



Report of the Cabinet Member for Business Improvement and Performance

Cabinet – 16 December 2021

Quarter 2 2021/22 Performance Monitoring Report

Purpose:	To report corporate performance for Quarter 2 2021/22.
Policy Framework:	<i>Delivering a Successful & Sustainable Swansea Corporate Plan 2020/22</i> <i>Achieving Better Together Programme.</i>
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Cabinet endorses the performance results for Quarter 2 2021/22 and approves their use to inform executive decisions on resource allocation and, where relevant, corrective actions to manage and improve performance and efficiency in delivering national and local priorities.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the performance results for the second quarter of 2021/22 delivering the Council's Well-being Objectives (priorities) described in the Corporate Plan 2020/22 *Delivering a Successful & Sustainable Swansea*.
- 1.2 The outturn presented in the performance tables (Appendix A) incorporates an overview of performance that needs to be considered alongside the current financial situation of the Council.
- 1.3 The financial resources required to achieve the specified performance levels in 2021/22 have been provided in the approved budget. As part of the work on *Achieving Better Together* there will be an increased focus on understanding the level of activity and outcomes that are achieved for

the budget allocated so that choices can be made about relative priorities.

2.0 Performance and Improvement: impact from COVID-19

2.1 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 in order to redeploy resources to areas where they were most needed.

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

2.3 This has been an unprecedented time and the Council's response to the pandemic, whilst not necessarily reflected in the established performance indicators in this report, has been extraordinary.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 These results for Q2 2021/22 should therefore be considered within this wider context, the ongoing pandemic and achievements noted.

- 2.7 Performance is judged using the results measured by Corporate Plan performance indicators and is usually compared to agreed targets. For the sake of this report and given the issues set out above, targets for 2021/22 have not been set due to the ongoing impact from COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns and other preventative and reactive measures.
- 2.8 The impact on the performance indicators from COVID-19 can also be seen where this occurs by comparing the results of performance indicators against the results from the same period last year where comparison is possible.
- 2.9 The Q2 2021/22 outturn shows that **15 out of 26 (58%)** comparable Corporate Plan performance indicators showed improvement or stayed the same compared to Q2 2020/21.
- 2.10 The performance indicators are assessed each year to ensure that they remain appropriate; although the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown disrupted this process in 2020/21 and during 2021/22. The indicators and how the Council can better measure strategic directions and our priorities will be reviewed as soon as allowed by the progress of the pandemic.
- 2.11 The performance tables in Appendix A set out an overview of performance for each Corporate Plan priority provided by Directors and Heads of Service who are the responsible leads; these overviews set the performance data within their proper context and can be found in para 4.0.

3.0 Other considerations

- 3.1 When making comparisons to 2020/21, the following should be considered:
- 3.1.1 The nature and number of some performance indicators (PIs) may have changed between these two periods and therefore direct comparisons may not always be appropriate.
- 3.1.2 The results do not always account for changes in resources and workload during that period (although details can be seen in the numerator and denominator information and in the comments column of the data tables attached to this report).
- 3.1.3 There may be changes to the numerator and denominator information that may affect the trends by showing a decline while the volume of work has increased.
- 3.1.4 None of the corporate priorities can be seen in isolation from each other. Each priority both affects and is affected by the others. For example, Improving Education and Skills is both important to our efforts to tackle

poverty and improve the economy. For this reason, many of the performance indicators allocated to measuring one priority can also be used to show progress meeting other priorities.

4.0 Context: Overviews of Performance in 2021/22

4.0.1 The following overviews provided by responsible departments describe the context to the performance meeting the Council's key objectives as at Q2 2021/22.

4.1 Safeguarding people from harm

4.1.1 Notwithstanding that Wales reports Covid status as alert level zero, levels of community transmission have remained high throughout the quarter and continue to have a significant detrimental impact on the health and care system. This plays out both through different and more complex levels of demand and a very significant deficit in workforce capacity. This deficit in workforce capacity is a national issue and plays out across all cohorts of the health and social care workforce. In Swansea the most significant deficits are in frontline child protection social work capacity and the adult domiciliary care workforce.

4.1.2 The above factors will impact on performance across a range of indicators. However reporting of these impacts is further complicated by the implementation of a new national performance framework and local implementation of the All Wales integrated health and social care reporting system (WCCIS). Smooth implementation of the new system has proved difficult. Staff are taking longer than expected to become familiar with its use as limited office based working has meant that training and mentoring can only be done virtually and the usual peer to peer learning almost entirely absent. A recent national upgrade to the system has compounded these performance reporting issues tenfold with the system repeatedly having to be shut down as it was unable to cope with the number of users trying to input information. All of these issues are being worked through at both a national and local level but it does mean that the usual depth and breadth of reliable, automated performance information may not be available until the 4th quarter of this year or even beyond and therefore the accurate baselining of new performance indicators may not be fully complete until next year.

4.1.3 Despite the perfect storm of all the above coming together at the same time, the Council still needs to know at any given time whether it is delivering safe services and meeting its number one priority of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. To provide this reassurance a series of manual performance monitoring checks have been established within services.

4.1.4 Taking into account all the available information the position for children services is that despite significant workload pressures including caseloads that are between 30 and 50% higher than target, key

measures of visits taking place and assessments being undertaken are ensuring that children remain safe. The continued focus on ensuring that children are supported to remain safe and well at home (safe LAC reduction) is still achieving very positive outcomes. The high numbers of children being supported via early help hubs is encouraging.

- 4.1.5 In adult services, whilst there are significant backlogs in assessments and very limited capacity to provide domiciliary care, the safeguarding team have reviewed the circumstances of all those individuals on waiting lists to ensure that either alternative forms of support are in place or that a step up, temporary care placement is offered for individuals who may otherwise be unsafe. Full local area coordinator coverage across Swansea is helping to ensure that where opportunities to support individuals without recourse to formal care exist, these opportunities are being realised.
- 4.1.6 Across both services emergency, contingency plans are in train to ensure our most fundamental statutory requirements will be met over what we expect to be an extremely challenging winter and Christmas period. It may be that for the next two quarters, reporting may have to be further adjusted to simply report against the effectiveness of those emergency plans.

4.2 *Improving education & skills*

- 4.2.1 During the second quarter, Swansea schools have faced considerable disruption as a result of Covid, with nearly all control measures to keep learners safe required from 13 September 2021. The negative effect on school attendance, particularly in secondary schools remains significant. Despite the removal of the requirement for whole year groups to self-isolate, secondary schools have seen disrupted classes as a result of both staff and pupil illness. An unvaccinated school population has seen over 4000 learners isolating in the two school months within quarter two. Attendance in Swansea remains lower than usual because of Covid. Schools in challenging contexts appear to have lower attendance compared to schools in less deprived areas of Swansea. Similar rates of lower attendance have been seen in local authorities across Wales.
- 4.2.2 The numbers of learners being excluded is growing in comparison to pre-Covid rates and requires precise monitoring. Implementation of Swansea's positive behaviour policy in schools is progressing well. Close monitoring of secondary schools' plans to support learners at risk of disaffection indicates strong support to prevent exclusion rates being even higher.
- 4.2.3 Authority wide attainment measures at foundation phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3 are no longer collected by Welsh Government and in key stage 4 and A Level year groups the awarding of grades has been determined by schools themselves. National categorisation and Estyn inspections have been suspended as a result of Covid. School

monitoring supports schools' readiness for significant national changes to how the needs of learners are met.

- 4.2.4 Preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales (underpinned by a strong emphasis on well-being) is in place and remains a focus area for school monitoring visits. Learner wellbeing and school staff well-being are carefully considered as part of recovery planning. Plans for the implementation of the new additional learning needs legislative framework are developing well. Considerable workforce training has been undertaken in readiness for higher expectations on additional learning needs provision in schools. The new legislative framework for additional learning needs requires timely intervention and provision to meet the needs of learners in Swansea.
- 4.2.5 Improved performance in meeting desirable timescales indicates that the work to digitise and simplify processes is taking good effect. Greater access to Welsh medium schools is progressing well with two new buildings on track for imminent occupancy. The new ten year strategic plan for Welsh in Education is at a formal consultation stage. Improvements to the school estate as part of the 21 Century Schools programme continue to develop well despite challenges during the Covid pandemic.

4.3 *Transforming our economy and infrastructure*

- 4.3.1 As reported previously in quarter 1, the effects of Covid on the construction sector are now becoming increasingly clear. Skilled and unskilled labour shortages, together with supply issues for some construction materials are having an impact on programme and construction costs. Dialogue continues with our contractors and all available countermeasures are being explored to mitigate the impacts of these issues. However, despite this our major regeneration priorities have continued to make substantial progress on site during Quarter 2.
- 4.3.2 The Copr Bay works have continued to make significant visible progress with the arena, bridge, residential block, MSCP, and church hall all significantly advanced and nearing practical completion. The Shaping Swansea procurement has been concluded with the appointment of Urban Splash as the Council's private sector development partner for the delivery of the next phase of strategic sites. This marks an exciting new chapter in Swansea's regeneration journey, bringing new resources and development expertise to the City.
- 4.3.3 The Public Sector Hub project at the former BHS building has made significant progress. Grant funding for refurbishment works have been secured and a works contractor has been procured. The Kingsway Employment Hub building procurement for a contractor has completed 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.

- 4.3.4 Wind Street works continue to make substantial progress on site and is set for completion in November, as does the Hafod Copperworks Powerhouse project with works completion targeted for May 2022. Procurement for a works contractor to deliver the Place Theatre refurbishment works has now been completed with works completion targeted for October 2022.
- 4.3.5 The delivery of actions within the Swansea Economic Recovery Action Plan is ongoing. The action plan, that was prepared in partnership with key stakeholders, and that is supported by deployment of the Council's economic recovery fund, includes a range of initiatives to stimulate economic activity and resilience within Swansea's local economy. The City Centre re-purposing study has been approved by Cabinet and initial projects are under consideration.
- 4.3.6 The Council has also been leading the production of the Regional Economic Delivery Plan in collaboration with other authorities in the region. This work is now advanced and will report to Council in January for adoption of the strategy and its accompanying action plan. The plan identifies transformational project investment in the region that will attract funds from the UK government's Shared Prosperity Funding programme that is envisaged in future years.
- 4.3.7 The WHQS Capital Programme for 2020/21 was affected by the Covid pandemic which curtailed the Council's ability to deliver planned works to occupied existing dwellings. This was recognised by Welsh Government and Swansea Council has been granted a further 12 months in which to deliver its WHQS Compliance Programme. The revised completion date is now 31st December 2021. The revised capital investment programme for 2021/22 has now been set at £46.875m, an element of £12m which is slippage from last year's Covid pandemic affected end of year financial outturn. The investment aims and objectives remain the same as proceeding years; to ensure homes are in a good state of repair, thermally efficient, safe and secure and meeting the needs of individuals.
- 4.3.8 Over the course of this financial year, the Council intends to deliver planned repairs and improvements to the following number of dwellings:
- 700 new kitchens and bathrooms.
 - 456 external fabric envelope upgrades, which includes reroofing and insulation, weatherboards and rainwater goods, insulated render and replacement high performance windows.
 - 661 chimney removals or rebuilds.

- 475 high performance combination boilers.
 - 3,700 garden upgrades to improve safety and security.
 - Fire safety improvement work to high and medium rise blocks of flats and sheltered housing complexes including installation of sprinkler systems.
 - Installation of 2,000 remotely monitored smoke alarm systems in sheltered housing complexes.
 - 537 electrical re-wires to ensure installations comply with the prevailing regulations.
 - New passenger lifts at Jeffreys Court flats.
- 4.3.9 A further element of work, to help meet future decarbonisation targets of social housing, has been integrated in this year's programme. Solar PV panels and battery storage to generate energy for the benefit of 137 households has been included as part of external envelope upgrades.
- 4.3.10 The above are just some of the headline work streams we intend to deliver as part of a much wider programme of repairs, maintenance and improvements which forms the WHQS Compliance Capital Programme. At the end of the financial year, