Government Minister for Finance and Local Government Rebecca Evans (Appendix A) details the response Public Libraries made to the pandemic and during this reporting period.
- 1.4 In 2020-21 Across Wales 1,492,452 books were issued, 173,235 Click and Collect collections were made, 4,528,337 people visited library websites, 2,897,491 e-resources were downloaded. Local authorities spend £37.5 million (net) on libraries which is just over 21.2p per week per person. 37% of population of Wales is a library member.
- 1.5 The report highlights the key role Libraries play in ensuring that information and culture is accessible to all. That via libraries the importance of culture in promoting positive well being and physical health can be clearly seen and is demonstrated through the case studies shared.
- 1.6 New measures introduced across Wales during this period that Swansea Libraries delivered included
 - Suspension of fines by automatically renewing loans
 - Expanding availability of online resources supported by £500k investment from welsh Government
 - Creating new digital content and reaching new audiences online
 - Redeployment of many staff to support shielding residents
 - Creating virtual tours of libraries to support re-opening measures
 - Seconded a manager to lead on a cross Wales Estyn Allan project to upskill library staff with digital skills and create more digital content online.
 - The following summarises service availability during this reporting period as was permitted in line with specific guidance from Welsh Government on the phased reopening of libraries and the Council's reoccupation of buildings and service recommencement process;

1.6.1 All Libraries were closed in April 2020 due to national restrictions (lockdown) but online services were extended and enhanced to provide alternative delivery methods where possible.

1.6.2 The community housebound service recommenced in May 2020.

1.6.3 Other front line library staff began to return to community buildings in late May and June and Central and hub libraries offered click and collect and return services at this time.

1.6.4 Other services were gradually reintroduced as permitted over the summer of 2020 and as redeployed staff returned to their substantive posts. Remaining libraries opened by September 2020 (except Bonymaen as too small to enable social distancing).

1.6.5 By putting in place appropriate safety and infection control measures such as use of PPE, extra hygiene, reorganisation of public and work spaces to enable social distancing libraries could now offer open access and browsing, computers and wifi, printing and copying, information services etc.

1.6.6 There were further periodic closures towards the end of the period with national firebreaks and a second lockdown.

2. Briefing

- 2.1 Swansea Libraries met all 12 core entitlements during this period through making libraries available online and physically throughout the period and maintaining services in different ways for residents in Swansea. Details of the 6 Quality indicators met can be seen in Appendix C.

The report recognises that we have the second highest number of active borrowers (i.e. those who have used library service in the last 2 years). Numbers are reducing slightly however. Covid has seen a reduction in parents and new born babies registrations as contact with Health Workers in NHS becomes more challenging and services were disrupted during Covid.

Swansea libraries were closed from April to June and therefore a decision was made to reduce expenditure on books by 25% as physical books were not being loaned and new books not easily supplied.

In order to support children's home schooling and literacy during this period, spend on children's book resources was concentrated on popular fiction, non-fiction and expanding our book banding scheme in libraries. This enabled library staff to assemble curated book bags for children based on their reading levels in school. Staff included welsh language titles and resources into these bags, which were available for click and collect in libraries during the lockdown period. The continued commitment of resources and the success of these book bag collections are reflected in the children's loans during this period.

Staffing levels were static during this period but Swansea remains in the bottom quartile in Wales for qualified staff. Opportunities for regrading posts and funding for higher graded professional posts is challenging. This is an issue which needs regular review.

During the lockdown period, many of our residents turned to our online e-book and e-audiobook services, which was reflected in a 63% increase in usage. Through a combination of increased financial support from Welsh Government and expanded content support from suppliers, we were able to expand our national shared collection and content availability. We also committed more localised spend in order to ensure that our residents had prioritised access to high demand titles. The increased commitment is reflected in the uptake of the service and usage.

Swansea implemented a successful click and collect service, supported by a marketing campaign to increase usage of the service, as well as extending its home delivery service (handling 12,729 requests online or by telephone).

During this period the Library Service staff developed new skills and more use of social media platforms and websites to deliver 481 activities which attracted 95,776 engagements from customers such as story times, crafting videos, instructional videos and resource guides, Author Q&As, online talks and reading challenges or and online book group.

Funding from the Welsh Government enabled the purchase of mobile devices for customers to use in 10 libraries in Swansea. This also supported staff in their communication with local schools and families during this period.

Case studies included

- support for a family who had recently moved to the UK to identify and access local support during lockdown
- partnering with Flying Start to encourage reading, enjoyment of books and library membership by young families
- click and collect service to a shielding resident and confidence building to venture out again into the community
- working with a local school to provide reading materials to support home-schooling during lockdown and
- supporting an elderly customer to build their digital skills to enable them to stay in touch with family via their phone during restrictions.

3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary

- 3.1 This report recognises that despite many staff being redeployed to Swansea Shielding Helpline, foodbanks and working with the LACs and more latterly TTP roles, library venues opened swiftly as permitted and in line with national restrictions and the Council's reopening approval process. And when closed, as restrictions dictated, acted to deliver alternative service online as much as possible. Sustaining a service in this way enabled residents to access physical material services, online and digital resources and to remain connected during the ongoing pandemic with availability of WIFI and broadband at venues.

The community home delivery service operated from May 2020 and the service extended its delivery to more residents isolated due to the pandemic through shielding.

This period demonstrated the role that reading has in improving wellbeing and mindfulness and how valuable libraries were to communities during the pandemic.

As noted in the report the pandemic was a catalyst for change and the service has maintained many of the services developed in this period e.g. 'click and collect' on request curated book selections, public access to mobile devices with touch screen technology, online content, investment in electronic formats for books etc.

“Once again, whatever their circumstances, public libraries demonstrated that they are a vital component of local communities, and the commitment, resilience, and compassion shown by library staff during the pandemic is inspiring. The dedication of staff to their customers and the value that these customers place on their library service is evident

Swansea library service has strong community links and partnerships and has maintained a solid level of provision and use despite the pandemic” - Welsh Libraries Report 2020-2021

4. Legal implications

4.1 None

5. Finance Implications

5.1 During the year there was reduced income from renewal of loans and no fines accrued or charged, however where this was directly impacted by Covid 19 a claim was made for Loss of Income from the WG Covid Fund.

5.2 There are ongoing temporary suspension of fines due to end in March 2023, and these are currently being supported by the Authority's Economic Recovery Fund.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 6.2 There are no implications identified after undertaking the Intergrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process.
- 6.3 If an IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required:
- There were no impacts identified for the period concerned
 - Screening Form Appendix D

Background papers: *None.*

Appendices:

Appendix A Welsh Government Report

Appendix B Welsh Public Libraries Framework Connected and Ambitious

Appendix C Presentation showing 6 Quality indicators for which data was supplied.

Appendix D IIA Screening



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WELSH LIBRARIES REPORT 2020-2021

This document is also available in Welsh

Foreword

During the pandemic, public libraries in Wales continued to provide an invaluable service to local communities. With the closure of physical buildings in March 2020, library services were quick to develop and promote on-line services and continued to find innovative ways to mitigate the loneliness and isolation experienced by many throughout the various phases of lockdown. The contribution of public libraries to the well-being of people throughout this period cannot be underestimated.

The closure of public libraries and the disruption to services due to the pandemic made it impractical to continue with the usual annual reporting exercise against the Welsh Public Library Standards for 2020 - 21. However, as the Minister responsible for public libraries, I feel it is important to record and acknowledge the contribution of library services to our communities during the difficult days of the pandemic.

This report therefore represents a revised data collection exercise, with a greater emphasis on capturing qualitative information and the experience of library customers. It does not compare the response of individual services to the pandemic, recognising that the local position of each service differed in, for example, the ability to access shared buildings, or the number of staff deployed to support other aspects of the pandemic response.

Once again, whatever their circumstances, public libraries demonstrated that they are a vital component of local communities, and the commitment, resilience, and compassion shown by library staff during the pandemic is inspiring. The dedication of staff to their customers and the value that these customers place on their library service is evident in the moving case studies included in this report.

The pandemic served to accelerate the pace of change in public libraries, particularly in relation to digital services and on-line activities. The Welsh Government will support libraries to maintain and develop these services where they have been successful. However, we know that many customers still value the opportunity to visit their local library to attend activities, to seek help or advice from library staff, or as a quiet space to read, study or work. We will continue also to support services as they encourage individuals to return in person, and to resume the excellent work that they do to support well-being, health, skills, learning, education, and the simple pleasure of reading.

Rebecca Evans MS

Minister for Finance and Local Government

Contents

Introduction	1
Individual Service Reports.....	6
BRIDGEND (AWEN CULTURAL TRUST)	7
BLAENAU GWENT (Aneurin Leisure Trust).....	10
CAERPHILLY	12
CARDIFF.....	15
CARMARTHENSHIRE.....	17
CEREDIGION	19
CONWY.....	21
DENBIGHSHIRE	24
FLINTSHIRE	27
GWYNEDD	29
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	31
MERTHYR TYDFIL.....	33
MONMOUTHSHIRE	35
NEATH PORT TALBOT	37
NEWPORT.....	40
PEMBROKESHIRE.....	43
POWYS	46
RHONDDA CYNON TAF.....	48
SWANSEA	50
TORFAEN	53
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	55
WREXHAM.....	58
Appendix 1: Libraries in the pandemic.....	60

Introduction

It was originally intended to extend *Connected and Ambitious Libraries: The sixth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020* for an additional year whilst a new standards framework was developed. However, the closure of libraries during the pandemic meant that it was impractical to require local authorities to report against the full framework for 2020-21. Instead, with the co-operation of the Society of Chief Librarians, a more focused exercise to collect key data and to capture how library services adapted and responded to the needs of customers during the pandemic was implemented. This report reflects information submitted by all twenty-two library authorities.

For 2020-21, each service

- summarised their provision against the 12 core entitlements of the WPLS¹
- recorded their achievements against 6 quality indicators (instead of 16) of the WPLS
- provided a narrative report on strategic direction
- provided up to six case studies demonstrating the impact of the library service on people

The report on the performance of each individual service is largely based on the narrative provided against the core entitlements, and on case studies, rather than through statistical information provided via the quality indicators. The information provided by the quality indicators does though provide valuable information on membership, online usage and issue figures, alongside staffing levels, and operational expenditure. Some overall headline figures are provided below:

In 2020 - 21:

- 1,492,452 books were issued. Despite the closure of physical buildings library books continued to be made available, largely through the 'click and collect' services, established across Wales.
- 173,235 collections and deliveries conducted through 'click and collect' schemes.
- 4,528,337 people visited library websites. This represents a 49% increase in the number of visits to websites in 2019/20.
- 2,897,491 e-resources were downloaded, a dramatic increase from the 1,200,491 downloaded in 2019/20.

¹ [Measuring the public library service: our standards | GOV.WALES](#)

- The number of new library joiners to Borrowbox across Wales on 19 March 2020 was 648% higher than it was on 5 March 2021².
- Local authorities spent £37.5 million (net) on libraries, just over 21.2 pence per week per person.
- There are 1,184,426 members of libraries in Wales which is 37% of the population.³

The substantial impact that libraries have on their communities, evidenced within the report, clearly represents value for money. The statistics outlined above illustrate the importance of public libraries to their members. During the pandemic, libraries were essential in bringing communities together online through for example Lego clubs, online reading groups and story-time sessions.

Libraries as local hubs play a key role in ensuring that information and culture is accessible to all. The importance of culture in promoting positive well-being and physical health has been re-enforced by the pandemic. Access to cultural and heritage online activities provided a respite for people across Wales during uncertain times and emphasised the broad and deep reach public libraries have in their provision of access to all types of information⁴.

To deliver a service during the pandemic, libraries had to adapt their offer rapidly. Services reacted proactively to ensure that the needs of all customers were met during exceedingly difficult circumstances. New measures introduced included:

- allowing automatic loan renewals across all library services in Wales.
- going fine free, either permanently or temporarily.
- expanding the availability of online resources. The increase in demand was supported by an additional £500k of Welsh Government funding to purchase resources.
- creating new digital content and reaching new online audiences through story time and rhyme time sessions. These sessions provided an outlet for children isolated and unable to go to school, and their parents.
- Welsh language sessions were delivered online by many authorities. Sessions for children included a story, conversation (with the facilitator and puppets) singing traditional and newer rhymes, through the medium of Welsh. Positive feedback was received from parents who appreciated the opportunity to participate with their children in live rather than pre-recorded sessions.

² [BorrowBox – Your library in one app](#)

³ [National level population estimates by year, age and UK country \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁴ [CCV Covid Report A4 AW \(culturehive.co.uk\)](#)

- offering online reminiscence sessions to care home residents. The content included stories, photographs, and other images to encourage conversations and reminiscing. These sessions inspired the residents to talk to their carers and one another, and to library staff and the sessions had a positive impact on the mental health of those involved.
- many staff went beyond the usual expectations to maintain contact with more vulnerable customers, making befriending phone calls to vulnerable customers who were shielding.
- introducing self-service digital click & collect lockers in some services to enable customers to reserve items and collect from the locker at a time convenient to them.
- offering Bookstart Dechrau Da and Baby and Early Years packs to families of babies and young children through the library service whilst health visitors face to face services were suspended.
- libraries were unable to offer the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) in the usual way. As a result, staff in libraries collaborated with local schools, holiday clubs and partners to engage with children and encourage them to join the Silly Squad. To make it easy and safe for children to take part SRC Challenge bags were prepacked and distributed via the library network, summer play schemes and holiday clubs.
- addressing period poverty with free sanitary products, not only from branches, but as an option on the click & collect/home delivery service, including reusable eco-friendly products.
- a number of library staff were redeployed throughout 2020/21 and provided support to shielding families through the delivery of food and prescriptions. Providing reliable and accurate information is central to library work, and these skills, alongside effective communication and listening skills were essential in this environment. Librarians as trusted professionals were able to effectively support their customers.
- as buildings opened, services provided online virtual tours of library buildings so potential customers could see access arrangements and the facilities available, such as toilets.

The positive impact of these innovations is clearly demonstrated through the following feedback from library customers:

“What a lifeline the service is, thank you for all your support in these terrible times.”

“The library has kept me sane; I rely totally on my library books.”

“The call and collect service has been a lifeline. My hearing has rapidly deteriorated so all I have is my books.”

“Receiving a phone call from the library has been the best news since the lockdown, it was so lovely to hear a friendly voice. They even helped me access some e-books on my i-pad. A wonderful thing. I cannot wait to get back in my library though.”

“Reading has kept me sane during these difficult times. I was overjoyed to hear when the library were able to offer the [order and collect] service.”

“The children love their weekly trip to the library for their packs and are excited to see what’s been selected, they have so little to look forward to at the moment.”

Additional funding of more than £1.5m provided by Welsh Government during 2020/21 from the Welsh Government’s Cultural Resilience Fund and the Cultural Service Fund for Local Government, enabled public libraries in Wales to introduce new initiatives and to support staff to acquire new skills. The Estyn Allan project, funded by Welsh Government, provided a training programme across the public library sector to support staff to develop the knowledge, and confidence to deliver bi-lingual digital activities. The training covered a wide range of topics to enable staff to engage with communities’ online, filming and recording events and activities online and in person, recording and broadcasting podcasts and using social media to engage audiences. A staff member from Denbighshire noted:

“Being part of the Estyn Allan project has been an excellent experience which has benefitted both my personal and professional development. Through participation in online sessions with industry professionals I have been able to gain specialist skills and knowledge relating to the use of digital equipment for marketing and content creation. As a result, my digital confidence levels have increased significantly, and I have applied this new learning through the creation of new online media content for Denbighshire Libraries as well as working to enhance the social media presence of the same. Working as part of the Estyn Allan team has opened up new links between Denbighshire Libraries and others across Wales and allowed the sharing of ideas and resources on a scale which would otherwise not have been possible. Going forward, I hope to share my learning with my colleagues in Denbighshire and strive towards further enhancing my digital skills “.

The initiative also resulted in the launch of new digital bilingual and specific Welsh language services. The success of Estyn Allan was recognised with the award of Library Team of the Year by CILIP Cymru Wales for 2021.

Many services purchased tablets to loan to customers without access to a home device. These tablets could be pre-loaded with content, or with library apps to enable access to e-books, e-audio books, e- magazines and newspapers, and could be Wi-Fi enabled for those without internet access at home. This was particularly valued at a time when children were being home-schooled by parents. Services also moved book groups and other activities online, using a variety of innovative methods to maintain enthusiasm and engagement in the virtual environment.

The information provided by individual library services across Wales clearly demonstrates the importance of library staff. The case studies provided clearly outline how staff, whilst experiencing the impacts of the pandemic themselves, went above and beyond to support their customers. Staff demonstrated resilience, adaptability and compassion and worked effectively with a variety of colleagues to support the most isolated members of their communities. Friendly, hardworking, and enthusiastic staff are at the heart of all services across Wales, and they clearly understand their customers. Some individuals commented that when they asked staff to choose their books for them during the pandemic, they found the selection better than when they browsed themselves. A customer in Merthyr Tydfil succinctly expressed the value that customers place on their library staff:

“Library staff are resilient, kind, caring, adaptable and almost in the realms of superhero.”

Individual Service Reports

The individual service reports below should be read in the context of the broader pandemic impact and the specific restrictions on library services.

Library services across Wales continued to maintain their statutory duties during 2020/21. With the closure of physical buildings, all services obviously witnessed a dramatic decrease in footfall and physical book issues. On average the decrease in book issues was around 80%. Some services also lost library members. However, the decline in physical use was counter-balanced by the provision of digital resources, such as e-books and e-magazines which saw a huge increase in demand.

As far as possible, activities which would normally have been delivered in library buildings were also moved on-line. However, it must be recognised that the capacity of library services to respond to the pandemic was variable and dependent, for example, on the extent to which staff were redeployed to support the pandemic response, and on the nature of library buildings. For example, not all service points were able to re-open or function due to physical constraints and the consequent inability to implement social distancing.

BRIDGEND (AWEN CULTURAL TRUST)

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service includes 11 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 99% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Awen library service provided detailed evidence to show that it continues to meet all the core entitlements.

Digital downloads increased by 38% since 2019/20. Bridgend is one of only seven local authority areas to see an increase in library membership during 2020-21.

The materials budget decreased by 30% in 2020/21. However, the service noted that many book suppliers were closed or unable to deliver for large parts of 2020/21 and the materials spend was focused on specific areas, such as the children's collection. Nevertheless, there has been an overall reduction of 35% since 2017/18. Usage of materials tends to be around the median for Wales although the materials budget per 1000 population is in the bottom quartile. Expenditure on Welsh materials has remained static at 3%.

There have been no significant changes to staffing, and the total number of staff identified as holding recognised library qualifications remains the same and is the highest in Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The merger of the Booklink and Mobile Library Services in early 2020 to create 'Books on Wheels' allowed Awen to react very quickly to ensure that deliveries were conducted to the most vulnerable and isolated customers.
- Bridgend has used social media effectively to deliver a variety of online sessions, including 'bounce and rhyme' and 'dungeons and dragons' sessions. This helped to continue to engage existing members. Awen will continue to focus on supporting individuals who lack the digital skills to engage with these activities.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the refurbishment of Porthcawl library. This resulted in a more flexible space and enabled the service to offer activities and events safely as buildings opened up
- A key development also included a new website. An innovative virtual tour was created for 8 libraries which means that customers can tour the libraries before visiting. The addition of 'how-to' videos and an events calendar provides a welcoming introduction to the local community.

Future plans

The case studies (examples below) demonstrate the impact the library service has on individuals and communities, particularly with health and wellbeing and digital skills.

In the immediate future, the service intends to complete the Maesteg Town Hall development and to position the library as a focal point for community engagement. Alongside this, the development of a new library strategy will ensure the events and activities offered by the library continue to remain relevant to the local community.

Summary

Awen's pro-active and engaged staff have enabled the service to remain focused through a difficult year. Careful planning has ensured the service has remained consistent and stable. The service has established a solid foundation to build on successes, regain former customers, and reach new ones.

Case Study 1

The restrictions imposed on the library service had a significant impact on customers in Bridgend. The service has an excellent relationship with library customers to ensure their needs are met. The pandemic increased the waiting time for requested books, due to the suspension of Books4U, Inter Library loans and deliveries from suppliers.

One customer uses the library for her local and family history research and experienced this problem after requesting a specialist item from the service. Just before the first Lockdown in March 2020, the individual started to research her family history. The item requested was '*Family Histories and Community Life in North Carmarthenshire*' by David T R Lewis. As this book was on a local history subject that was specific to Carmarthenshire, Awen did not hold a copy.

We found that Carmarthenshire Library Service held a few copies and were willing to lend them. However, due to the restrictions it proved difficult for us to obtain a copy. We updated the customer and explained that we would obtain the title of the book as soon as possible.

In March 2021 Carmarthenshire Library Service joined the Books4U scheme. We requested the book, and it was the very first book received through Books4U from Carmarthenshire.

The customer is now looking forward to reading the book and gathering the information that she needs to continue her family history research. The customer was very happy with the outcome. She was so happy that she asked us to take a photograph of her with the book in the library, so she could send it to family.

The restrictions imposed on the library service have had a significant impact on our patrons at Awen Libraries. We have an excellent relationship with our patrons and always make the very best efforts to help them achieve their needs, whether that need is entertainment, information, or a friendly chat.

Case Study 2

The pandemic paused in-person outreach activities, including visits to day centres and care homes. Library staff contacted care homes in the area to offer storytelling and reminiscence sessions via Zoom. A number of care homes accepted.

Sessions were held for residents using Zoom and content included stories, photographs and other images to inspire conversations and reminiscing. This provided a change to routine for residents, a time to come together and to participate in a new activity and to see new faces. Library staff introduced the residents to new stories and poems and using family history resources to share photographs and other media that made the sessions interactive.

A member of staff at the Care Home said

“Thank you for the session today. I have spoken with some of the service users that were present and they expressed that they enjoyed. We talked more about gardening and herbs, they agreed that they would like to do some more activities related to this and it has been inspired by the stories you’ve told today. I have found that these sessions are also beneficial for relaxation as they concentrate on listening and it helps them feel calm. I know you hadn’t asked for feedback but I just wanted to let you know the positive impact the stories are having and that we appreciate you taking the time to do these with us.”

BLAENAU GWENT (Aneurin Leisure Trust)

Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service includes 6 branches and 2 home-delivery vehicles, with 98% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library. The community hub model of delivery continues to be a success, enabling the library service to develop strong links with partners to deliver a range of services for the benefit of the community.

Library service performance

Aneurin Leisure library service reported that it continues to meet all the core entitlements.

It is encouraging to see that the materials budget has increased by 18% since 2019/20, with a 65% increase since 2017/18. There have been no changes to staffing levels during 2020/21 which remain low and affect the ability of the service to do more. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications is the lowest in Wales. Blaenau Gwent is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Staff made 640 welfare calls to vulnerable customers in the first two weeks of lockdown.
- The home delivery service had an incredibly positive impact on the local community, delivering additional stock to local hospitals and community centres supporting isolated and vulnerable people.
- The new 'call and collect' scheme was hugely popular.
- The service was able to ensure continuity of access to digital resources and facilitated on-line membership from the start of pandemic, with more flexible joining procedures.
- Digital downloads increased by 79% compared to the previous year.
- The service went fine-free, thus making the service more attractive to customers.
- The service delivered digital events that helped people feel connected to their local communities. Working with a range of partners, courses offered included creative writing and budgeting support for local communities.
- Staff recognised that there was an increase in enquires relating to family and local history and worked with volunteers in this area to provide support over the phone for detailed enquiries and signposted individuals to digital resources, such as home access to Ancestry and FindMyPast.
- The partnership with Cymraeg i Blant continued with online baby yoga and baby massage sessions.

Future plans

Aneurin Leisure library service demonstrated the impact it has on individuals through the case studies submitted (example below) including the benefit to people's health

and wellbeing, confidence, reducing feelings of isolation, and supporting digital skills development. The partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and has been a key factor in enabling Aneurin Leisure to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities.

The long-term commitment of Blaenau Gwent Council and Aneurin Leisure Trust to establishing a community hub model in each library across the authority remains in place. The service will continue to work with the local authority to ensure libraries form an essential part of local Covid recovery plans. The relocation of Abertillery library into the town centre, co-locating with Adult Community Learning and a local arts organisation remains a priority. These changes will enable the library service to achieve its vision of “improving people’s life opportunities, inspiring and enriching lives by providing high quality library services that are relevant and accessible to all.”

Summary

Recent increases in investment levels are welcomed. The pro-active staff and partnerships bring considerable benefits to a wide range of individuals and communities and with additional resources even more could be achieved for the benefit of the local community in future years.

Case Study

A customer from Ebbw Vale is grateful for the support she received from her local library in helping her set up her own business. The customer approached the library in October 2020 to request some specialist non-fiction titles. The library was able to source all the books requested and purchased titles for the customer to ensure she had the support needed. The customer also used the library for PC use, photocopying, scanning and Wi-Fi printing. The customer said:

“The library has been a great help with setting up my own business. I am setting up an indoor play centre, I have been able to borrow books on health and safety, ideas for activities, childcare, and accounting, it has saved me so much money. Using all the IT facilities and having a space to study, was so helpful to me, when I have a young family at home. It was great to be able to book a study space and have some peace and quiet, when there are five of us, at home. I also feel really safe in the library, knowing that all the equipment is cleaned, and the books quarantined etc.”

CAERPHILLY

Library services in Caerphilly are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 18 branches and 2 home delivery vehicles, with 98% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library. As reported in 2019/20, 11 of 18 libraries are now single staffed service points.

Library service performance

Caerphilly reported that it met all the core entitlements.

As with other library services, it saw an inevitable decrease in active borrowers and library membership totals, although the latter resulted from the migration of customer records to the new all-Wales library management system and a data cleanse.

The materials budget decreased by 8% in 2021. It is noted by the service, that the purchase of stock was affected by Covid, and that the needs of the community were met through careful management of the budget and the purchase of extra copies of popular titles to meet demand. The service remains committed to prioritising children and 21% of the total materials budget is for children. However, there has been an overall decrease in the material budget of 37% since 2017/18.

There have been no significant changes to staffing, with the overall total of staff per 10,000 people remaining at the median level in Wales. The service experienced several challenges during 2020-21 with the loss of a valued senior manager and the impact of staff redeployment.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The service has remained resilient, with the promotion of digital services, such as Lego clubs and story time sessions for children.
- The LibraryLink home delivery service was a valuable service for many, resulting in improved customer wellbeing.
- Library staff were redeployed to help support critical services. These included the delivery of free school meals, Test Trace Protect (TTP), the Customer Services Contact Centre and the team providing befriending services.
- Caerphilly implemented an 'order and collect' scheme, where staff expertise in choosing appropriate resources for customers inspired many to explore new genres.
- The library purchased materials from the Reading Agency Empathy collection to support the health and wellbeing of children and young adults.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the purchase of four laptops to extend and build upon the digital offer to residents who have no access to the internet or digital devices. Staff have identified opportunities through working with others which will enable library members to benefit from virtual advice and support from key council partners.
- The service saw a 68% increase in electronic issues since 2019/20.

Future plans

The case studies (examples below) demonstrate the impact the library service has on individuals and communities, particularly with children's learning, health and wellbeing and digital skills.

Caerphilly Library Services continues to provide a broad appeal to customers and non-customers as evidenced in the January 2021 'The Caerphilly Conversation' Consultation Report. Results show that 55% of responders were aware of the alternative services libraries provided during COVID and respondents listed libraries as an important key frontline service the Council needs to focus on as communities recover from the pandemic. In the immediate future, the service will continue to focus on opportunities to provide alternative methods of service delivery to residents.

Summary

Caerphilly has a pro-active approach to service delivery, working with a variety of partners to bring benefits to its customers. If investment levels can be maintained this will support the service to increase its reach and re-engage with customers who did not use the service during the pandemic.

Case Study 1

Due to the impact of the pandemic, the Summer Reading Challenge moved online during 2020. This is a vital scheme and encourages children to read library books throughout the summer holidays.

A family including 2 young boys are regular visitors to Caerphilly Library. The family noted that the activity they missed the most was their regular visits to the library. The library was closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Both boys had taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge for many years, and it had become an important part of their summer routine. The boy's mum advised that she was a qualified teacher and understood the importance of reading and enabling the children to choose their own books.

The library informed the customer that even though the Summer Reading Challenge was only being delivered virtually. The family completed the online registration and provided the following feedback:

"Whilst the boys enjoyed taking part and liked the little games, they did miss the prizes the library would give them, so I bought my own little treats to reward them instead. Unfortunately, we did not have access to actual library books for the challenge, but we signed up to Borrowbox and the children downloaded a range of e-books. My son was used to using his iPad to read as he had been using it for home-schooling. As my other son preferred interactive lift-the flap type books at the time, Borrowbox was not quite as popular with him, so he was thrilled when we learned that he would be eligible for the home delivery service. We filled out the application form with his preferences and the wonderful staff chose a collection of books and delivered them to the door. We all made use of

the Order & Collect service when it started in September – the staff continued to choose a selection of books for the children whilst myself and my other son enjoyed browsing the library catalogue and ordering for ourselves. We had some lovely library freebies when we picked up our books, including a free pen for myself and bags for each of the boys. We were also able to book browsing appointments in the library. Although regular users before the pandemic, both boys had forgotten what the library was like, and the first appointment was filled with exploring the children’s area and getting familiar with the surroundings again. We are so lucky to have such a fantastic facility in our town and we always receive a warm welcome from the staff. We cannot wait to resume our regular visits and look forward to finding some amazing books to read for the Summer Reading Challenge this year.”

Case Study 2

The team Caerphilly buddying service was implemented in Caerphilly. This ensured vulnerable residents were supported. A library assistant was moved into this team to support seven vulnerable households. The member of staff soon adjusted to their new role, as a number of skills were transferable. This included communication and listening skills through regular phone calls to residents, organisational skills to shop for seven families and those of compassion and understanding.

Feedback from a supported customer included:

“I spend days and days not seeing a soul and then you came into my life, and it was like a ray of sunshine.”

The staff member has remained in weekly contact with the individual and now often shares a chip shop meal.

CARDIFF

Library services in Cardiff are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 21 branches, 1 mobile and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 99% of residents living within 2 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Cardiff reported that it met all the core entitlements.

With the shift to online services, Cardiff saw a sharp rise in website visits of 65% since 2019/20 and a significant increase in e-resource usage. Cardiff is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic.

There have been no significant changes to the materials budget, with expenditure per 1000 population remaining slightly above the median level in Wales. A revision of stock priorities was also made early in the year, with resources diverted into digital provision in response to customer demand. The service continues to invest strongly in children's resources, and in Welsh language materials. Expenditure on Welsh resources remains above the median level in Wales.

Cardiff Hubs & Libraries service continue to operate as an integrated team. There have been no significant changes to staffing. Cardiff has continued to invest in staff training and development through virtual sessions via an online academy.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- There was an incredible 464% increase in digital downloads in 2020-21 compared to the previous year.
- A click and collect service was introduced and items were delivered to those unable to visit a hub to collect or return their books. The service was described as a 'lifeline' by many users.
- Cardiff Hubs & Libraries set up a food bank distribution centre to support the wider foodbank provision in Cardiff.
- The service has provided a wide range of digital activities throughout 2020/21, including, a social hour, low impact functional training sessions, community cooking, gardening hour and Knit and Natter.
- Cardiff has offered a weekly bilingual adult 'read aloud' session live on Facebook and promoted Welsh authors and publications where possible.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled Cardiff to create 5 mini studios. Twenty-seven staff received training in operating the digital equipment purchased and this team has been able to produce professional digital content. The service will focus on delivering a hybrid events programme.

Future plans

Cardiff provided case studies (example below) showing the positive impact the digital and outreach services had on people's health and wellbeing, skills, and sense of community.

The service notes that in the immediate future, libraries will continue to work collaboratively with health colleagues to improve public health issues. This partnership will continue to develop as age friendly and child friendly outcomes are prioritised. New initiatives will include a new wellbeing support service to support adults who feel socially isolated and need help to manage their personal wellbeing.

A major audit of stock holdings will also be taking place to ensure stock continues to meet the needs of communities.

The continued redevelopment of library Hubs will also be prioritised to fulfil commitments outlined within the library strategy and to help people stay connected and improve their overall wellbeing.

Summary

Cardiff's focus on health and wellbeing has opened new partnerships and opportunities. The service has been widely praised for the support provided to vulnerable customers. The implementation of a digital activity programme enabled the service to reach out to a new audience and proved beneficial for many users. If investment levels can be maintained, the service can build further on an already strong foundation.

Case Study

From 8 June 2020 the Outreach Service operating model changed from a structured, timetabled, and regional based service that was focused on customers of the mobile library van and household delivery service to a wide ranging and inclusive Click and Collect/Delivery model that covered all library customers across the Cardiff area.

Working in close collaboration with the newly created Click and Collect and advice Line service, for 4 days/week Outreach staff delivered books to the homes of anyone who was unable to visit a hub to collect or return books in person. Outreach staff also delivered Personal Protection Equipment to care organisations, schools, and vulnerable individuals.

Initially the service covered the four core library hubs that opened during the pandemic but as COVID restrictions relaxed the service was extended to 8 hubs that covered all regions in the County of Cardiff. Since the start of the service Outreach staff have made deliveries to 4,991 library customers. The Click Collect service has been widely praised and appreciated by the vulnerable people it serves.

CARMARTHENSHIRE

Library services in Carmarthenshire are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 15 branches, 3 mobiles and 4 home delivery vehicles, with 95% of residents living within 3 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Carmarthenshire reported that it met all the core entitlements.

In line with other library services, active borrower numbers fell, but online usage increased with a 128% increase in digital downloads.

The materials budget decreased marginally since 2019/20 and has seen a 12% decrease since 2017/18. However, the service continues to invest strongly in children's resources. Expenditure on Welsh resources has increased since 2019/20, with figures for Welsh language issues remaining well above the median in Wales. The service held regular Welsh language story time and craft session online throughout 2020/21.

There have been no significant changes to staffing and figures remain above the median level in Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Carmarthenshire libraries developed a schools selection service during 2020/21. Teachers were able to request boxes of books to loan that supported the national curriculum and reading for pleasure requirements of the pupils within their schools.
- During the pandemic, Carmarthenshire continued to collaborate closely with local partners, promoting popular electronic resources, such as home access to Ancestry and PressReader, with large increases in usage.
- Digital activities offered during lockdown included family history, storytelling, craft, online makerspace sessions to gathering stories from the community about their experience of Covid and the lockdown.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the service to purchase remote lockers, which has enabled Carmarthenshire to trial a 24/7 digital vending solution. The service notes that in the immediate future that the digital lockers will support residents in accessing stock locally and safely. Customers will be able to reserve items using the library catalogue and pick up the item from a locker at their local library at a time convenient to themselves. This will also facilitate longer opening hours in rural areas and increase the reach of libraries in Carmarthenshire.
- A 'click and deliver' scheme was introduced to support customers, providing a vital link for some vulnerable residents.

Future plans

The service submitted case studies (example below) which showed the impact of the housebound service in developing community engagement and meeting the needs of vulnerable people within the local community. The 'box of books' delivery service to local Schools enabled local children to benefit from up-to-date reading materials from the library. Digital activities were offered in conjunction with this offer, impacting positively on the health and wellbeing of local children.

Carmarthenshire are planning to extend services further at regional Libraries through the implementation of an Open+ pilot at Carmarthen Library which allows the library to open beyond normal staffed hours. Plans to develop the successful Makerspace initiative also remain in place.

Summary

Carmarthenshire have been pro-active in several areas including services for children and schools, and digital opportunities. The service has continued to perform well. The maintenance of investment levels will ensure the service can continue to develop innovative solutions and new services.

Case Study

Carmarthenshire Libraries played a supporting role to our school hubs during the pandemic. As a result of school closures, Carmarthenshire Libraries contacted all local school hubs to promote their box of books delivery service. This service was available to support all children and teachers attending the hubs.

The service usually supports all local schools in the provision of books. These books are connected to classroom themes and group/individual reading material. During the initial phase of the pandemic Carmarthenshire Libraries set out to provide this service for all hubs. By providing this service to vulnerable and key worker children, the library was able to connect communities and improving wellbeing. Ysgol Felinfoel benefited from this service hugely with over 300 books being issued to the Hub to support their children.

CEREDIGION

Library services in Ceredigion are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 5 branches and 3 mobiles, with 81% of residents living within 3 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Ceredigion met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full and did not achieve 2 (on customer surveys and availability of library strategy).

As with other library services, it saw an inevitable decrease in active borrowers and library membership totals, although the latter resulted from the migration of customer records to the new all-Wales library management system and a data cleanse.

The materials budget has decreased and is slightly below the 2017/18 figure. Nonetheless, the materials expenditure per 1000 population is in the top quartile in Wales. The service maintained its investment in children's resources. Expenditure on Welsh resources has decreased by just under 79% since 2019/20 and can be attributed to the impact of the pandemic.

Staffing levels have been maintained since 2019/20, with the total number of qualified staff remaining above the median level in Wales.

Ceredigion also became the 20th service in Wales to join the all-Wales Library Management System (LMS) in 2020/21. The implementation of the LMS is a significant achievement at a time of reduced staffing levels and should help the service to respond effectively to customer needs as national projects are developed.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services

- Ceredigion saw an increase in digital downloads of 42% compared with 2019-20 and is in the top third for digital loans per 1000 population.
- The service has provided a wide range of digital activities throughout 2020/21, including interviews with authors, story times and reading groups. This was, in part, due to the Estyn Allan project. Library staff across all local authorities in Wales benefited from this digital training programme during 2020/21, resulting in an improved digital offer from Ceredigion.
- The library service includes three mobile libraries and they have continued to deliver resources to vulnerable and housebound customers throughout 2020/21 although the delivery model was adjusted due to the pandemic.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the library to purchase wireless printers. Contactless technologies have proved invaluable in libraries during the pandemic, impacting positively on the safety of customers.

Future plans

Ceredigion submitted two brief case studies (example below), including promoting online services to elderly customers and the home delivery service, both of which highlighted health and wellbeing benefits of the library services.

As with all local authorities in Wales, the service notes that in the immediate future, the priority will be to encourage individuals to return to the library, although the financial impact of the pandemic on the service is unclear. The development of a strategy is planned, but the priorities for the strategy are still under development.

Summary

Ceredigion has worked hard to maintain a library service in 2020-21. Prioritising the development of a library strategy and engaging with existing customer and non/lapsed customers through a variety of means to inform the strategy will help the service plan for a successful future.

Case Study

Ceredigion Libraries provided a click and deliver system throughout 2020-21. Individuals who were unable to visit the library for a variety of reason, including illness and family commitments were able to order resources and have them delivered to their home address. Feedback on the service was positive and it made a significant impact on how people were able to cope with lockdown, shielding and customer safety.

CONWY

Library services in Conwy are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 10 branches (5 of which are community supported libraries) and 1 mobile, with 89% of residents living within 3 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Conwy provided detailed evidence to show that it met all the core entitlements.

Conwy saw a significant increase in website visits and a 184% increase in e-resource usage compared to the previous year, placing it near the top in Wales for digital downloads per 1000 population. Conwy is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. The service has seen a small decrease since 2017/18.

The materials budget has seen a 24% decrease since 2017/18 although the service remains in the top quartile for material spend per 1000 population. However, it has been noted by the service that a significant part of the budget is based on the capital business case that is submitted each year. This funding is not guaranteed, and the service undertakes a bidding process annually to obtain this funding. Most indicators of usage such as adult and children's loans, digital issues, active borrower levels, place Conwy around the median for Wales. Total expenditure on Welsh resources remains above the median level in Wales and issues for Welsh stock per 1000 Welsh language speakers place Conwy in the top third of library services across Wales.

The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same and is slightly above the median level in Wales. There has been a decrease in the total number of staff due to budget cuts.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- A successful bid for Child Development Funding in December 2020 enabled the service to work closely with local Family Centres to provide virtual bi-lingual storytime sessions for pre-school children experiencing developmental delay because of Covid restrictions.
- The service also continues to support Welsh language reading groups. The Welsh learners' conversation group started at Conwy Library continued to meet digitally throughout the pandemic.
- The virtual offer was expanded to include crafts and cooking sessions. The physical offer was also developed with library staff putting together an individual and tailored selection of books for customers for delivery or collection. Library members welcomed this.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the creation of a dedicated portal for libraries and for Culture. This has improved the promotion of services and will continue to improve engagement with local communities.

- The service implemented a click and collect service, which has been maintained and provides many benefits to customers.

Future plans

A number of case studies (examples below) were provided showing the impact a range of services made to individuals including health and wellbeing, digital services, families, and impact on staff.

A public consultation on the draft Library and Information Strategy 2021-26 has been completed. The main focus for the strategy will be the development of Libraries as Community Hubs. There will be a focus on raising awareness of the libraries as a place where residents can access a variety of council services. There will also be a continued focus on raising the profile of the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme for mental health. Funding received from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has helped support Conwy and Denbighshire Libraries' partnership to engage Community Navigators to raise the profile of Reading Well and to directly prescribe the books to their service customers. Health and wellbeing will remain a priority.

Summary

Conwy library service continues to deliver a strong service with priorities on health and wellbeing, children, and bilingual provision. However, staffing levels are essential to the maintenance and development of these priorities. Staffing has been reduced by almost a quarter (22%) since the conclusion of the fifth WPLS framework (2017) and could impact on the ability of the service to deliver in the future.

Case Study 1

During lockdown, library staff were re-deployed to call handling, brokerage (who arranged for prescriptions and shopping to be collected) and shielding support teams, giving local support to everyone who needed it. Library staff provided day to day practical and emotional support for people who were frightened, confused and in need of help.

Chemists and supermarkets struggled initially to manage demand for home deliveries, and this had a huge impact on those most at risk. Library staff made sure that the most vulnerable members of the community did not go without food and medicine. One member of staff noted that:

“I had many pleasant chats about how we were all coping during those strange times. One thing that stood out for me was the true community spirit. People who initially received parcels, but then managed to get food slots, cancelling their parcels so that they could be offered to others in more need of them being only one example.”

“The collaborative work we did with existing food banks, and those set up by local community groups was heartening. Their support and immediate response to requests for help were invaluable to us in resolving difficult situations”.

Case Study 2

The Conwy Community Navigator service provides support for people in the community to improve their mental and physical well-being. A partnership with the library resulted in a referral for an individual who was struggling with loneliness and decreased mobility. The library team made contact to find out more about hobbies and interests. This resulted in a delivery of books to the customer's home from the "Books on prescription" scheme⁵. Providing this customer with a multi-agency of services has given them a new sense of purpose in life and at the same time improved their mental health and wellbeing.

⁵ [Reading Well | Reading Agency](#)

DENBIGHSHIRE

Library services in Denbighshire are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 8 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 88% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Denbighshire provided detailed evidence to show that it met all the core entitlements.

Denbighshire notes a very substantial increase of 166% in digital loans. The service increased the range of digital downloadable eBooks and eAudiobooks with additional investment and provision e.g., Press Reader for online newspapers. Additional training and a focus on using social media also resulted in greater engagement with communities across Denbighshire.

As with other library services, Denbighshire saw an inevitable decrease in active borrowers and library membership totals, although the latter resulted from a data cleanse of user records in line with GDPR requirement. Denbighshire is one of fifteen authorities to have seen a decrease in membership in 2020/21 because of the pandemic.

The materials budget remains slightly above the 2017/18 figure. Denbighshire has the highest level of Welsh issues per Welsh speaking population and have maintained their high investment in Welsh materials. Two Welsh reading groups were hosted digitally during 2020/21.

The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same, but there has been a slight decrease in the total number of staff. Vacancies have not been filled due to budget cuts over several years. Only 50% of the actual staffing levels staff are reported as other staff spend 50% of their time on customer service roles.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The Bookstart provision continued online throughout 2020/21, alongside the provision of two Welsh language reading groups.
- An order and collect service was introduced to the benefit of customers.
- The Home Library Service expanded its delivery service and supported 79 new customers.
- Library staff formed the core for the Proactive Calls service for shielding people during the lockdown and worked closely with a range of council and third sector partners to provide information and advice.
- A memory bags collection for people living with dementia was launched during the year.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the service to create new solo digital spaces. These rooms offer private spaces and are bookable and enable individuals to undertake private appointments

online. These rooms offer services to individuals who may otherwise be excluded.

Future plans

Denbighshire provided a range of case studies (examples below) which demonstrated its impact on customers and communities, particularly through its new memory bags for dementia, digital opportunities for staff and public, and for children and families through the popular online bilingual rhymetime with Makaton signing.

Denbighshire's vision remains as "libraries are the beating hearts of the communities they serve - trusted neutral places where everyone is welcome regardless of their age, background or financial circumstances". In the immediate future, the focus will continue to be on further developing the health and wellbeing offer, the delivery of digital services, a review of the home delivery service and adapting library facilities to enable individuals to engage with each other safely. As noted by other local authorities, ongoing budget pressures will impact on future developments.

Summary

The service led on the Wales wide digital skills programme for staff Estyn Allan. This was a notable achievement, as it enabled greater collaboration across public libraries in Wales. Denbighshire library service has maintained its priorities on health and wellbeing, children and bilingual activities, and digital engagement. The service has a strong foundation to develop services in the future.

Case Study 1

The growth in the use of digital library resources (eBooks, eAudiobooks, and digital magazines and newspapers) has been seen for several years – but it was accelerated by the lockdown in March 2020 as people sought access to reading material when library buildings had to close.

Total downloads of digital material increased by 166% in 20-21, with Borrowbox loans (eBooks and eAudiobooks in English and Welsh) increasing by 94%, and e-zines by 55%. This was supported by Welsh Government's investment in additional content in Welsh Libraries' Borrowbox offer, and we also purchased some additional stock to meet demand for heavily requested titles. We enabled people to join online and access the resources without having to come into the library.

For one customer living with ME, using Borrowbox has made a positive impact on her life as she has access to downloadable eAudiobooks, and can also support her son's reading development:

"This is the most fantastic App! I have M.E. No longer able to read but I can listen to these books. So many choices of books too! Really simple to use, syncs well across tablet and phone and it is free with library. There's also super easy option to reserve a book and it will email when u can add it! I have listened to the book my son was reading at school so we could talk about it. Thank you for making a bookworm happy again!!"

With libraries unable to offer access to printed newspapers due to closure and safety concerns once re-opened, we purchased in Press Reader which provides access to over 7000 newspapers from across the world.

The following video illustrates the impact of this resource on one customer's life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKH6YhTD0Ls>

“A great innovation for me. I can just get up in the morning, make a coffee, turn on and read whatever newspaper I like.”

Case Study 2

Denbighshire Bookstart moved its regular rhymetime activity online. The Bookstart team, working from home, produced a live bilingual Rhymetime on Facebook every week (average views 664), and recorded and published online rhyme and story videos (average views 1079).

The live sessions enabled families to continue to engage with the team and the library service – sending in requests for birthday greetings and favourite rhymes each week. Sessions were bilingual and make use of Makaton signing so that children and families could develop their Welsh and signing skills at the same time. The sessions brought a sense of normality and routine to many families.

The staff team had to learn new skills very quickly and demonstrated great flexibility, creativity and commitment in switching their provision to virtual at a time of great personal stress.

The team's work was recognised in 'Making a Difference: Libraries, Lockdown and Looking Ahead'⁶, a report by Carnegie Trust UK into UK public library services exploring their role supporting individuals and communities during lockdown and the barriers they faced during this time.

⁶ <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/making-a-difference-libraries-lockdown-and-looking-ahead/>

FLINTSHIRE

Library services in Flintshire are delivered by Aura Leisure and Libraries Ltd. on behalf of the local authority. The service includes 7 branches, 1 mobile and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 83% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Aura library service reported that it met all the core entitlements.

Aura library service in line with the rest of Wales, saw an increase in its digital downloads of 83%.

As with other library services, Flintshire saw an inevitable decrease in active borrowers and library membership totals. The service has also witnessed a decrease since the fifth WPLS framework. This could be reviewed with a plan of engaging with lapsed and potential new customers. Flintshire is one of fifteen authorities to have seen a decrease in membership in 2020/21 because of the pandemic.

The materials budget has seen a 31% decrease since 2017/18. Expenditure on Welsh resources remains strong. This is an area the service may want to review perhaps in conjunction with neighbouring services, to get the most from their investment.

The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same whilst there has been a slight decrease in the total number of staff. Both total staffing and qualified staffing levels per 10,000 population are very low, and in the bottom quartile for Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Flintshire has offered online Welsh conversational classes as well as a Welsh book group throughout 2020/21.
- Flintshire offered a variety of pre-recorded and live content for library customers. This included pre-recorded weekly story times and rhyme times.
- The service used social media effectively to promote resources; this included a monthly author of the month and titles recommended by staff.
- A key service for members offered throughout this period was the home delivery service to vulnerable customers. To further support these individuals Flintshire launched the 'Aura Library Link' scheme. Individuals were able to register for this service and were then contacted by a member of the library team on a regular basis.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the creation of a new website. This has supported the resilience of the service, as the online presence has been transformed. The new platform has the potential to attract new audiences and to highlight digital resources.

Future plans

Aura library service submitted several case studies (example below) to demonstrate the impact the library had, particularly for children, older people, and direct engagement through its community calls and home library service. These had direct benefits on people's health and wellbeing, feelings of isolation, and digital skills.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that the key aim for the future will be to reconnect with customers and encourage them to physically return to library buildings. As a result of the impact of the pandemic, there is a need to review plans to ensure that current priorities align with the needs of customers. There is a need to ensure any future changes attract new and lapsed borrowers. Health and wellbeing, digital inclusion and literacy will remain priorities.

Summary

Aura library service has implemented new schemes such as the wellbeing hub at Flint library and the digital equipment loans. The low staffing levels perhaps hinder the ability of the service to maximise its potential. However, staff demonstrated compassion and empathy through the delivery of Aura library link. This service helped reduce the sense of loneliness and isolation that some customers experienced in 2020/21.

Case Study

The home library service operates across Flintshire delivering bags of books to customers registered for the home library service every 5 weeks. Library assistants collate a bag of books at the library for each customer to meet their requirements. The resources are delivered directly to the customer.

The home library service continued throughout the pandemic and gained additional customers, including those who were isolating and unable to visit their local or mobile library. A bereaved customer noted the following:

"During the pandemic I joined the Home Library service provided by Aura, I look forward to my bag of books and always receive a variety of choice. I enjoy receiving books from different authors, other than my favourites and broadening my choice of reading. If I request a book, it is in my bag for the next visit and my reading helps take me to another world, at a time when I need to find a happy place."

GWYNEDD

Library services in Gwynedd are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 13 branches and 3 mobiles, with 80% of residents living within 3 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Gwynedd provided detailed evidence to show that it met all the core entitlements.

It is encouraging to see that the materials budget has increased by 19% since 2017/18, with a further increase in 2019/20, which has been invested in online resources. Gwynedd is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic.

Gwynedd is the leading authority for expenditure on materials per 1000 population. Its investment in and support of Welsh language materials has been maintained and Welsh issues per 1000 Welsh language speakers are the fourth highest in Wales. Gwynedd also leads on the provision of Welsh language audio books and e-books for all Welsh public libraries, and Welsh e-books for the Reading Well for children scheme, collaborating with partners including Ffolio (the new platform for Welsh e-books, led by the Books Council of Wales).

Due to vacancies the total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has slightly reduced although it is at the median level in Wales. The total number of staff remains stable. A review of the staffing structure has been undertaken, with the creation of a new digital and learning job role to reflect changing priorities.

- Gwynedd, led on a partnership with the Welsh Books Council in 2020/21 to provide the Goreuon o Gymru (Best of Wales) collection in libraries in 2020/21 which resulted in an increase in the availability of books for Welsh learners.
- A partnership with Gwynedd's early years' service, resulted in Gwynedd sharing packs and activities with parents in a selection in schools to improve literacy levels in local communities.
- Digital downloads increased by 72% compared to the previous year
- Gwynedd expanded the range of online resources available for customers, including Press Reader for newspapers and Find My Past in their offer.
- The service delivered a number of successful virtual story time sessions for children.
- The service was able to improve access to a range of information and services through the extension of information kiosks to three additional libraries.

Future plans

Gwynedd supplied a range of case studies (example below) showing the impact the service has had on people and communities during 2020-21, including a policy to remove fines permanently; digital engagement; and addressing period poverty through eco-friendly options distributed through its order and delivery service.

A new strategy is currently in development, and this will include a review of the mobile library service following the success of its tailored home delivery service in 2020-21.

The service highlighted that one of the key challenges will be to attract people back to the library following restrictions to core library services throughout 2020/21.

Summary

Gwynedd has strong partnerships in priority areas such as learning, health and wellbeing, and children and families. It has maintained its strong performance for Welsh provision, and the library appears well placed to build on its successes during the pandemic and attract more new and lapsed customers.

Case Study

For the sixth year running Gwynedd Libraries were commissioned by Communities First to run the Family Reading Scheme. Provision was offered to 7 schools with space for up to 6 families with children in the Nursery, Reception or Year 1 class to participate from each school. The aim of the scheme is to promote reading and improve the confidence of parents.

The scheme needed to be implemented in a slightly different way in 20/21 due to Covid-19 restrictions and the challenge was to plan the activities in a different way. The focus was on encouraging parents to share books with their children, and to have fun whilst discussing stories together.

A home delivery package was provided to each family by Gwynedd Libraries which included three storybooks and a picture to colour in, craft work inspired by one of the books, together with instructions and resources. There was also a YouTube link so that the family could watch a video of an actor reading one of the stories. The schools were responsible for identifying and inviting families.

All families were delighted to receive free book resources, and there was evidence to suggest that these books had considerable use in the home. The remainder of the money was used to purchase various craft resources so that the families could take part in the craft activity by following the instructions in the pack. 132 activity packs were distributed to families over the Autumn and Spring term and 57 children benefited from the scheme.

Comments included:

“Cynllun gwerthfawr dros ben sydd wedi parhau drwy gyfnod dyrys ac anodd iawn. Adborth wych a chefnogol iawn gan y rhieni a phawb yn ddiolchgar am yr adnoddau ffantastig. Wir yn gobeithio bydd y cynllun yn parhau ac y bydd y sesiynau teulu yn cychwyn yn ôl, pan fydd hi'n saff. Diolch anferth”

“Just nodyn i ddiolch yn fawr am y pecyn gyrhaeddodd fel rhan o'r cynlyn darllen. Mae'n wych, yn enwedig gan ei fod yn cynnwys gweithgaredd crefft hefyd. Newch chi plis basio fy niolch ymlaen i'r rheini sy'n gyfrifol? Wir yn gwerthfawrogi.”

ISLE OF ANGLESEY

Library services in the Isle of Anglesey are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 5 branches, 1 mobile, 1 home delivery vehicle, and 2 community supported libraries, with 89% of residents living within 3 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it met all core entitlements in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1; availability of library strategy (in part) and consulting users (did not achieve).

Anglesey saw an increase of 142% for its digital downloads. It is now in the top quartile for digital downloads in Wales, through increased investment and promotion. There has been a small decrease in library membership since 2017/18. The Isle of Anglesey is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. The service notes that this may be from lack of opportunities to renew or join in person as branches were closed.

The service has witnessed a decrease of 18.1% in its materials budget since 2017/18, and it is now just above the median for Wales. The Isle of Anglesey notes that services to children were prioritised during the pandemic and its children's expenditure has been maintained.

Expenditure on Welsh resources has slightly increased, although the level of loans per 1000 Welsh speakers is in the bottom quartile. The service may wish to engage with neighbouring authorities for ways to maximise its Welsh materials investment.

There has been a slight decrease in total staffing levels since 2019/20 due to vacancies. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Call and collect packs were promoted to children.
- The school's library service provided reading for pleasure boxes to primary schools.
- A popular Lego club was delivered online.
- The service supports Welsh language reading groups.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the service to purchase iPads and hublets, which has added value to existing digital resource provision and has facilitated access at home to online resources, such as newspapers and magazines.

Future plans

The Isle of Anglesey submitted several case studies (example below) showing the impact of specific services on individuals and communities, such as the new call & collect service; the reading for pleasure book boxes for schools; and online clubs for children and families.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the Isle of Anglesey continues to be committed to the aims outlined in the Isle of Anglesey County Council Library Service Strategy 2017-2022. The impact of the pandemic means that service will focus on further developing the health and wellbeing offer within Anglesey Libraries alongside enhancing the service's digital offer, continuing the professional development of staff, and ensuring buildings are as safe as possible. It will also be a priority for the service to fill vacant posts to ensure resilience.

Summary

The Isle of Anglesey has worked hard to enhance its digital offer and recognises that filling the vacant post will enable the service to achieve more as it recovers from the pandemic. The service may be able to capitalise on recent developments such as the new Holyhead library and maintain investment in electronic resources, alongside the development of social media strategies to promote this service.

Case Study

Pre Covid the library Service ran some very popular Lego Clubs in 4 libraries. This was one of the activities that the service successfully managed to transfer on-line. Weekly themes were established, and children (and the occasional adult) posted their creations on the library Facebook page. The service was able to celebrate each child's creativity by creating a gallery of that week's theme. This activity provided much enjoyment at a difficult time. Feedback included:

“Lego club was an absolute lifesaver for us - our child looked forward to coming to the library for the Lego club, but the online club came a close second. He would spend hours building and exploring the theme. The fact that the library was setting the theme caught his imagination in a way that me giving him ideas could not. The focus took away from Covid and all the restrictions, and he loved seeing his efforts on Facebook.”

MERTHYR TYDFIL

Library services in Merthyr Tydfil are delivered by Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service includes 5 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 88% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it met all core entitlements in full.

Merthyr Tydfil experienced a pleasing 68.5% increase in digital loans compared with the previous year. There has been an increase in library membership since 2019/20 and a 7.5% increase since 2017/18. Merthyr is one of only 7 authorities who has witnessed an increase in membership during 2020/21.

The materials budget has decreased significantly since 2017/18 and is now 47% lower than 2017/18 levels. Merthyr Tydfil attribute the decrease in 2020-21 to the total budget and spend on Welsh language and children's resources to the pandemic and restrictions. Nonetheless, the service has continued to meet the standard set for WPLSQI 9.⁷ This standard requires libraries to achieve either a minimum of 243 items per 1,000 resident population or a minimum spend of £2,180 per 1,000 resident population annually. Merthyr acquired 249 items per 1,000 resident population in 2020/21. It should also be noted that in Merthyr, the furlough of staff was a contributory factor as staff were not available to purchase stock. The services affected by furlough and redeployment were not able to spend the budget allocated in some cases.

Staffing levels have remained static since 2017/18, with the total number of staff and the total number of professional staff below the median level in Wales. However, the service notes the continued positive praise and feedback received by customers regarding the staff.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Throughout 2020/21, Merthyr was able to deliver many sessions digitally that aimed to support learning, enjoyment and enable customers to obtain the maximum benefit from available resources, both physical and virtual. Staff worked with individuals and groups of all ages.
- The service saw an increase in visits to the website.
- A new Support Assistant role means that most activities are now delivered bilingually.
- A partnership with the local Welsh Centre also supports the service to ensure services through the medium of Welsh are maintained.
- The 'call and collect' scheme was hugely popular.

⁷ [connected-and-ambitious-libraries-the-sixth-quality-framework-of-welsh-public-library-standards-2017-to-2020.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Future plans

The service submitted two case studies to illustrate its impact during 2020/21 (example below). These were online videos showcasing local history photographs, and staff involvement in volunteering projects and coming together during the restrictions.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Merthyr notes that the key priority will be to reinstate the level of pre-pandemic work and activity in a safe way.

The priority will be a focus on children and health and wellbeing, with its role in this area recognised by the trust and council. The profile of the library has been raised as a result of the work in this area. The promotion and delivery of activities around health promotion is essential for the resilience of the service. In addition, the service will be developing work around the Welsh Language Strategy in partnership with the local authority.

Summary

Despite one of the lowest levels of expenditure per 1000 population, the service works hard to engage with all people and its various communities. One of its strengths is staff enthusiasm, and health and wellbeing. Any further investment would enable the service to re-engage with new and lapsed customers in the future.

Case Study

The first lockdown happened quickly. Staff reacted quickly and set up networks on various digital platforms to keep in touch and share news and to ensure no one was alone at such a difficult time.

The team actively searched out volunteering opportunities and many started by delivering free school meals to children in Merthyr. Staff also kept in touch with Homelink customers to ensure they were not isolated.

Some staff members became NHS supporters through the collection of food and toiletries to donate to the local hospitals where staff were under immense pressure.

When the news came that a staff member had lost their husband, the team again supported each other, sending messages of support, flowers and cards and wishes to the whole family. On the day of the funeral, despite lockdown restrictions and no physical contact, they made their way to the funeral home to stand outside in support of their colleague, something that will never be forgotten.

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Library services in Monmouthshire are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 6 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 73% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it meets all core entitlements in full.

Monmouthshire experienced an increase of 60% for its digital downloads. It is just below the top quartile for digital loans per 1000 population. Monmouthshire is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. There has been a small overall decrease in library membership since 2017/18.

The library service is integrated with the Community Hubs but for 2020/21 reporting has adjusted its financial and staffing reporting to reflect the library budget separately. This will make for easier comparisons across Wales but means trends over previous years are less useful. There has been a welcome increase in materials expenditure in 2020/21. For 2020/21 it is just below the top quartile for material expenditure per 1000 population. Expenditure on children and Welsh language materials are both lower than the proportion of these groups in the population, and the Welsh language spend in 2020-21 was extremely low at 1%, when the Welsh-speaking population in Monmouthshire is 7.9%.

Due to a change in the calculation of library staff hours to separate library work from the merged Community Hubs, there has been a significant decrease in the total number of staff and the total number of staff per 10,000 population is the lowest in Wales. The number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same and is in the bottom quartile for Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The service delivered online poetry readings throughout 2020/21 and used social media accounts to promote electronic resources.
- The service continued to purchase additional e-resources such as Which? and FindMyPast.
- A popular 'request and collect/deliver' service was implemented and will be retained in the future.
- Inclusion in the council's weekly virtual staff sessions and newsletters helped promote of services throughout the year.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the purchase of iPads and digital equipment which helped to improve the delivery of virtual services. Monmouthshire was able to offer a greater variety of digital sessions, leading to an improvement in community engagement and participation.

Future plans

The service submitted case studies (example below) which showed the impact the request and collect service had on individuals, improving their health and wellbeing, and reducing feelings of isolation. Home access to online family history services enabled a local women's history project to continue, bringing benefits to those involved.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Monmouthshire continues to report that the community hub model works well. Community learning remains a priority with classes offered to support people with literacy, numeracy and job seeking. Digital services will continue to be promoted and further investment in electronic resources will improve the resilience of the service.

The service plans to continue to collaborate with partner agencies in the future to identify more people in need of the housebound delivery service and to encourage people to return to the physical hubs.

Summary

Monmouthshire has strengthened its digital provision and usage and continues to support digital inclusion and health and wellbeing in the authority effectively. The service plans to re-engage with lapsed and new customers and build on the community hub model. The service will need to be supported with appropriate levels of revenue funding to achieve this.

Case Study

Through Bookstart we aim to provide every family in Monmouthshire with free books, resources, and guidance when their children are in their first year of life and again when they are toddlers. During 2020/2021, it was difficult to distribute Bookstart packs in the usual way but, working with Booktrust, we were able to arrange deliveries to Flying Start and a delivery to Health Visitors in the north and south of the county.

Sharing stories and rhymes from an early age supports a range of outcomes, including positive early language, oracy and communication skills development, parent-child bonding, and early literacy. During 2020/2021, we were able to hold weekly story time sessions and occasional Baby Rhyme Times via social media.

NEATH PORT TALBOT

Library services in Neath Port Talbot are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 8 branches, 1 mobile and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 90% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library. The library service also supports 7 community managed libraries (CMLs) with resources (including staffing and stock) but follows the 2014 Welsh Government guidance by not including CML activity in their WPLS return. As a result, the service 'loses out' on loans by CML customers which are not reported here, whilst the reported expenditure covers *all* libraries.

Library service performance

The service reports that it meets all core entitlements in full.

Neath Port Talbot is one of the few services to see a slight increase growth library membership in 2019/20 and they attribute this to the enhanced online offer with people able to join online. The service has seen a 6% decrease in the resource budget since 2017/18, which although small, may have impacted usage. However, an increase in expenditure on children's resources was undertaken in 2020/21 to assist with home learning requirements during Covid. The service ranks just above the median for children's loans per 1000 population in 2020/21.

Although there has been a slight decrease on expenditure on Welsh language resources, Neath Port Talbot have noted that this was partly due to lack of availability of suitable materials, and a changing of supplier. The service expects this area to improve in future years. Expenditure on materials remains at the median level across services in Wales, and it also is at the median for Welsh language issues per 1000 Welsh language speakers.

Staffing levels have remained static since 2018/19, with the total number of professional staff above the median level in Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The service offered a variety of digital activities including, song and rhyme, creative arts, children's activities, reading groups, alongside events that have promoted literacy and adult learning.
- The service committed to a weekly programme of online events for 12 months which created a positive sense of community for everyone who joined in.
- The digital downloads in Neath Port Talbot library service increased by 78%. Expanding their digital offer to include newspapers through PressReader played a role in the increase.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the purchase of tablets which enabled the service to introduce a tablet lending scheme, which impacted positively on the promotion of digital services.
- The library service established a pilot project to loan MP3 players, with e-audio books of their choice to visually impaired people.

- The service enhanced its delivery service to include a kerbside collection and a call and collect service.

The service also temporarily removed fines during the pandemic, and then made it a policy to permanently not charge fines for late returns.

Future plans

Case studies on the impact of the home delivery service, online reading groups, online Sunday Storytime, and online art and wellbeing groups, show the impact the service and staff have made to people's health and wellbeing, skills, sense of community and confidence (examples below).

The service reports that the proposed outcomes of the 2019 review of its library service have been achieved, despite the pandemic. This included an enhanced, more adaptable Mobile Library Service and a revamped Mobile Delivery Service, with one new vehicle in place and one further electric vehicle expected. The proposed development of a new library in Neath's town centre is also in progress. The Library Service remains focused on delivering services and resources in the areas of digital inclusion, health and wellbeing, children's literacy, and lifelong learning. The success of the kerbside collection and call and collect services means that these will be retained in the future.

The service anticipates that once a clear view of corporate priorities emerges after the pandemic, a new Library Strategy for Neath Port Talbot will be produced during 2022.

Summary

The value of a well-managed and resilient service is evident as the service adapted quickly and maintained its community engagement, even increasing membership levels. Active borrowers fell by a smaller percentage than in many authorities during 2020/21. Further investment will enable the service to build on its recent successes.

Case Study 1

Neath Port Talbot Libraries have had a strong reading group community for many years. This group provides an invaluable opportunity for people to get together to share their thoughts about books and to meet people in their community. In a year of constant challenges, another that presented itself was how to keep reading groups active and ensure that people can still contribute and share their opinions during a time when face to face contact was not possible.

At Baglan Library the staff there understood the value of the reading group which had been running for many years and established various means of communication, such as email, WhatsApp, and Facebook to maintain contact within the group. The library staff ensured that group members could contact them using a variety of methods. Once libraries were able to offer a Call and Collect service the staff worked to provide the group members with regular books and opportunities to discuss and share

thoughts. They were even able to overcome the challenge of one group member being stranded in New Zealand for much of the year.

The efforts of the library staff ensured that this group continued to meet throughout the pandemic, by moving to online monthly meetings. For the group members this meant different things. For one member it was very important for their mental health and well-being to be able to read together as a group and for other members it enabled them to normalise their day in a time of much disruption. To many the group is akin to family and by keeping together it helped create a sense of belonging when they were isolated in their homes. This would not have happened without the support of the library staff.

The word lifeline has been often used with regard to the provision of services during the pandemic and for the members of the reading group it is very appropriate. It has been essential to their health and well-being.

Case Study 2

When libraries were unable to offer physical, in-person services, Neath Port Talbot moved many services online. A Facebook group, 'NPT Bookstart and Song and Rhyme' was set up.

The library delivered many recorded song and rhyme sessions and towards the end of 2020 live sessions were offered two to three times during some weeks.

Feedback was very positive with many expressing thanks that the group continued to deliver song and rhyme events:

"I would have been lost without song and rhyme every week. I love to have that time with my son sharing songs and stories together. It's been hard but it's helped me a lot, especially talking to others."

The Bookstart Song and Rhyme group has continued to flourish. It is now a fundamental part of the digital services offer and has attracted new customers.

NEWPORT

Library services in Newport are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 9 branches and a home delivery service, with 97% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it meets 11 of the core entitlements in full, and one partially, as its strategy is due for renewal and will be produced in line with the new corporate strategy in 2022.

Newport is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. There has been a decrease in library membership since 2017/18 and although the 2020/21 decline is to be expected, the longer-term trend could be investigated to determine how to reach new and lapsed customers.

There has been a small decrease of 6.6% in the materials budget since 2017/18, although the service remains about the median for Wales per 1000 population for this indicator. It would be beneficial for the service to consider the acquisition of materials and the potential link between the selection of materials and the levels of active borrowers per 1000 population.

The service has retained its expenditure on Welsh language materials and works with a number of partners to maximise use of the collection. Newport works in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin to offer Welsh Language storytimes and baby massage sessions at libraries and these sessions help to promote the use of Welsh junior stock.

There have been no changes to staffing levels since 2019/20 and the total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications remains above the median level across Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Newport's digital downloads increased by 71%.
- The service moved many activities online during 2020/21, and increased investment in e-resources.
- The service implemented a new call & collect scheme.
- Newport prioritised children's resources and services during the pandemic to help support young people's learning.
- The library staff contacted vulnerable household clients on a regular basis to check on their health and wellbeing.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the purchase of four desktop self-service kiosks which allowed the service to re-open library site visits at an earlier stage than would have been possible without this equipment. Self-service kiosks are now available at all library sites in Newport.

Future plans

The service provided case studies (example below) illustrating the beneficial impact of its home delivery service to housebound customers; the health and wellbeing benefits of a creative online group; and the health and wellbeing benefits of the Shared Reading group meeting up online during the pandemic – a practice they have continued since then.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Newport, notes the integration of the library service with the new Neighbourhood Hub model of multi-disciplinary teams. Library services will be based within the 4 main hub locations and branch libraries will function as spokes with members of the wider hub team delivering services. The first Hub opened in January 2020 with the library operating at the centre of its provision. Unfortunately, the pandemic has meant an assessment of the performance of the site has not been possible, but prior to closure there was evidence that the library service was a core element of this building. A new library strategy will be developed during 2021/22.

Summary

Newport has strong engagement with partners particularly in community learning, digital engagement, and health and wellbeing, but relatively low investment in some areas. The future strategy should help the service capitalise on its resources to attract more customers and use of the libraries.

Case Study

Due to the pandemic, the shared reading group moved online. The migration happened within the first weeks of the lockdown. The majority of the Shared Reading Group continued to meet between 11am and 12:30pm every Wednesday throughout 2020/21.

The Shared Reading group has been vital to the mental health and wellbeing of the group members as during the lockdown this was for many the only form of contact, albeit virtual, that they had outside their immediate family.

During the pandemic, the 10 to 15 minutes of chat at the beginning of the sessions was extended as it quickly proved to be a vital part of the sessions, providing the opportunity to swap news and concerns and to check up on each other's physical and mental wellbeing.

Each session concluded with the Area Librarian reading a short story and/or a poem and to keep interest up from week to week and to provide additional talking points monthly themes were used. Themes included "Murder Most Foul," "Twisted Tales", Ghost Stories, Speculative Fiction and "Fairy Tales: Classic and Modern." The most popular themes, considering the restrictions was our "World Tour," which carried on for three months where the Area Librarian chose Folk Tales and short stories from Classic and modern authors from different countries around the world.

All stories and poems provided a great inspiration for the sharing of personal stories, opinions, and recommendations for further reading. Customer feedback included:

“During the last year, the Shared Reading Group has been a little taste of normality in a very strange world. We have a very happy group, with a wide range of interests and tastes in literature and we have become very good friends meeting every week in our WhatsApp group...at 11am [to] spend a very interesting hour and a half with our short stories and personal news. This service has impacted on me greatly as I live alone, and it is something to look forward to on a Wednesday. To feel a little more cultured and knowledgeable and less lonely by the end of our session.”

PEMBROKESHIRE

Library services in Pembrokeshire are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 12 branches and 1 mobile, with 83% of residents living within 3 miles of a library or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop.

Library service performance

Pembrokeshire met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and 2 in part (library strategy and lending books for free). A reservation fee for items not in the customer's branch but available in other Pembrokeshire branches, was temporarily suspended during COVID-19 restrictions, but such reservations were limited to 2 per customer. Pembrokeshire remains the only service in Wales to make this charge. However, it should be noted that the reasons are predominantly geographical.

The service witnessed a marginal increase in library membership, one of only 7 authorities where this happened in 2020-21. However, longer term there has been a decrease since 2017-18. In 2020-21 expenditure on children's resources was below the average spend across Wales at 14%. There has been a decrease of 9% on expenditure on stock for children since 2019/20. However, prior to the pandemic, junior issues had increased annually since 2017/18. Furthermore, the proportion of the total materials budget spent on children's resources has increased by 2% since 2018/19.

Along with temporary reductions to the materials budget due to the pandemic, a permanent cut was made, and the materials budget has declined by 37% since 2017/18. Pembrokeshire is now in the bottom quartile in this area in Wales.

Expenditure on Welsh language materials per 1000 Welsh speaking population has reduced and it would be beneficial to consider further investment in this area in the future, in particular, in relation to targeted marketing and promotion of stock. However, the ability to speak Welsh is now a mandatory requirement for new front-line posts and the service provides time and funding for staff to learn Welsh, which should help in the longer term.

There has been a slight decrease in the total number of staff since 2019/20 although this is due to a seconded person returning and the replacement temporary staff leaving. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications per 10,000 population remains above the median level across Wales.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Digital loans increased by a substantial 66%.
- The service delivered some activities online, such as baby rhyme time using Facebook.
- Pembrokeshire continued to be involved in the Summer Reading challenge, ensuring resources were available to children via the order and collect service.
- An order and collect service was implemented.
- The majority of library staff undertook online courses during the pandemic, which has impacted positively on their personal development.

- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the service to deliver an effective marketing and communication plan. Marketing of services was undertaken through newspaper editorials/adverts with some infographics, both in print and on social media. Merchandise was purchased to promote events and activities in the library.

Future plans

The service provided a case study (example below) on the beneficial impact of the order and collect service, particularly for health and wellbeing, children, and families; and on the impact on a member of staff undertaking the Estyn Allan training.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Pembrokeshire notes that the 2021-2023 library strategy is in the last stages of development. Key priorities will be health and wellbeing and tackling poverty, along with the partnership with the National Library of Wales for Glan yr Afon library which will be one of only three locations in the UK to benefit from the National Gallery [London] Masterpiece tour in 2022.

Pembrokeshire continues to invest in the development of library services, with projects to introduce self-service facilities already underway at Pembroke Dock Library in 2022; new builds at both Narberth and Pembroke, which are due to complete respectively in 2023 and 2024. Narberth is dependent on the success of a grant application. Both will provide self-service and enhanced opening hour access and involve partnerships with the local community and volunteers.

Summary

Pembrokeshire has invested in its library estate in recent years with plans for further capital investment with some exciting projects delivered. It is important that the level of revenue funding is sufficient to ensure that the benefits of the capital investment are realised.

However, it may be beneficial to review the level of revenue investment, because the weaker performance areas of the service appear to be directly related to reductions in investment [e.g., book stock]. This is important to make the most of the service and to encourage people back to libraries. The lack of sufficient new and appropriate stock can result in a decrease in new members and a reduction in usage levels.

Case Study

A staff member from Pembrokeshire describes her experience of participating in the Estyn Allan project. The aim of the project was to deliver a training programme to enable staff to develop the digital activities on offer to library customers.

The training covered a variety of topics in the three-month period during which time staff learnt a great deal about the delivery of digital content. The skills and knowledge acquired included:

- The selection and purchase of equipment and software to create content.
- The use of camera equipment and video editing software.
- The delivery of content in different formats, such as podcasts and blogs.
- The use of social media to promote libraries and to engage with library audiences.

The member of staff also undertook three Opening the Book reader development modules. These offered lots of practical information about stock promotion both in the library and digitally.

Training was shared with other members of staff. In total staff took part in 134 hours 15 minutes of training. This resulted in the generation of ideas and enthusiasm for online activities.

Trainees across Wales were able to share ideas, knowledge and good practice and offer support to each other. The staff member noted:

“Going forward I feel much more confident about the provision on online content. I now have an understanding of our social media audience (currently just Facebook) and can tailor the content accordingly. The next step in the long term (depending on staff capacity) is to produce a Social Media Plan to promote wider participation.”

POWYS

Library services in Powys are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 16 branches and 2 mobiles, with 76% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it meets 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, 1 in part and did not meet 1 (lending books; in part and library strategy; did not meet)).

Powys is one of only seven services to see an increase in library membership during 2020-21. The materials budget decreased in 2020-21. As noted by other authorities, the ability to purchase materials was affected by the redeployment of staff and the availability of materials. Nevertheless, there has been a 33% decrease since 2017/18 in the materials budget.

Although the materials budget is now one of the lowest in Wales per 1000 population, the loans for adult and children are in the second quartile. This suggests that the service is maximising its expenditure and choosing appropriate stock for its customers. Welsh language resource expenditure has been maintained and the service works well with local partners to actively promote its Welsh collection and Welsh learning. The member of staff responsible for stock selection is an active member of the Showcase Wales panel, which creates an annual list of the best Welsh writing in English as a checklist for library authorities.

There has been a 10% decrease in the total number of staff since 2019/20. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications remains at the median level across Wales, with several staff being supported to achieve qualifications.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The service Powys notes an impressive 77% increase in digital downloads since 2019/20.
- Activities such as rhymetime and storytime sessions have been well supported and promoted.
- The programme of online events delivered included financial help workshops.
- Powys has continued to be involved in the Bookstart scheme, delivered by BookTrust. This initiative, alongside the Summer Reading Challenge, continued despite restrictions.
- The service implemented an online programme of events for children and adults throughout the pandemic.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the service to purchase Wi-Fi printers, which enabled printing within community hubs, while limiting public contact with equipment.
- A click and collect service was implemented.

Future plans

The service provided several case studies (example below) showing the benefits of its digital projects including the loaned devices, the staffed digital helpline; its click and collect service; and a programme of online events.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, rebuilding services and encouraging members to return to physical library buildings will remain a priority. A new strategy is currently in development which will place health and wellbeing at its heart. The service has developed a Digital Strategy with support from the Welsh Government and this will inform the future direction of the service. A priority will be a staff training programme to enhance digital skills within the service. An income generation strategy is also being developed to ensure the sustainability of the service.

The service noted that Llanwrtyd Library has remained closed since the start of the pandemic, and staff redeployed. Pre-covid consultation concerning the future of this library determined that it would transition to a community library with services delivered by volunteers.

Summary

The service has maximised its strong communications and digital expertise to continue to provide a library service during the pandemic. Although staffing and resource investments remain low compared to other services, its usage levels are positive. The service is planning to build on these strengths as we move away from the pandemic.

Case Study

In partnership with Money Saviour, Powys Libraries held a series of online training sessions about money management. These sessions covered Universal Credit, energy providers and budgeting, and participants had the opportunity to learn and ask questions. Participants learned a lot about grant-funding, benefit pitfalls and ways to make their money go further. The feedback was very positive:

"I am really excited about making a spreadsheet for my budgeting now – Sorcha is really knowledgeable and has actually made me enthusiastic to plan what I do with my money, rather than just spend it and panic. These sessions have helped a lot."

"That was very informative. There were quite a few things that I did not know about Universal Credit, such as Council Tax Reduction being separate from Universal Credit – that is useful to know, and I will be passing that on."

"I did not know quite how many grants were available to help with energy costs. It all seems a bit of a minefield, trying to figure out how to do everything, but this session clarified a lot and I know what my next steps will be."

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Library services in Rhondda Cynon Taf are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 13 branches and 2 mobiles, with 93% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The library service meets 12 core entitlements in full.

RCT saw a 23% increase in active borrowers, which is attributed to individuals being able to join online and the digital library offer. It is now 4th in Wales for the number of active borrowers per 1000 population. However, it is one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic

The materials budget has decreased marginally in 2020-21 with a 14% decrease since 2017/18. As noted by other authorities, the ability to purchase materials was affected by the redeployment of staff and the disruption to the supply chain. The service maintained its expenditure on children's and Welsh language resources.

Staffing levels have remained static since 2019/20, with the total number of professional staff per 10,000 population above the median level in Wales, and some staff being supported to gain library qualifications.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- RCT notes a substantial increase of 83% in digital downloads since 2019/20.
- The library provided reading packs to schools through the school's library service, and this effectively contributed to the promotion of resources in this area.
- The service delivered bilingual storytimes online along with other online events for children and events during the pandemic. The service intends to continue with this as an effective way of reaching new audiences.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled RCT to purchase seven self-service kiosks, improving the environment for customers and staff. This provided added safeguards, reducing the need for face-to-face interaction, an important consideration during the pandemic. The service expects that up to 20% of returns and loans will be undertaken using self-service in the future, freeing up staff time for customer engagement in other areas.

Future plans

The service provided a range of case studies (example below) highlighting, the positive impact the click and collect service had on people's health and wellbeing, along with the impact of the digital loans of devices and the online events.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, priorities include the development of community hubs, including the

creation of a cultural hub at Treorchy library. The service plans to continue to work with partner agencies in to develop the neighbourhood network model further.

The service notes the need to consider the growth in the delivery of online services and the need to balance this provision with face-to-face services. This will include the promotion of events and activities to encourage members to return to their local library. There are plans to purchase more tablets for the provision of a 'home' library service to those members unable to access mobile library services. Alongside other local authorities, a key consideration will be improving customer confidence.

Summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf has demonstrated strengths in its online provision and engagement during the pandemic and adapted to serve its communities in different ways. The service should consider maximising the opportunities found during this time to encourage more customers back in the future. Clear corporate support for the community hub and neighbourhood network models suggests the potential for further improvements in performance are likely in the future.

Case Study 1

As RCT libraries were unable to provide story time and craft sessions in libraries, the decision was made to move these sessions online and provide them through the Library Service's Facebook page. The staff in the Children's and Schools department filmed themselves reading stories in both English and Welsh and then designed a craft related to the theme of the story. A film of how to make the craft was produced and customers had the option of printing and using their own craft materials or picking up a basic 'craft kit' from their local library. The feedback was positive:

"The stories on Facebook are great. We sit and watch them on my phone. When I was picking my son up one day, I saw that the library had craft packs, so we picked one of them up and had a go at making a witch's cauldron. It was great to have these things to do as it was hard to explain to Blake why he could not go into the library."

Case Study 2

RCT libraries provide an 'At home' service to library customers who are unable, through disability or who live more than two miles from a library and are unable to access mobile library services. This service enables individuals to access audio or physical books chosen for them by library staff using a pre-agreed selection criteria. To expand the service and to increase usage, a tablet loan scheme has been introduced. A tablet preloaded with eBooks or eAudiobooks is provided to a customer. This service has the potential to benefit many individuals and can be run in parallel with the loan of physical books.

SWANSEA

Library services in Swansea are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 17 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 96% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reports that it met all 12 core entitlements.

Swansea has the second highest number of active library borrowers per 1000 population. Swansea was one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. Some of the decrease in library membership is due to data cleansing within the LMS.

Swansea experienced a 25% decrease in expenditure between April to June when libraries were closed, and physical books were not being loaned. However, the strengths demonstrated by Swansea library service in community engagement and promotion mean that it is currently median for physical book issues per 1000 population. The service has maintained its commitment to children's and Welsh language materials. There is a clear correlation between children's issues and expenditure in this area.

Staffing levels have remained static since 2019/20, and the service remains in the bottom quartile for qualified staff per 10,000 population. As with all local authorities across Wales, staff improved digital skills during the pandemic through the successful Estyn Allan project.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Swansea noted a 63% increase in the use of electronic resources.
- Welsh titles were included in all children's click and collect book bags along with Welsh language activities for learners. The service notes that purchases made reflected the need to support the mental health of communities impacted due to the pandemic.
- Swansea implemented a successful click and collect service, supported by a marketing campaign to increase usage of the service, as well as extending its home delivery service.
- The service capitalised on its growing social media presence by delivering some events and activities online and creating new content via digital means.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled the purchase of four privacy booths were purchased, alongside digital equipment for customers to use within libraries in Swansea. This supported staff in their communication with local schools and families to support a variety of digital activities, including the Empathy Lab.

Future plans

Swansea library service supplied powerful case studies (examples below) which show the impact various library services have had on families and communities. These include people accessing the home delivery service, support for a family from abroad, and bookbags for children at a local primary school to help with home learning.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the service has implemented a new plan. The revised vision statement is:

“Provision of an agile, inclusive and sustainable library service that enables citizens and communities to engage meaningfully with culture, reading, technology and learning within their local community.”

A key part of this vision will be a new central library. The new library will form part of a city centre hub and will enable a more collaborative approach with other council services. Further priorities in the immediate future, include reading and literacy, health and wellbeing and digital inclusion.

Summary

Swansea library service has strong community links and partnerships and has maintained a solid level of provision and use despite the pandemic. The service is in advanced planning stages to capitalise on the planned new central library to increase reach to new customers, as well as continue to build on its digital opportunities.

Case Study 1

A mother and her 3 children moved to Swansea from Spain about 5 years ago and her local library is St Thomas' Library, which is situated in a very close-knit community in East Swansea. The mother experienced a language barrier when it came to communicating and this made her very reluctant to ask for help. However, she had developed a relationship with the library staff, whom she trusted. The family were experiencing a variety of difficulties including financial concerns, poor accommodation and living conditions and bullying of the children. The lady was in considerable distress and sought the support of the library. She needed advice regarding applying for jobs.

The library responded by introducing her to employability agencies who work closely with library, and she secured a work at a local hotel. She was also advised to contact 'Family Partnership.' Library staff also liaised with the local primary school regarding the bullying issues and the situation improved as a result of this intervention. The library also worked with the Local Area Coordinator (Social Services), local vicar, the AMs office, and the school to ensure the customer received the necessary information and support needed to improve her living conditions and ultimately move on from private rental to council accommodation.

The outcome for the family is that the mother has a job that she loves, and the family feel safe and secure. They are planning their move to their new home shortly and she has feedback that the impact on her own and her children's wellbeing is immeasurable.

The fact that they are able to stay in the same area with their friends and school close by, is of immense comfort to them all and means they have a much more positive outlook for the future.

Case Study 2

Penlan Library is situated on a Council estate just north of the city centre of Swansea in one of the most deprived wards in the County. The Library Manager works with Flying Start settings in the area to support the promotion of literacy to local families, including support to join and use the local library.

The library set up a book sharing scheme in two of the local Flying Start childcare settings, including a Welsh language setting. Working together with the team the Library staff introduced library books and bookbags, alongside promotional material to encourage parents to access their local library and support to use the Swansea Library digital platforms to access, books, stories, craft ideas and information. For many families having access to free, curated and bilingual collections to support their child's learning has made a positive difference.

Many of the families involved have joined and continue to visit their local library. The bilingual, basic Welsh picture books have been popular with both the children and helped the parents to learn the language also.

TORFAEN

Library services in Torfaen are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 3 branches and 1 home delivery vehicle, with 97% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

The service reported that it met all core entitlements.

Torfaen service was one of only seven local authorities to see an increase in library membership in 2020-21. The service attributes this to the popularity of the 'request and collect' service and enhanced digital offer.

There was a slight decrease in the spend on books during 2020, although the book budget remained consistent. Expenditure on children's resources and Welsh materials has been maintained. Torfaen's material expenditure is below average per 1000 population, but issues are closer to median ranking. This is despite a decrease in the number of active borrowers per 1000 population since 2019/20. This suggests that stock selection is appropriate and well balanced and effectively meets the information needs of its community.

Staffing levels have remained static since 2019/20 although 1.5 posts remain vacant. As with all local authorities, 2020 was a challenging year with many staff redeployed to undertake other Council activities.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- Torfaen saw an increase of 61% of its digital issues.
- Torfaen was able to promote its children's resources and engage with families through the delivery of 'home-schooling' book bundles, chosen by staff for children in local communities.
- The move to online events including story time and a popular reading club was welcomed by members.
- The service continued to promote the Welsh language through virtual activities this year and participated in the online Big Welsh Rhymetime.
- Staff established a temporary Library@Home Befriending Service. This service was welcomed and helped the library to support vulnerable residents in their homes at a time when the impact of loneliness for many was severe.

Future plans

The service provided several case studies (example below) which showed the beneficial impact the library had on its customers such as the Library@Home Befriending Service, the request & collect service; online rhyme and story times; and an online reading group which is mostly people over 70 who not only felt more connected, with improved wellbeing but also learnt new digital skills.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the service will continue to use the Library and Information Strategy 2018-23 to focus activities.

The service is collaborating with partner organisations to deliver promotional and outreach opportunities in the community and the development of joint projects to help deliver services (for example, the Health Blaenavon Project, Dementia Friendly partnership working and Fusion arts/cultural activities).

The service intends to take a blended approach to service development, particularly building on the digital skills developed through the Estyn Allan project and reintroducing physical activities in libraries. The successful request and collect service will become part of its core offer.

Summary

Through its wide range of partnerships and enthusiastic staff Torfaen has managed to maintain a library service which brings many benefits to new and existing customers. Despite historically low levels of investment, it has used staff skills and communication effectively. It would be beneficial for Torfaen to consider a strategy to attract former customers back to the service.

Case Study

A virtual book club was established in March 2020. The main issue to overcome during the early days of lockdown was the fact that the library was closed and access to the physical book stock was not possible. It was decided to use the Borrowbox service at this time because of the availability of "multiple use" titles which would be ideal for an online reading group.

A Library Professional engaged with the book group members beforehand to encourage participation and to facilitate the move to Microsoft Teams and Borrowbox. The first meeting took place in April 2020 and 12 members were present. This was a significant achievement as the majority of the group were in their 70's and 80's, lived alone and had not used any form of virtual meeting room before. There were minor difficulties with sound and camera, but they quickly adapted to the new situation.

As well as helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness amongst the group members, the online reading groups helped to give people confidence in using technology.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN

Library services in the Vale of Glamorgan are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 4 branches and 5 community supported libraries, with 94% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library. The community supported libraries are included in the WPLS reporting figures.

Library service performance

The service met 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full and did not meet 1 (library strategy).

The Vale was one of fifteen authorities which saw library membership decline in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 because of the pandemic. Expenditure on materials remained broadly the same as the previous year, including the proportion spend on children's and Welsh language materials. Currently the service is just below the top quartile for the materials budget per 1000 population, but loans are below the median. This suggests that it may be useful to review what items are bought and borrowed to try to maximise use of the collections.

The service's relatively high rankings for spend per 1000 Welsh language speakers and issues of Welsh materials per 1000 Welsh language speakers are more evenly matched. The service appointed a Welsh speaking Children's Librarian at the end of 2019/2020. This improved communication and collaboration with local schools and helped provide a range of bilingual activities.

Staffing levels have remained stable and there have been no significant changes since 2017. The service actively encouraged staff to undertake as much training as possible during 2020-21 to capitalise on online training opportunities and is well resourced for qualified staff. A focus on the digital skills of staff was a priority during 2020-21, to support members, many of whom were using online services for the first time.

The service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The Vale of Glamorgan library service witnessed a 55% increase in the download of electronic resources.
- To help members during the year the service increased loan times and temporarily removed fines and other charges.
- The home delivery and click and collect services were prioritised. These services helped staff build relationships with customers across the Vale.
- The library also built on its social media presence and increased online content for children and adults with a variety of virtual events, activities, and clubs.
- The service continues to support the Welsh language, particularly focusing on Welsh language books for children and learners.
- Staff were also supported to learn Welsh, and all social media posts were bilingual, along with several of the online events.
- The digital libraries officer created an online booking system for customers to collect books, which enabled the safe re-opening of branches.

- The service continues to be the host lead for the all-Wales LMS project and future developments on this.

Future plans

The Vale of Glamorgan provided several case studies (example below) which demonstrated how different library customers benefited from the service during the pandemic, including the expanded home delivery service, the online click and collect service, and a teenager's online skills and digital opportunities developing out of a library-run club.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the service notes that a capital transformation grant was provided by Welsh Government during 2020-2021 to upgrade the ground floor at Penarth library. The Penarth library refit included installation of Open+. This will enable the service to add at least 20 additional opening hours to its current opening hours.

A key concern for the service will also be to encourage members to return to physical library spaces. There is also a need to consider how to integrate physical and digital services. Supporting the health and wellbeing of local communities is a key priority for the service. Services such as 'click and collect' proved extremely popular during the pandemic and it is likely that these services will be continued to continue to meet the needs of members in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Summary

The Vale of Glamorgan library service has used its strengths effectively during the pandemic to support its customers. The service should be able to build on its achievements to attract members and physical customers back to its libraries and capitalise on new investments such as the Open+ facilities.

Case Study

Libraries inspire people. The following example exemplifies how libraries can kick start an idea that leads to something special.

For a number of years, a library assistant based at Llantwit Major library, has been conducting Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) workshops for children and young people. These proved popular in several libraries across the Vale with groups meeting regularly to continue their specially prepared campaigns. Although sadly these sessions had to be put on hold due to COVID restrictions, we have received some wonderful updates from one of the parents about her child's progress this year that has come about as a direct result of the D&D sessions.

The mother tells us that her child was bitterly disappointed that these sessions had to end in March 2020 but having observed the staff member as dungeon master in the D&D sessions, she began to organise her own online sessions with her friends. She spent hours each week writing new campaigns and her mother tells us that it has really fuelled her creativity as a young writer and storyteller.

Most recently the child applied for a place on an RPG development project run jointly between a Welsh and German arts project for children, "The Trickster's Net." This was limited to 16 places for Welsh students and 16 for German students and was a very competitive process. We were delighted to hear that her experience in running and organising D&D sessions successfully earned her a place in this project.

Her mother says:

"What started as a small fortnightly club in the library has offered my children a sense of belonging, fun, well-being, creativity and confidence."

The child says:

"[D&D] has improved my mental wellbeing and can improve social skills. It has also given me a creative outlet and brings out the creativity in my friends."

WREXHAM

Library services in Wrexham are delivered by the local authority. The service includes 10 branches, 1 mobile, 1 home delivery vehicle, and 1 community managed library not included in the return, with 92% of residents living within 2 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Wrexham met 9 of the 12 core entitlements in full, partially met 2 (Wi-Fi access and consulting users) and did not meet 1 (availability of library strategy).

The service is currently performing in the top quartile for adult and children's loans per 1000 population, although the current revenue budget places the service in the bottom quartile across Wales. The materials budget has continued to decrease and has reduced by 26% since 2020. Unfortunately, no commentary has been provided so it is unclear if this is due to the pandemic or is a permanent reduction in budget.

There has been a substantial decrease of 50% to the Welsh language budget, however, the expenditure per 1000 Welsh language speakers remains just above the median, and issues per 1000 Welsh language speakers is very high when compared to other library services. It is likely that the stock selection by well-informed librarians ensures that the content accurately reflects the needs of the local community. Furthermore, the service actively promotes the Welsh language stock through existing partnerships, such as, Tim Cymraeg, Owain Cyfeliog and NENE publication. Cefn Mawr library continued to collaborate closely with a local Welsh language medium school and was able to provide materials for classes within the school throughout the lockdown.

The staffing complement was reduced in 2019/20 and this has decreased further in 2020/21 and staffing levels are now 14% lower than in 2017. It is in the bottom quartile for both total staffing and qualified staffing per 10,000 population. It appears that the service continues to be affected by an austere and uncertain environment.

However, the service responded positively during the periods of lockdown, by adapting and developing new services.

- The service witnessed an increase in electronic downloads of 88% in 2020-21. In particular, the service notes the popularity of Ancestry during 2020.
- The service has also pre-recorded story times for children which have been shared on social media.
- Services and resources for children have been a key priority for the service. Wrexham delivered 55 'Read Aloud' sessions on zoom throughout the year, which were well attended, but found engagement with live storytime session patchy throughout 2020-21.
- The service produced a bilingual video promoting Wrexham Library Service books, which was positively received.
- Support from the Welsh Government's Cultural resilience fund in 2020 enabled Wrexham to purchase handheld tablets, protective cases and charging cabinets. Customers can use the tablets to access the library catalogue to

browse for an item and place a request, or to read an e-book or e-zine. This has helped Wrexham libraries improve their digital offer for members.

Future plans

Wrexham library service provided several case studies (example below) to show the benefit of the libraries during 2020-21. This included enhanced provision to schools which stimulated an interest in reading among the children, the home delivery service, and the loans of digital devices to isolated individuals.

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Wrexham notes the requirement to cut a further £100,000 for the budget in 2021/22. It is difficult to envisage the successful planning and delivery of the service to its existing customers with this level of continuous reduction. There are plans to review the service to meet the needs of people who currently have no access to library services in Wrexham. Priorities include the delivery of services for vulnerable families, the need to support education for children, Welsh language and culture and combat the negative impact of poverty.

Summary

Wrexham library service continues to face annual budget reductions which hinder its ability to reach individuals and communities which would benefit from its services. Ongoing reviews of some elements of the service may offer greater stability so the service can concentrate on its priorities of children, isolated communities, Welsh provision and health and wellbeing. Prioritising the development of a library strategy will help the service plan more effectively in an uncertain environment

Case Study

Library staff are now working in partnership with staff from the adult social care team to help deliver a new project to isolated and vulnerable members of Wrexham County Borough.

Several iPads were purchased using funding from the Community Inclusion Grant (established to help vulnerable members of the community) to support those who were identified as being at risk of isolation. The iPads provided a lifeline for these individuals who were able to contact friends and family using this technology.

Thanks to the grant, libraries in Wrexham were also able to provide 5 4G iPads to people in the community. This enabled these individuals to access free audio books from the library service and connect with others.

Appendix 1: Libraries in the pandemic

Although there were some variations after the initial lockdown, due to varying levels of infection or physical location of buildings, public libraries in Wales were able to operate broadly as follows:

Stage 1

Between March and June 2020, all library buildings closed and offered digital/remote services only. On 8 May, the First Minister announced an adjustment to the Covid regulation “enabling local authorities to begin the process of planning how to safely re-open libraries”. In the first instance, many services developed and implemented a ‘Click and Collect’ loans service. Library customers were able to reserve items via the online library catalogue, or by phoning the library and booking a slot to collect and return items. This enabled customers who were able to travel to a library site to collect and return their books in safety. Welsh Government funding of £5,000 for each service supported libraries to put in place appropriate safety measures to safeguard staff and customers.

Stage 2

Between June/July and October 2020, a phased re-opening of buildings within some services was implemented, but with appropriate measures in place, such as restricting the number of individuals allowed in the building at a given time. Some libraries were affected by local lockdowns in September. Between October and November, there was a ‘firebreak’ in Wales which resulted in the closure of some library buildings and the offer of digital/remote services once again. Libraries reopened between November and December 2021.

Stage 3

Library buildings closed at Christmas due to Welsh Government regulations and libraries offered remote services only. From late March, a phased re-opening of most branches in Wales continued. Individual local authorities managed the process of restoring services according to their capacity to manage and deliver a service. This varied considerably across Wales.

Because of the changing regulations, public libraries in Wales were able to open their physical buildings for up to around six months out of 12 (June – December 2020). Many services opened only with pre-booked appointments, and some small branch libraries did not open at all due to an inability to ensure adequate physical distancing between customers and/or staff. Some libraries also opened on reduced hours, and some were unable to offer access to the full range of facilities including access to IT facilities.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Connected and Ambitious Libraries:

The sixth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020

Contents

3

Foreword

4

1. Introduction

10

2. Core entitlements

12

3. Quality indicators

22

4. Reporting,
monitoring and
assessment

24

5. The Well-being
of Future
Generations Act

26

6. Community
managed libraries

Foreword

Public libraries connect people, information and culture. The Welsh Government and local authorities have an established record of working well together to achieve ambitious goals for our library services. I am delighted to be working collaboratively with local authorities on a new framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, to ensure that we continue to provide the citizens of Wales with high quality public library services.

As library users know, libraries provide everyone with a wealth of information, resources, activities and cultural opportunities. They are places of ambition and learning where people can gain new skills, leading to job success and prosperity; they encourage people to be active and healthy through a range of health information services and partnerships; and they connect and unite people, not only with each other and local communities, but also with culture and the world beyond Wales. They also make a valuable contribution to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

All parts of the public sector are facing considerable financial pressure, including public library services. The expectations of citizens, for a high quality library service, need to be balanced with what is practical and possible to deliver, alongside the statutory requirement to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” service as specified in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The Welsh Public Library Standards framework provides a mechanism to enable service providers to plan their provision, and for the public to know what they can expect from their library service. The framework also enables me to assess provision and performance of Welsh public library services as part of my statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

I am pleased that this new framework increases the emphasis on outcome and impact measures to help identify the wider benefits of using the library service. In conjunction with promoting the Standards to make our library services as sustainable and efficient as possible, further consideration will also be given to the regional consortia model which was outlined in the Expert Review of Public Libraries and the Scoping a New Future for Welsh Public Libraries report.

I welcome this new framework of the Standards and the opportunities that it provides to continue the positive partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities to continue to deliver an outstanding connected and ambitious public library service in Wales.

Ken Skates, AM

Cabinet Secretary for
Economy and Infrastructure



1. Introduction

“Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

“The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.”¹

1.1. The benefits of using public libraries

Library service engagement with individuals and with the wider community drives benefits in many of the Welsh Government’s priority areas such as prosperity, resilience, equality, cohesive communities, culture, learning and health and well being. How the library interacts with its stakeholders – chiefly the users (and potential users) of the service – is key to the provision of a quality service. User perceptions of the services available derive from their experiences.

Libraries which engage appropriately with their customers will provide the maximum benefits both for individuals and the community. As well as providing training and learning support for individuals, libraries contribute to society in other ways, such as providing access to computers and e-government for digitally excluded members of the community.

The public library has a key role in social inclusion. It may be the only place in the community where users can spend time in a safe and neutral environment. Supporting job-seekers in their search for work contributes to the local – and

national – economy. By providing specialist facilities and services for those in the community who might have special needs, libraries contribute to health and well-being. Such benefits will only be achieved if the library provides equality of access for all. Much information is now more easily accessible online – indeed, some is only available online – and libraries are uniquely positioned to facilitate access to resources which may be too costly for individuals (e.g. the cost of the basic hardware, Internet access or the resource subscription).

Libraries play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. From children's first steps in listening to stories and learning to read, to providing quiet spaces for study, and supporting older people in using new technologies, libraries contribute to the delivery of literacy targets, information literacy and digital inclusion.

Good libraries play an important part in shaping people's views of local government. In order to deliver quality,



sustainable services to the public, libraries need active leadership and a programme for development enabling them to respond in a timely way to the changing information and cultural needs of their local communities. Staff must have the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver services and meet customer needs, demonstrated by appropriate professional qualifications. Libraries have the opportunity to contribute to a range of wider local and national government agendas, but this will only happen if the library is pro-active in promoting its role, based on a strong vision linked to those agendas.

1.2. What this means for the people of Wales

The sixth framework of Welsh public library standards builds on the developments in the fifth framework. It comprises 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators to monitor how well library services realise these benefits for the people of Wales. The mapping between benefits and indicators is not a simplistic one, as measuring outcomes and impacts at a service-wide level cannot be achieved directly, but must be inferred from broader indicators.

The table below shows the indicators in this framework which are most directly related to some of the key benefits of using public libraries. Libraries which perform well on these indicators will be engaging appropriately with their customers to make a difference to their lives.

Outcomes and impacts	Core entitlements	Quality indicators
People in Wales will be able to increase their knowledge / skills having used the library	2, 3	1, 3, 5
People in Wales will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library service	3	4, 6, 9, 10, 12
People in Wales will feel part of a community using the library service	3, 11	1, 7, 8
People in Wales will be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the digital world using the library service	2, 6, 7	4, 9, 11
Personal health and well-being is enhanced by using the library	3, 4	1, 4
People in Wales can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library	3, 6	3, 11

Other core entitlements and quality indicators are concerned with the effective management of services, which underpins the effective delivery of the outcomes and impacts. All can be related to one or more of the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act; details are given in Section 5.

1.3. Fulfilling the statutory duty

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964² makes it a duty of the relevant Welsh Ministers (currently the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure) **“to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by local authorities and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred upon them as library authorities under this Act”**.

² Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/contents>

Under the same Act, library authorities are required to **“provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”**.

Since 2002, the Welsh Ministers have fulfilled this duty through the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS, or, the Standards). The first framework ran from 2002 to 2005 with subsequent frameworks covering the periods 2005-08, 2008-11, 2011-14 and 2014-17. Each individual framework evolved to reflect the changing needs and expectations of public library users. In addition to the fulfilment of statutory duties, the WPLS framework plays a valuable role in supporting the development of public library services.

There is general consensus among stakeholders concerned with the provision of public library services in Wales that these performance measurement frameworks, introduced and administered

by the Welsh Government for the sector, have helped public library services to improve in a number of ways and in key areas. For example, as a result of the Standards, there have been significant improvements in service areas such as the delivery of requests and provision of ICT facilities and services, leading to enhanced outcomes for library customers.

Local authorities have a statutory duty (under section 7 of the Act) to provide a library service and encourage both adults and children to make full use of that library service. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are fulfilling their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the comprehensiveness and efficiency, in terms of the manner of delivery, of library services in Wales.



1.4. Community managed libraries

Since about 2014 the number of independent and semi-independent libraries in Wales, frequently referred to as community managed libraries, has increased. Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2015 on community managed libraries has now been updated and is included here, at Section 6, rather than in a separate document, as previously. It includes criteria to be fulfilled in order that a community managed library might be included in the library service's annual return as part of the statutory service, and details of the data to be provided on all community managed libraries.

1.5. The sixth quality framework

The aims of this sixth framework of Welsh Public Library Standards are to:

- enable the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service by local authorities;
- provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
- have clear links to the Welsh Government's programme for government³, to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales;
- be transparent, easily understood and accepted by all stakeholders;
- incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities; and
- minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities.

³ Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021, available at <http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf>

The framework has been based largely on the fifth framework, updated to take account of the changed local authority environment within which library services must work, and continues to provide opportunities for libraries to deliver services in innovative ways and the flexibility to make best use of the resources available to them. It will come into operation on 1st April 2017, and libraries will make their first report against its requirements in the summer of 2018. This document describes the new framework in detail.

Section 2 lists the 12 core entitlements, and self-assessment prompts will be provided in the guidance for library staff.

Section 3 describes the 16 quality indicators, which are of three broad types.

- Input indicators are concerned primarily with what the library service will provide for the citizens of Wales in key areas in order that the core entitlements can be delivered.
- Output indicators are concerned with levels of use. When considered alongside input indicators, they can give an indication of the efficiency of delivery of the service.
- Outcome and impact indicators measure the direct or indirect effects of the library service on its users, and on the wider community. They show the difference libraries make to people's lives.

Most indicators will be reported every year; some may be reported once in the three year period, for example, where user survey data are required. For some indicators, formal targets are set, although such targets are not appropriate in all cases.

Libraries will be expected to compare their performance on all indicators with previous years, and to meet the targets where these are set. Benchmarking of authorities will be possible when all results are available.

⁴ See <http://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/?lang=en> for details



The nature of the geography, distribution of population and other factors within individual authorities can cause significant variations in the approaches necessary to the planning and delivery of library services. For this reason, Welsh library authorities are offered alternatives against which to measure their services in some of the indicators described, and should choose the most appropriate to reflect their circumstances.

Definitions of the various terms and guidance on methods of data collection are not specified in this document; however these will be included with the reporting template provided to library services, and are available on request⁴. In all cases, detailed guidance on data collection and calculation will be provided to library authorities to ensure consistency and



comparability. Existing data will be utilised wherever practicable. Where appropriate, international standard definitions and methods have been adopted.

Section 4 of this document details the reporting requirements, which include an element of self evaluation and descriptive reporting in addition to key service statistics and the performance indicators, and describes the monitoring and assessment process. A holistic view of assessment will be taken.

Library performance will be judged on all the aspects of the framework, including compliance with the core entitlements, ranking on the quality indicators, how many quality indicators are met in full and in part, and the narrative providing

evidence of the impact of the service on individuals and the community.

Library provision spans a range of Welsh Government outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously. The Well-being of Future Generations Act⁵ lists seven broad areas of priority, and **Section 5** of this framework document aligns the core entitlements and quality indicators with these areas, giving examples of the contribution the library service makes.

⁵ See <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en> for details

2. Core entitlements

A set of core library entitlements for Welsh citizens was first incorporated into Making a Difference, the fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards. These entitlements have been revised and refocused for this sixth framework, to enable the public to know what they can expect from their public library service.

These entitlements are initially self-assessed by each authority. A number of questions are specified in the Guidance document, which the authority is required to take into account when making their self-assessment. It is not necessary to be able to answer every question positively to meet the core entitlement, but justification for the assessment, which could refer to other relevant provision, should be provided in the return. The self-assessment will be moderated by MALD, the Independent Adviser, and a small Reference Group of senior librarians to ensure consistency between authorities.

WPLSCE 1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join, and open to all.

WPLSCE 2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.

WPLSCE 3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.

WPLSCE 4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.

WPLSCE 5 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.

WPLSCE 6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.

WPLSCE 7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.

WPLSCE 8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.

WPLSCE 9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

WPLSCE 10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.

WPLSCE 11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

WPLSCE 12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.



3. Quality indicators



The quality indicators in this sixth framework build on the previous framework, and include additional measures covering the outcomes and impact of the library service. They fall into two broad types; those which are provided for monitoring and benchmarking performance over time and between authorities, and those which have specific targets.

WPLSQI 1 Making a difference

This selection of indicators assesses the impact of library use on people's lives in a variety of ways. Although some are relevant to other areas of this framework, they are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report, at least once in the three year period:

- a) the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills;
- b) the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out;
- c) the percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library;
- d) the percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place;
- e) the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once during

the three-year period of this framework. Authorities will be given guidance on the conduct of the survey and wording of questions to ensure comparability. Respondents answering 'not applicable' or 'don't know' should be excluded from the calculation.

Authorities may conduct more frequent surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

WPLSQI 2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key element of library performance. As with the indicators concerned with library impact (QI 1), some of these are relevant to other areas of this framework, but are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report:

- a)** the percentage of adults who think that the choice of books available in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- b)** the percentage of adults who think that the standard of customer care in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- c)** the percentage of adults who think that the IT facilities provided in the library they use are 'very good' or 'good';
- d)** the percentage of adults who think that overall the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- e)** the average overall rating out of ten awarded by users aged 16 or under for the library they use.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once in the three-year period of this framework.

It is appreciated that not all authorities wish to use the CIPFA PLUS suite of survey instruments (from which the above indicators are drawn), and guidance will be issued to ensure that authorities which

choose to use their own surveys will have comparable results. Authorities may conduct more frequent surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

WPLSQI 3 Support for individual development

Libraries shall ensure that the following services are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more:

- a)** basic support in the use of the ICT infrastructure provided (including Wi-Fi) and in accessing the range of electronic information resources available;
- b)** training to improve literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills, and assistance in developing or enhancing capabilities to identify and access appropriate resources efficiently and effectively; critically evaluate information; and apply information appropriately to further objectives, such as educational, employment, health and well-being.

Training programmes may be developed and delivered with appropriate partners outside the library service;

- c)** support for users to access local and national e-government resources;
- d)** reader development programmes/ activities for both adults and children.

The format of the support offered and frequency of any specific timetabled sessions should be appropriate both for the size of the service point and local community needs.

WPLSQI 4 Support for health and well-being

- a)** Libraries shall ensure that the following services are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more:
 - i. Book Prescription Wales scheme
 - ii. Better with Books scheme



- iii. Designated health and well-being collection
 - iv. Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours - leaflets, books etc
 - v. Signposting to health and well-being services
- b)** Authorities will report the number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more in which the following services are available on a regular basis
- i. Shared Reading groups (reading aloud together)
 - ii. Book clubs (discussion of chosen book)
 - iii. Macmillan cancer or other health information partnerships
 - iv. Dementia Friendly services
 - v. Mental health awareness activities

WPLSQI 5 User training

This indicator assesses the extent to which sessions offered match local need, and the impact of those sessions for the participants. Reader development sessions; literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills sessions; ICT sessions, etc., should all be included. Include sessions arranged in collaboration with partner agencies. User training may have a general audience, or be targeted towards specific sub-groups of the population e.g. children, carers, unemployed persons, etc.

Sessions may require advance registration, or be open to all on a drop-in basis. Include sessions also reported under WPLSQI 4.

Authorities will report:

- a)** the total number of attendances at pre-arranged training sessions organised and/or hosted by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;



- b) the percentage of attendees at such sessions who said that attendance helped them to achieve their goals;
- c) the number of customers helped by means of informal training during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Part b) of this indicator should ideally be derived from a simple feedback form offered to all attendees, but may be based on sessions during one or more sample periods.

Part c) of the indicator may be derived by sampling. Authorities will be provided with guidance to ensure consistency of reporting.

WPLSQI 6 User attendances at library events

The purpose of this indicator is to estimate the attraction of library events for the library's population to be served, and the extent to which such events meet local need.

- a) Authorities will report the total number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Include events with literary, cultural or educational intent, e.g. author visits, reading groups, literary discussions, digital and information literacy workshops, genealogy workshops, health literacy, financial literacy, job seeking etc.

Events specifically for children are included, such as storytelling, poetry, music. Include events delivered by partner organisations in collaboration with the library service.

- b) Libraries shall ensure that events or activities for those who have special requirements are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more. The events or activities may be promoted specifically for an intended group, or open to all, but with a clear target group in mind.

Special requirements can include physical and health impairment, economic disadvantage (e.g. long-term unemployed), cultural difference (e.g. non-native speakers, new arrivals), educational background, or other circumstances that require special library services. Authorities should provide specific examples of such events and list joint working with relevant social inclusion organisations and partners.

WPLSQI 7 Location of service points

No stipulation is made with regard to minimum opening hours of static libraries (on a site by site basis) however, authorities are asked to consider the viability of service points which are open for fewer than 10 hours per week. Equally, no stipulation is made with regard to length or frequency of mobile library stops, however it is expected that mobile libraries will visit each scheduled stop at least 12 times per year.

Authorities shall ensure that they meet the following criteria for the location of service points and mobile library stops, according to their population density:

Population density	% of households	Distance from library
20 or more persons per hectare	At least 95%	Within 2 miles of a static service point
More than 1 but fewer than 20 persons per hectare	At least 75%	Within 2.5 miles (or 10 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop
1 person or fewer per hectare	At least 70%	Within 3 miles (or 15 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop

WPLSQI 8 Library use

Seven measures of use of the library are required, covering the physical and the electronic resources provided. Together, they assess the library's success in attracting users to its services.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of visits to library premises during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- b) the total number of external visits to the library's website during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.
- d) the total number of library members
- e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
- f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- g) the total number of electronic downloads

The data used should be those as reported to CIPFA for the public library actuals return.

WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

This and the next indicator are designed to ensure adequate investment and an appropriate balance of resources across various sections of the community.

- a) Library authorities should achieve
 - either a minimum of 243 items acquired per 1,000 resident population or a minimum spend of £2,180 per 1,000 resident population annually.

Books and e-books, periodicals, audio-visual material and electronic resources are all included.

Authorities should include their contribution to consortium purchases where relevant.

- b) Library authorities will report
 - The percentage of the material budget spent on resources for children.

WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources

This indicator is designed to ensure materials in Welsh are provided in line with local requirements and the socio-demographic characteristics of the population.

a) Authorities should achieve:

Either a minimum of 4% of the material budget, or, a minimum of £750 per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population.

Authorities will also report:

b) Total issues of resources in the Welsh language per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population.

WPLSQI 11 Online access

a) Every static library should provide

- i. A minimum of one device giving public access to the Internet and networked digital content. Computers, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are all included.
- ii. Wi-Fi access for users to bring their own laptops or mobile devices.

b) Authorities will report the total number of devices giving public access to the Internet

- i. Available in static libraries, per 10,000 resident population
- ii. Available in mobile libraries.

Computers, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are all included.

c) Authorities will report the percentage of available time allocated for use of public access ICT equipment actually taken up by users. This should be aggregated across all libraries in the authority, including mobiles.

WPLSQI 12 Supply of requests

This indicator measures the efficiency of the public library service in responding to requests for material which is not immediately available.

Authorities should achieve:

- a) A minimum of 64% of requests for material to be notified to the user as being available within 7 calendar days of the request being made;
- b) A minimum of 79% of requests for material to be notified to the user as being available within 15 calendar days of the request being made.

Requests for pre-publication material shall be counted from the date of publication. Material which is not owned by the library but must be acquired by purchase or by inter-library loan is included in the calculations.

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications

- i. Library authorities shall achieve total establishment staffing levels for the service of 3.6 (full time equivalent) per 10,000 resident population. Staff who do not work directly in service provision, e.g. cleaners, are excluded. Include only those staff paid from the library service budget.
- ii. The total number of staff (full time equivalent) holding recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management per 10,000 resident population should not fall below 0.65. Staff with qualifications in cognate areas, such as ICT, heritage or leisure management or education and learning may be included in the calculations if they occupy posts on the library staff establishment which require those qualifications, and when the qualifications held are relevant to their current roles and functions within the library service.



Include only those staff paid from the library service budget.

- iii. The designated operational manager of the library service shall, either be the holder of recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management, or, have undertaken relevant library management training within the last 3 years.

Authorities will also report:

- a) where this post sits within the local authority management structure;
- b) the post held by the most senior professional librarian (where different); and
- c) where that post sits within the local authority management structure.
- iv. A minimum of 1% of aggregate staff working hours should be spent in training and personal / professional development during the year. All library staff should

be encouraged to undertake training and development relevant to their role and responsibilities, and to improve their skills.

- v. Library authorities may offer members of the community the opportunity to volunteer, to support additional services in libraries managed and run by the library authority. Such opportunities can, for example, enhance the life skills and employability of individuals, contributing to tackling poverty outcomes.

Where there is community involvement in delivering the library service at a branch level, we expect there to be paid staff working alongside the volunteers in the libraries, for some of the time.

Library authorities that use volunteers to deliver additional services 'in house' (as opposed to community managed libraries) shall ensure:

- a designated volunteer coordinator

from the library service's permanent professional staff coordinates those parts of the service involving volunteer workers;

- each volunteer receives a written role description;
- legal requirements are met for each volunteer in relation to their role;
- both induction training and continuing training is provided for all volunteers;
- volunteers are appropriately supervised; and
- they have achieved, or are actively working towards, Investing in Volunteers accreditation⁶.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of volunteers across the year;
- b) the total number of volunteer hours during the year;
- c) whether they have accreditation status relating to the NOS or are working towards this accreditation.

Note that in order to meet this indicator in part, the service must achieve at least three of the five elements, including (iii), relating to the qualifications of the operational manager.

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure

In the current economic climate it is not thought appropriate to set a target for overall library expenditure, but spending on the public library service will continue to be scrutinised closely.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total revenue expenditure per 1,000 resident population;
- b) the percentages of this total spent on staff, materials and information resources, maintenance, repair and replacement of equipment and buildings, and other operational costs;



⁶ See <http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/inyourcountry/iiv-wales> for more information

- c) total capital expenditure per 1,000 resident population.

Authorities which complete the CIPFA public library actuals return should use the same data here.

WPLSQI 15 Cost per visit

This indicator is useful for justifying expenditure of public funds, giving a proxy for value for money, but it must be interpreted in conjunction with demographic indicators and quality indicators relating to use. It measures the cost of the library service related to the number of library visits, including virtual visits.

Authorities will report:

- The total expenditure on library staff and materials, net of generated income, divided by the sum of the number of physical visits to library premises (including mobiles) plus the number of visits to the library web site during the year.

Authorities which complete the CIPFA public library actuals return should use the same data here. The ratio will be automatically calculated from data provided for other indicators.

WPLSQI 16 Opening hours

- i. Welsh public libraries should achieve a level of aggregate staffed (paid staff and/or volunteers) opening hours across all service points administered by the authority of no less than 120 hours per annum per 1,000 resident population.
- ii. Authorities will report the total number of unstaffed opening hours across all service points administered by the authority per 1,000 resident population.
- iii. This part of the indicator is concerned with the adequacy of the library service's maintenance programme and staffing strategy. Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of hours of unplanned and emergency closure of static service points as a result of building failure or staff unavailability as a percentage of the total planned opening hours of all static service points during the year;
- b) the number of mobile library stops and/or home delivery services missed as a result of vehicle failure or staff unavailability, as a percentage of the total number of planned mobile library stops and/or home delivery services during the year.

Scheduled opening hours not open as a result of adverse weather conditions, or any other cause beyond the library's control, are not included.



4. Reporting, monitoring and assessment

The statutory requirements of public library service provision in Wales are enshrined in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are fulfilling their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the efficiency of the manner of delivery of library services in Wales.

4.1. Reporting requirements

Each year, local authorities will be required to report their performance against the various elements of the framework. The return will include a compliance rating against the core entitlements – indicating whether these are fully met, partially met, or not met, with appropriate description / explanation. For all entitlements which are not fully met, the return should also include a strategy for improvement in the following year.

Individual authority returns will also include data showing performance against the quality indicators included in this framework, together with a comparison for the previous year. Where performance has declined, the return should include the authority's strategy to halt the decline. Where targets are not met, the return should include a narrative outlining proposals and a timescale to achieve these targets. These data will be drawn together to provide an overview of Welsh public library services as a whole, to assist with identification of good practice, and of areas where action may be required to bring about improvements.

Measurement of the impact of public library services – the difference those services make to people's lives – is not easily quantifiable. For this reason, a qualitative element will be included in the reporting.

Each authority's return should include at least one, but no more than four, specific case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. This is expected to describe not only the service provided and the use made of that service, but also the outcomes for the individuals or members of group as a consequence. Guidance will be provided on the format of the case studies and appropriate material to include. Such case studies will build into a valuable source of evidence of impact and value, and will further promote the spread of good practice across Wales.

A second qualitative element of reporting will be a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards both local authority agendas and wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, including any relevant legislative frameworks. The purpose of this strand of reporting is to encourage libraries to be aware of the wider social drivers (e.g. health and well-being; digital inclusion including information literacy; literacy, including reading and the connection with digital literacy; community engagement and community benefits, including families, children and young people, older people, welfare reform; Welsh language and culture), to which their service should be able to demonstrate a contribution, and to make explicit their relevance and value to policy makers at local, regional and national level.

A short description of the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year will be included. Authorities will also be required to confirm that feedback in the form of opinion on the year's performances achieved by each library service has been

adequately considered by the member with responsibility for library services and by the relevant management, scrutiny and performance monitoring procedures.

A reporting template will be provided to authorities to ensure that reporting is consistent and comparable across Wales.

4.2. Monitoring and assessment procedures

The process of monitoring and assessing will be led by MALD: Museums Archives and Libraries division of the Welsh Government, and will follow the pattern established in earlier frameworks. Annual returns should be submitted by the deadline each year, and will be scrutinised for completeness by an independent reviewer and a peer reference group. The independent reviewer will then prepare a formal written feedback report, covering all aspects of the framework, including all quality indicators and narrative elements, which will be delivered to each authority in the autumn, in time to address any issues raised as part of their formal service planning process. This feedback will be formally disseminated to library authority chief executives and also to council leaders, scrutiny officers or performance managers as well as to the managers of library services. The annual reports will be made public, via the MALD web pages.

The independent reviewer will prepare a summary overview each year, including an analysis of overall performances, and significant trends within those performances, against the entitlements and quality indicators. The highest, lowest and median performances in Wales will be calculated for each indicator where this is possible. The overall analysis will be disseminated to all local authorities, usually during an annual seminar. At the end of the framework period a summary report will be published via the MALD web site.

The findings of these processes will be brought to the attention of the relevant Minister annually, highlighting achievements and trends and also problem areas, such as

declining performances, incidences of non-compliance or recurring failure, together with a diagnosis of the causes wherever possible. Noteworthy improvements in performances and improving trends will also be drawn to the Minister's attention.

The core entitlements and quality indicators set out in this framework deal with aspects of the library service which are considered by the Welsh Government to be necessary – but are not necessarily sufficient – for the delivery of a comprehensive and efficient library service under the terms of Section 10 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

As the ultimate sanction in the cases of failure to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Welsh Government can institute an inquiry, issue a direction and transfer the library functions of a library authority to itself or to another authority/organisation. Sanctions would be invoked in cases where, for example, a significant number of the core entitlements and performance targets are not reached, there is a failure consistently to reach the average performance of comparable Welsh authorities with no evidence of improvement over time, or performance across the service as a whole is consistently falling year on year.

To date, it has not been necessary to implement any of these sanctions due to constructive discussion between the relevant parties.

5. The Well-being of Future Generations Act



Libraries have a clear contribution to make to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

5.1. A prosperous Wales

Development of a skilled and well-educated population is a fundamental aspect of public libraries' activity. Examples of how this is achieved include providing access to a world of lifelong learning through relevant book stock and online information, and the provision of free IT equipment, broadband and Wi-Fi, which supports education, small businesses and job seeking. Core entitlements 2, 3, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 all monitor aspects of public libraries' contribution to this goal.

5.2. A resilient Wales

Social and economic resilience is supported by encouraging and promoting individual personal development, enabling people and society to adapt to changing circumstances.

Regular consultation with users ensures that the services themselves are resilient and able to adapt to changing needs. Two core entitlements are particularly pertinent here, 3 and 11, together with quality indicators 4, 11 and 14. Examples of how this is achieved in practice include support for greater community involvement in running library services, and book stock that encourages a more resilient lifestyle with access to IT so people can self-educate about the issues.

5.3. A healthier Wales

Physical and mental well-being is a key offer of public libraries, not only by providing information on which to base informed choices for the benefit of health in the future but also designated collections and schemes such as Book Prescription Wales titles loaned through libraries, which directly benefit individuals with health concerns. Relevant core entitlements for this goal are 3 and 4; quality indicators 1, 4, and 6 monitor activity.

5.4. A more equal Wales

Libraries are welcoming, inclusive and offer pro-active outreach and public engagement activities in deprived and socially excluded communities. Support for government initiatives such as Universal Jobmatch and Universal Credit enable those without IT skills or facilities to fulfil their potential. Core entitlements 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 3, 4, 11, 13 and 14, all monitor public libraries' contribution to this goal.

5.5. A Wales of cohesive communities

Libraries offer a safe neutral place within the community which provides opportunities for people to connect with each other. The one-stop-shop or hub model being developed in many areas further connects local communities with the services they need. Other examples include support for community involvement through the provision of information about the local area. Core entitlements 1, 3 and 5, and quality indicators 1, 6, 13 and 16 monitor aspects of public libraries' contribution to this goal.

5.6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

With explicit provision in the current framework covering the provision of material in the Welsh language, libraries are well placed to contribute in this area. They promote and protect Welsh culture and language, and encourage participation in the arts and recreation through the availability of a good range of stock in Welsh, and a host of cultural events and activities. Core entitlements include 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10, and quality indicators 2, 6, 8, 9 and particularly 10 are all relevant here.

5.7. A globally responsible Wales

A commitment to make the most efficient use of resources is embodied in the quality indicators. MALD works with the British Standards Institute and International Standards Organisation in developing and using quality indicators for libraries which conform to ISO 11620.

Further, the borrowing of books is a great recycling tool, reducing the impact on the environment. Libraries in Wales work together in book purchasing consortia, digital/e-book consortia and the All-Wales Library Management System. Core entitlement 12 is directly related to global good practice, while quality indicators 14 and 15 are related to the balance and efficiency of service provision.

6. Community managed libraries



Since about 2014 there has been a growing number of independent and semi-independent libraries in Wales, frequently referred to as community managed libraries. Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2015 on community managed libraries has now been updated and is included here rather than in a separate document, as previously.

Welsh Government guidance on community managed libraries recommends that for such libraries to be considered as part of the authority's statutory provision, they must meet the core entitlements contained within the Standards framework. For the purposes of the sixth framework of public library standards, community managed libraries which receive ongoing support from the local authority library service in terms of shared resources, qualified staff and a 'seamless' customer experience can be considered for inclusion in the return.

For example, libraries conforming to the following models may be eligible:

- Elements of resources and staff provided or co-ordinated by the local library service, with the building in community ownership and a contribution towards staffing from the community council with the staff employed by the library service.
- Limited resources and regular staffing (defined hours) provided by the local library service, the building in community ownership and assistance from volunteers.

Models involving the transfer of the building and resources to the community and entirely run by volunteers with minimal (or no) ongoing assistance from the local library service in managing the facility are not eligible for inclusion.

It is appreciated that different models may exist within a single authority, so that some community managed libraries may be included in the returns, while others may not. For full consideration of whether community managed libraries can be included in the statutory service, the following minimum criteria should be met, along with meeting all the core entitlements:

- A service level agreement with the local authority public library service to include resource sharing activities such as inter-library loans;
- Paid staff, whether funded by the local authority library service or from other sources (e.g. community councils) available for 50% of the library opening hours specified in the service level agreement;
- The provision of a range of material, e.g. books, multimedia/audio-visual, Internet access and staff to support access to and utilisation of these resources;
- Authority support for the ICT facilities, which should be free at the point of use;
- Full access to and use of the local authority's library catalogue including the ability to place reservations, for members of the public. Paid staff would be expected to have access to the LMS.

The purpose of these criteria is to ensure that the public receives a high quality, comprehensive and efficient public library service that is deemed worthy of the statutory service. It is possible for a community managed library to achieve all the proposed criteria outlined above, and if they meet these and the core entitlements, they could be considered for inclusion as part of the local authority's statutory provision of public library services.

As identified above, this is achievable by entering a partnership with their local authority public library service and/or working with community councils and groups.

6.1. Reporting and data collection

If community managed libraries are considered by the authority to be part of the statutory service and are included in the annual return, the guidance document on what data to gather and how applies to all the libraries. The same rigour should be used to gather data in community managed libraries as in other libraries.

In addition, the Welsh Government wishes to monitor the support and resources provided to community managed libraries within the authority, and the extent to which they have been included in the indicators in this framework.

All authorities will therefore be asked to provide the following information, as part of the contextual data in the return:

- a) The number of community managed libraries for which the authority provides
 - i. Paid staff
 - ii. Full access to and use of the local authority's library catalogue for members of the public
 - iii. Support for the ICT facilities
 - iv. Shared and rotated stock services
 - v. A service level agreement including resource sharing activities such as inter-library loans
- b) The total annual aggregate opening hours of community managed libraries within the authority.
- c) The total number of staff hours per annum dedicated to supporting community managed libraries. Include front-line staffing and management support and administration time.

Separate figures for the above will be sought for those community managed libraries included in the return (i.e. those meeting all five bullet points above), and those not included, where available.



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Page 1: Wrexham Central Library

Page 3: Ken Skates AM (image: © Crown copyright (2017) Visit Wales)

Page 5: Top: Llanelli Library, Middle: Rhyl Library, Bottom: Torfaen Libraries

Page 7: Top: Computer training group, Prestatyn Library, Bottom: Cwmbran Library

Page 8: Llanelli Library

Page 9: Carmarthen Library

Page 11: Shared reading group at Ty Cae Nant Residential Home, Torfaen Libraries

Page 12: Reading at home service, Torfaen Libraries

Page 14: Baby and toddler group, Prestatyn Library

Page 18: Reference room, Llanelli Library

Page 19: Seren Walker, Cwmbran Library

Page 21: Welsh language discussion group, Aberkenfig Library

Page 24: School visit, Maesteg, Bridgend

Page 26: All Stitched Up, Blackwood Library

Page 28: Risca Library

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Swansea Library Service

Details of 6 Quality indicators supplied for WPLS 2020 21

WPLSQI 7 Location of service points

- Population density (persons per hectare) 6.5

WPLSQI 8 Library use

Total number of external visits to the library's web site during the year	136,059	551
Total number of active borrowers during the year	31,670	128
Total number of library members	87,246	353
Total number of adult book issues	88,353	358
Total number of children's book issues	32,666	132
Total number of audio-visual issues	5,625	23
Total number of electronic downloads	188,191	762

WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

	2020-21			2019-20
Total number of items acquired	30,468	123		40,637
Total materials expenditure (from WPLSQI 14)	£223,532	£905		£385,251
Total expenditure on material purchased for children	£55,907			
Does this figure include expenditure on a Schools Library Service?				
Percentage of materials expenditure for children	25%		%	19%

WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources

	2020-21			2019-20
Total expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	£9,552			
Percentage of materials expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	4.27%		%	3%
Spend per 1,000 Welsh-speaking resident population	£420		£	£424

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels & qualifications

	2020-21			2019-20
Total number of staff (FTE)	71.3	2.89		71.1
Authority comment (including information about shared staff):				
"In post" as per guidelines = 71.32 and estab is 74.91				
Number of staff holding recognised library related qualifications (FTE) (including cognate areas)	6.5	0.26		7.4
Number of staff holding qualifications in cognate areas (FTE)	0.0			0.0
Number of posts which require a library qualification	7.0			3.0
Does the designated operational manager of library services hold a formal qualification in librarianship or information science or information management?				
Please give details of current qualifications held:	BA Hons Library and Information Studies MCLIP			

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure

E	2020-21			2019-20
Expenditure on staff	£2,169,878	79%		76%
Total materials expenditure	£223,532	8%		13%
Expenditure on maintenance, repair & replacement of equipment & buildings	£105,016	4%		2%
Total other operational costs	£199,520	7%		8%
Total revenue expenditure	£2,763,405			
Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population	£11,188		£11,751	
Total capital expenditure	£62,449			
Total capital expenditure per 1,000 population	£253		£123	

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Cultural Services - Libraries

Directorate: Place

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services
- Other

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

Report on Welsh Public Libraries Standard - Swansea Libraries for 2020-21

This is a report to the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel regarding the final report from Welsh Government reflecting the service performance under the Welsh Public Library Framework 2020-21

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further Investigation	No Impact
	+	-	+	-	+	-		
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x
Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x

**Q3 What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches?
Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement**

The library service consults with customers on a 3 year cycle to understand what they think of the library service and reflecting specific areas defined by the Welsh Public Library Framework. Through out the period we gathered feedback via our library Have Your Say and Council customer comments form and social media which reflected the gratitude of residents that they could access reading material, broadband pc's and communicate with their local library.

Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan's Well-being Objectives when considered together?
Yes x No
- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
Yes x No
- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
Yes x No
- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
Yes x No

Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk
 x

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?
 Yes x No **If yes, please provide details below**

Q7 Will this initiative result in any changes needed to the external or internal website?
 Yes x No **If yes, please provide details below**

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Q8 What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?

The WPLS ensures that local authorities deliver an efficient and effective library service. The report recognises the achievements of the service throughout the reporting period 2020-21

Outcome of Screening

Q9 Please describe the outcome of your screening using the headings below:

- **Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)**

The library service delivered positive impacts through the 2020-21 Covid pandemic and maintained access to services and developed online services to support the widest audiences possible

- **Summary of involvement (Q3)**

Library staff were redeployed to other services including emergency shielding contact centre and TTP and foodbanks but continued to deliver library and information services online and through click and collect services and home delivery at the most difficult times

- **WFG considerations (Q4)**
- **Any risks identified (Q5)**
- **Cumulative impact (Q7)**

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the **'Integrated Assessment Implications'** section of corporate report)

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:	
Name: Karen Gibbins	
Job title: Library Service Manager	
Date: 26 10 22	Page 301

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Approval by Head of Service:
Name:
Position:
Date:

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 9



Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

To the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel –
8th November 2022

Update on Reaching the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Purpose:	To brief the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel on 10 th May 2021
Content:	An update on meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and to forward views to the Cabinet Member via a letter from the Panel Convener
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Service Transformation
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Carol Morgan and David Meyrick E-mail: dave.meyrick@swansea.gov.uk
Finance Officer:	Jeff Dong
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Background

- 1.1 In May 2021 the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation reported to the panel on the Council's progress towards meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and how due to Covid19, the Welsh Government had allowed the Council an extension of 12 months to complete its programmes and meet the standard.
- 1.2 The Council has now met the standard and the purpose of this report is to set out the achievements since WHQS was introduced, compliance levels and the positive impact this programme has had on council tenants as well as the local economy.

2. Compliance Reporting

- 2.1. The WHQS is a statutory requirement for all social landlords in Wales and for Swansea forms a part of the Council's Local Housing Strategy. The Council has in place a WHQS Compliance Policy and submits WHQS compliance figures to Welsh Government annually. Financially, annual business plans have ensured sufficient investment has been available to deliver detailed programmes of repairs and improvements. Budgets and programmes of major repairs will continue to be reported to Council annually and will draw on the same areas of updated information including general and specialist stock condition surveys as well as feedback from repair services.
- 2.2. Compliance levels are reported annually to Welsh Government and are made publicly available by StatsWales. The most recent compliance levels were submitted to Welsh Government in June 2022 covering the period between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 to reflect the level of compliance at the end of the full financial year. Compliance levels for all social landlords in Wales are due to be published on 10th November 2022.
- 2.3. Whilst Welsh Government set a deadline for social landlords to reach the standard, it still requires social landlords to maintain their homes to the WHQS, and to continue reporting compliance and submit business plans. Financially, the Welsh Government will continue to support the process via its Major Repairs Allowance (MRA).

3. WHQS Measurement

- 3.1. The WHQS sets out its requirements across six main themes including good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated; fuel efficient and well insulated; up to date kitchens and bathrooms; located in safe and attractive environments and suit the specific requirements of the household. Compliance is achieved when building elements within these themes are considered to be in reasonable condition and performing as intended. The level of compliance is recorded via house condition surveys and records are updated when major repairs and improvements are completed.
- 3.2. The WHQS allows landlords to record elements within individual homes as 'acceptable fail'. The standard recognises that it may not be achievable for a landlord to bring all the elements up to the standard and social landlords are permitted to report these as one of the following acceptable fail categories: cost of remedy; timing of remedy; residents' choice and physical constraint. Elements which cannot be brought up to the WHQS, continue to be repaired and maintained to ensure homes remain safe.

4. WHQS Compliance

- 4.1. The Council has reached the WHQS deadline and achieved 70% full compliance with the remaining properties containing one or more acceptable fails. The figures submitted to Welsh Government recorded compliance as of the 31st March 2022 and reflect the delivery of improvements across the full financial year.

- 4.2. Over the last 12 months, full WHQS compliance has increased by 1,818 to 9,571 properties. Those which contain an acceptable fail has decreased in this period and is currently at 4,066 properties, of which 2,062 are due to residents' choice and the remaining 2,004 are due to timing.
- 4.3. Compliance across individual elements are set out in the table below and show high levels of compliance with only small number of properties with an acceptable fail.

WHQS Element	Properties Fully Compliant	Properties with an Acceptable Fail
Roofing	13,477	190
Windows	13,634	3
Doors	13,535	102
Kitchens	12,117	1,520
Bathrooms	11,668	1,969
Heating Systems	13,378	259
Energy Rating	11,847	1,790
Electrical Systems	13,563	74
Smoke Alarms	13,628	9
Gardens	10,980	2,657

- 4.4. It is only in the last 8 years the Council has had sufficient investment to begin to deliver improvement schemes to renew kitchens, bathrooms and upgrade gardens resulting in significant increases in compliance. Elements such roofs, doors, windows, heating and electrical installations have received investment over a much longer period, resulting in stable high compliance levels.
- 4.5. Properties with an acceptable fail will continue to be included in future programmes of improvements and this will increase overall compliance. Some are included in longer term regeneration and/or refurbishment schemes included in the HRA Business Plan via future capital programmes. Tenants that have previously opted out from schemes such as kitchen and bathroom renewal or heating upgrades, can be reintroduced into a programme and work generally delivered in the next financial year.

5. National Picture

- 5.1. There are 11 stock owning local authorities in Wales of which seven had achieved WHQS compliance prior to the 2021 deadline. The remaining four, including Swansea were compliant by the deadline. The following table sets out the level of compliance last publicly reported with the exception of Swansea where the most recent compliance levels are shown.

Local Authority	Stock	Fully Compliant Stock	Year
Caerphilly	10,654	8,895	2019
Cardiff	13,678	11,282	2019
Carmarthenshire	9,130	8,183	2019
Denbighshire	3,380	1,801	2019
Flintshire	7,263	2,861	2019
Isle of Anglesey	3,884	2,910	2019
Pembrokeshire	5,648	5,244	2019
Powys	5,385	2,752	2019
Swansea	13,637	9,571	2022
Vale of Glamorgan	3,879	2,961	2019
Wrexham	11,057	8,361	2019

- 5.2. Overall, Swansea has a typical proportion of its homes which are fully compliant across its stock, with the remainder being acceptable fails. Nationally, all local authority landlords reported a proportion of their homes contain acceptable fails.
- 5.3. The latest WHQS compliance figures across Wales will be published by Welsh Government around the 10th November 2022. It is expected that compliance will further increase, however it is likely the national picture will continue to show ongoing levels of acceptable fail within those figures.

6. Financial Investment

- 6.1. The Council has invested heavily in achieving the WHQS, primarily through capital investment. This investment has been supported by the Welsh Government which has awarded a Major Repair Allowance each year from April 2004 onwards. In total, Welsh Government will have contributed £165m towards improvements in Swansea.
- 6.2. Based on completed works and their typical costs, the Council has invested over £546m into improving its homes since the introduction of the WHQS. The investment covers a wide range of major repairs and improvements and the table below highlights the main areas:

WHQS	Investment (£)
In a Good State of Repair Walls, roofs, windows, doors etc.	£217,934,000
Safe and Secure Smoke alarms and fire safety, gas and electrical safety etc.	£68,355,000
Adequately heated and Fuel Efficient Boilers, heating controls, loft insulation etc.	£33,630,000
Up to Date Kitchens and Bathrooms Kitchen, bathrooms, showers, extractor fans tec.	£147,218,000

Located in Safe and Attractive Environments Repair to garden and wider environmental improvements	£27,923,000
Suit the Requirements of the Household Disabled adaptations – ramps, bathrooms, handrails	£51,300,000
Total	£546,360,000

6.3. The WHQS programme has required major input from staff and contractors alike to ensure the programme has been delivered. Achieving WHQS compliance has required clear long term programmes, robust financial plans, major design and procurement exercises and the delivery has depended on vast amount of engagement with tenants and the mobilisation and management of technical operatives.

6.4. Within the Council, the Housing Service and Building Services have been central to achieving the standard, however other service areas of the Council have provided their expertise and assistance including Finance, Legal, Highways and Planning.

7. Local Economy

7.1. The Council has delivered its WHQS programme through a mix of direct delivery via Building Services and procuring local and Wales based contractors, ensuring the local and the Wales economy has benefitted from this investment.

7.2. The Council has also sought to maximise employment opportunities through training and by providing and supporting job opportunities. Building Services has appointed and trained over 60 apprentices, engaged a further 80 fully qualified trade employees in addition to the continued employment of over 300 staff in its service area.

7.3. The Council's Beyond Bricks and Mortar team work very closely with external contractors and agencies in Swansea to create training and job opportunities for those considered hard to reach – people who have experienced long term unemployment or faced barriers in accessing the job market. Through WHQS contracts the team have created 89 jobs, 46 apprenticeships, numerous training and work experience opportunities and college trainee positions. These opportunities represent a shift in directions and fortunes for many individuals.

8. Tenant Information

8.1. Throughout the delivery of the WHQS programme the Council has sought to inform and engage with tenants on major planned works to their home. The Home Improvement Team have been central to this task and particularly on programmes such as wind and weatherproofing and kitchen and bathroom renewal. As a result, they will have knocked on the door of virtually all 13,600 council homes and engaged with thousands of tenants. By engaging with tenants in this way the Council has been able to understand individual needs and circumstances, to re-assure, identify

when to make reasonable adjustments and provide tenants the opportunity to feed into the process and make choices such as the type of kitchen they would like.

- 8.2. The tenant magazine Open House has frequently included updates on progress towards meeting the standard and the Council's website contained updates as well as upcoming programmes allowing tenants to see when work such as kitchen and bathroom renewal was planned for their home.
- 8.3. The Housing Service also facilitates a Tenant Consultative Panel and a Building Repairs Group which recently met in person for the first time since covid restrictions were lifted. These groups offer tenants an opportunity to meet, discuss and feedback on proposals and ongoing housing issues.
- 8.4. The Council periodically conducts 'STAR' surveys which are a standardised customer satisfaction survey undertaken by the majority of social landlords. Recent 2021 results showed many tenants were satisfied with the quality of their home with 75.4% expressing a positive opinion, 13.8% stating they did not have an opinion and 10.8% registering some level of dissatisfaction. Levels of dissatisfaction have reduced from surveys undertaken in 2019 where these were recorded as 14%. Through feedback and engagement, the service aims to better understand the reasons behind tenant dissatisfaction and address these issues.
- 8.5. Resident satisfaction surveys are undertaken on most work streams completed as part of the WHQS programme. The replacement kitchen and bathroom programme is the most intrusive and difficult to deliver while residents remaining in occupation. Analysis of statistical returns across the five participating contractors indicates that 95% of all tenants feel the investment has improved their homes and quality of living while 72% rate the completed work as good or excellent.

9. Future Challenges

- 9.1. The WHQS remains a statutory requirement for all social landlords in Wales and Welsh Government continues to expect the standard to be maintained. This is reflected in the Welsh Government's ongoing financial support through their Major Repair Allowance (MRA) in which they awarded a further £9.2m to Swansea for financial year 2022/23.
- 9.2. Welsh Government are currently consulting on a revision to the WHQS to ensure social housing will meet the oncoming challenges for tenants and landlords. The consultation proposes that the new standard will include challenging retrofit decarbonisation targets to make homes highly thermally efficient, low carbon emitting and importantly affordable places to live for tenants. The new standard also contains requirements to ensure improved storage spaces, water efficiencies and that homes ready for letting are carpeted in the majority of rooms.
- 9.3. Changes are also planned in relation to fire safety in social rented flats in Wales. It is understood landlords will be required to examine fire safety arrangements in greater detail and to report levels of compliance annually.
- 9.4. It is estimated the additional measures set out in Welsh Government's WHQS2023 Consultative Document added to existing commitments of maintaining the existing

WHQS will require approximately £875m to achieve the future standard, the target date of which is yet to be confirmed. Responses to the consultation from the Welsh Housing sector, including both Local Authorities and Housing Associations have raised significant concerns over the affordability and deliverability of many of the elements in the new standard. WG are yet to formally respond to the results of the initial consultation.

- 9.5. Continued Welsh Government financial support in the form of MRA and additional Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) grant funding will be linked to the Council's future commitment to planned decarbonisation programmes and its ability to meet future statutory delivery targets.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The Council has now reached WHQS compliance. This is a major strategic achievement and milestone reflecting the considerable investment the Council has made in its housing stock. Across those properties with an acceptable fail, over half are due to tenant choice and the remainder are due to timing, where long term regeneration, refurbishment or major repairs are planned.
- 10.2. The Council is required to maintain its homes to the WHQS and will continue to invest in future major repairs and improvements. Tenants who declined WHQS improvements in the past can still receive these improvements. This will result in the continued increase in compliance, reduction in acceptable fail levels and improved stock condition.
- 10.3. The WHQS programme has been a major source of investment locally in and Wales. By rolling out long terms improvements, the programme has supported hundreds of jobs, created opportunities and also been a major source of engagement with tenants.
- 10.4. The primary objective of the WHQS to improve the housing stock has created safer as well as warmer, better insulated, and fuel efficient homes which has improved the comfort and quality for residents, together with associated health benefits of good housing.
- 10.5. Welsh Government plans to build on the success of WHQS by introducing a revised standard WHQS2023 which aims to make existing social housing a higher standard than new properties being built to prevailing Building Regulations. This programme will create financial, planning and practical delivery challenges for the Council well into the next decade.

11. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 11.1. The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

11.2. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.

11.3. Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

11.4. An IIA Screening Form has been completed and a full IIA report is not required. Reaching and maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard for the Council’s housing is an example of the 5 Ways of Working promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and will contribute towards the 7 well-being goals. The planned programme of repairs set out in this report is about early intervention which will secure social housing for the long term and will benefit future generations. Reaching and maintaining the standard has reduced carbon emissions, increased efficiency and supported employment and the local economy. Future investment will be subject to consultation with those individuals affected via the Council’s Major Works Agreement and all schemes needing planning consent will be subject to normal planning procedures and the council’s IIA process. Any individual requirement will be taken into account during the scheme liaison process.

11.5. Reaching WHQS compliance will secure social housing for the long term, making homes healthier and more efficient places to live.

12. Legal implications

12.1. WG can exercise powers under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 if there is a failure to meet the statutory obligation referred to above.

13. Financial Implications

13.1. The financial implications of achieving WHQS compliance to date are outlined in 6.2 of this report. The estimated of attaining future WHQS standards is outlined in

9.4 of this report. Ongoing maintenance of the WHQS is included in the HRA Business Plan.

Glossary of terms:

WHQS Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Background papers: None

Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment screening

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Housing and Public Health

Directorate: Place

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services
- Other

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

The Council as landlord is required to bring its homes up to the Welsh Government's Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The WHQS contains six main themes including good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated, up to date kitchens and bathrooms; located in safe and attractive environments and suit the specific requirements of the household. The WHQS was introduced in 2002, became a legal requirement in 2014 and has a deadline by the end of December 2021. Compliance figures required by Welsh Government are reported as of the 31st March 2022.

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel have periodically requested an update. The purpose of the report for Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel is to set out how the Council has reached WHQS compliance and highlight the contribution Welsh Government has made financially, the major contribution the Council has made and the positive impact the programme has had on tenants, the quality of council homes in Swansea, how it has supported continued employment within the Council and the local economy.

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further Investigation	No Impact
	+	-	+	-	+	-		
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches? Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement

The report to Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel sets out the number of homes which are compliant with the WHQS. Improvements carried out to council houses to ensure they meet the WHQS are undertaken via the Housing capital and revenue programme and consultation is carried out to all householders affected by the schemes via the Council’s Major Works Agreement. Any individual needs will have been accounted for as part of the scheme preparation and in the delivery stages. Statutory Consultation via the Planning Process will have been carried out for any schemes requiring planning consent.

Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan’s Well-being Objectives when considered together?
 Yes No

b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?

Yes No

c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?

Yes No

d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?

Yes No

Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (*Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...*)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes No If yes, please provide details below

Preparing designing and delivering WHQS investment programmes requires the input and contribution by other council services including, Building Services, Finance, Legal, Highways, Planning, Corporate Property, Commercial Services and Democratic Services,

Q7 Will this initiative result in any changes needed to the external or internal website?

Yes No If yes, please provide details below

The Council's external website contain updates on the WHQS, levels of compliance and grants from Welsh Government to support improvements

Q8 What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?

(You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups/ communities more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making. For example, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.)

The WHQS programme has supported the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and will continue to make a significant contribution to the 7 well-being goals. The safety improvements, thermal efficiencies and improved facilities within the home as well

as the enhancements to the wider environment has ensured there is an ongoing positive impact for people and communities in Swansea.

Overall the WHQS requires council houses to be well maintained and the investment has contributed towards the local economy through the Council's in-house apprenticeship programme and the Beyond Bricks and Mortar initiative which targets those who are hard to reach providing them with training and employment opportunities.

Outcome of Screening

Q9 Please describe the outcome of your screening using the headings below:

- **Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)**
- **Summary of involvement (Q3)**
- **WFG considerations (Q4)**
- **Any risks identified (Q5)**
- **Cumulative impact (Q7)**

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the **'Integrated Assessment Implications'** section of corporate report)

The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

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- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
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Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

An IIA Screening Form has been completed and a full IIA report is not required. Reaching and maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard for the Council's housing is an example of the 5 Ways of Working promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and will contribute towards the 7 well-being goals. The planned programme of repairs set out in this report is about early intervention which will secure social housing for the long term and will benefit future generations. Reaching and maintaining the standard has reduced carbon emissions, increased efficiency and supported employment and the local economy. Future investment will be subject to consultation with those individuals affected via the Council's Major Works Agreement and all schemes needing planning consent will be subject to normal planning procedures and the council's IIA process. Any individual requirement will be taken into account during the scheme liaison process.

Reaching WHQS compliance will secure social housing for the long term, making homes healthier and more efficient places to live.

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: Dave Bratley
Job title: Housing Asset Manager
Date: 18/10/2022
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Carol Morgan
Position: Head of Housing and Public Health
Date: 19/10/2022

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Housing and Public Health

Directorate: Place

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
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- Other

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

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Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

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 Yes No
- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
 Yes No
- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
 Yes No
- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
 Yes No

Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes No **If yes, please provide details below**

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The Council's external website contain updates on the WHQS, levels of compliance and grants from Welsh Government to support improvements

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Overall the WHQS requires council houses to be well maintained and the investment has contributed towards the local economy through the Council's in-house apprenticeship programme and the Beyond Bricks and Mortar initiative which targets those who are hard to reach providing them with training and employment opportunities.

Outcome of Screening

Q9 Please describe the outcome of your screening using the headings below:

- **Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)**
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- **WFG considerations (Q4)**
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- **Cumulative impact (Q7)**

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

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The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

An IIA Screening Form has been completed and a full IIA report is not required. Reaching and maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard for the Council’s housing is an example of the 5 Ways of Working promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and will contribute towards the 7 well-being goals. The planned programme of repairs set out in this report is about early intervention which will secure social housing for the long term and will benefit future generations. Reaching and maintaining the standard has reduced carbon emissions, increased efficiency and supported employment and the local economy. Future investment will be subject to consultation with those individuals affected via the Council’s Major Works Agreement and all schemes needing planning consent will be subject to normal planning procedures and the council’s IIA process. Any individual requirement will be taken into account during the scheme liaison process.

Reaching WHQS compliance will secure social housing for the long term, making homes healthier and more efficient places to live.

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: Dave Bratley
Job title: Housing Asset Manager
Date: 18/10/2022
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Carol Morgan
Position: Head of Housing and Public Health
Date:

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 10



To:

Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

*Date
Dyddiad:*

Overview & Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

27 October 2022

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance. The letter concerns the meeting held on 4 October 2022 and the Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

On the 4 October, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22. The Panel are grateful to yourself and Richard Rowlands Corporate Performance Manager, for attending to discuss and answer questions. Our observations focused on the following areas. We were made aware of the impact the Covid pandemic had in a number of performance areas. In addition to this there are 18 new safeguarding indicators as a result of new national Social Services Performance Framework therefore there was no comparable data for these indicators as they are new.

We were made aware that five out of eight Education and Skills indicators improved or stayed the same. We were pleased to see the progress made with Additional Learning Needs provision and understand that a rise in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) and lower attendance would be affected by Covid.

We were told that only one out of eight indicators for Economy and Infrastructure have improved or stayed the same compared to 20/21 and for Tackling Poverty, three out of five indicators improved or stayed the same. We were pleased to see that three out of four indicators in biodiversity and nature had improved with an increase of 121% in tree planting.

Indicators improving or staying the same was three out of five in regards to transformation of the Council. One of the declining indicators was staff sickness. We are acutely aware that this has been heavily impacted by Covid due to many Council jobs providing care and support which was impacted by enforced absence. We would

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request that you look into absence records to define and categorise sickness further to take enforced absences into account in future.

Overall, we were fully appreciative of the impact Covid has had over 2021/22 and that it has been difficult to compare it to 2020/21. We appreciate the efforts where indicators have improved in difficult circumstances.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but, in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk



**Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Economy,
Finance & Strategy**

To: *Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*
*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*
e-Mail
e-Bost:

Date
Dyddiad:

Overview & Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

27 October 2022

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy. The letter concerns the meeting held on 4 October 2022 and the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

On the 4 October, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23. The Panel are grateful to yourself and Ben Smith, Chief Finance Officer / S.151 Officer, for attending to discuss and answer questions.

We were informed that this Quarter has a forecast net overspend of £3m with no assurance of any support from Welsh or National Government as yet. We understand this deficit will need to be drawn from the contingency fund. Currently, two Directorates are overspent, two are underspent and one is break even. This is before the pay award, once this is taken into account it is likely that all 5 directorates will be overspent due to shortfalls in base funding for the pay award. We are aware that the budget was set on assumption of a 3% pay award but the actual pay awards currently in discussions will exceed the budgeted some by around £12m.

We heard that rising energy costs will affect us all and are being closely monitored. Prices are protected in the very short term by the Councils advance buying and fixed costs but in the future the Council is faced with substantial costs going forward.

You told us that the budget and forecast outturn position is currently expecting £26 million to be drawn from contingency reserves. This is not a sustainable position. This year will be a balanced forecast due to the draw on reserves but this leaves uncertainty for future years.

We asked what percentage of the total reserves makes up the £26m. You told us that there is an estimated £160 million reserves and assured us that in regards to reserves, Swansea has the second best provision in Wales. In addition, amounts

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drawn from this fund may be reduced if successful in discussion with both governments. You stated that every other Council will be having the same issues in regards to finance and current pressures.

We are acutely aware of the growing financial pressures facing everyone. We asked about the £2m in uncollected Council Tax and what the Councils plans were for collecting this. You explained the growing concern for those who may be struggling to pay this and it currently stands as a deficit.

We raised concerns regarding the rising cost of materials and the impact this may have. You told us that some materials are secured in fixed price deals and borrowing rates, however, we are not wholly insulated and it will be the job of the Council officers to manage that and keep to budgets.

We queried why the Home to School Transport budget was split into four separate headings. We heard that there are significant pressures in this area including the rocketing energy and fuel costs along with high inflationary pressures. Due to the many other financial pressures elsewhere in the Council there are currently no funds to cover any overspend these cost pressures are therefore broken down over four discrete headings for clarity. We asked about the £2.5m reserve put aside for IT, you told us that this is specifically set aside for the transformation programme including Oracle. We queried an underspend of 1.5m in relation to a Council Tax reduction scheme. You informed us that despite promotion of the scheme this is a common underspend and this will be used to offset the deficit. When we raised our concerns regarding next year's budget and whether savings are possible you expressed concern that if nothing changes there could be a substantial deficit for all Councils in Wales.

We are reassured that you are preparing some financial scenarios for Swansea Council and will continue to plan when you know what the settlement is for Wales and what the budgetary position is for Welsh Government.

Overall we discussed a number of additional strains on the budget. Could you please provide us with more information about the overspends and what measures are being taken to address them

Your Response

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but we would be grateful if you could specifically consider and respond to our query about what measures are being taken to address the overspend. Please provide your response to this and any other comments about our letter by 17 November 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 11

Service Improvement and Finance – Scrutiny Performance Panel

Work Plan 2022/23

<p>Meeting 1 6 Sep 2022 10am</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role of the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Panel 2. Overview: <i>Understanding Financial Reporting</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer 3. Overview: <i>Understanding Performance Monitoring</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery and Performance Manager 4. Work Plan 2022/23 Panel to discuss/agree work plan topics for the coming year.
<p>Meeting 2 4 Oct 2022 10am</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Q1 Budget Monitoring Report – 2022/23 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy 2. Annual Performance Monitoring Report for 2021/2022 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance
<p>Meeting 3 8 Nov 2022 10am</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Revenue Reserves <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy 2. Annual Review of Performance 2021/2022 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance 3. Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Performance Report <i>Invited to attend:</i> Karen Gibbins – Library Services Manager Karen Davies – Principal Librarian Cllr Elliott King – Cabinet Member Culture and Equalities 4. Welsh Housing Quality Standards Annual Update <i>Invited to attend:</i> Carol Morgan – Head of Housing and Public Health Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Transformation
<p>Meeting 4 6 Dec 2022 10am</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mid Term Budget Statement 2022/23 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy 2. Quarter 1 2022/23 Performance Monitoring Report <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance 3. Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021/2022 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Lisa DeBenedictis - Standards Officer Cllr Elliott King – Cabinet Member Culture and Equalities Cllr Robert Smith – Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

	<p>4. Recycling and Landfill - Annual Performance Monitoring 2021/22 and Recycling of Business Waste Briefing <i>Invited to attend:</i> Cllr Cyril Anderson– Cabinet Member Community Services Chris Howell – Head of Waste Management and Parks Matthew Perkins – Group Leader, Waste</p> <p>5. Audit Wales Report – “Making Equality Impact Assessments more than just a tick box exercise” <i>Invited to attend:</i> Cllr Elliot King - Cabinet Member Culture and Equalities Rhian Millar – Consultation Coordinator Lee Wenham – Head of Communications and Marketing</p>
<p>Meeting 5 17 Jan 2023 10am</p>	<p>1. Draft Budget Proposals 2022/23 – 2025/26 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy</p> <p>2. Q2 Budget Monitoring 2022/23 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy</p> <p>3. Q2 2022/23 Performance Monitoring Report <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>4. Sustainable Swansea Update - Transformational delivery aspects <i>Invited to attend:</i> Andrea Lewis – Cabinet Member for Service Transformation Ness Young – Interim Director of Corporate Services Sarah Lackenby – Head of Digital and Customer Services Marlyn Dickson – Strategic Change Programme Manager</p>
<p>Meeting 6 14 Feb 2023 10am</p>	<p>1. Annual Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan: Pre-Decision Scrutiny <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy</p>
<p>Meeting 7 14 Mar 2023 10am</p>	<p>1. Q3 Budget Monitoring 2022/23 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Ben Smith – Director of Finance / S.151 Officer Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy</p> <p>2. Planning Annual Performance Report 2021/2022 <i>Invited to attend:</i> Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance Phil Holmes – Head of Planning and City Regeneration Ian Davies - Development Conservation and Design Manager Tom Evans – Placemaking and Strategic Planning Manager</p>
<p>Meeting 8 18 April 2023 10am</p>	<p>1. Q3 2022/23 Performance Monitoring Report <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager Cllr David Hopkins - Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>2. Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan <i>Invited to attend:</i> Richard Rowlands – Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager</p>

	Cllr Rob Stewart - Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy
Meeting 9 9 May 2023 10am	1. Progress update on the Local Government Use of Data Action Plan (delayed due to pandemic impacts / diversion of resources) - tbc 2. Annual Complaints Report <i>Invited to attend:</i> Sarah Lackenby – Head of Digital and Customer Services Cllr David Hopkins - Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance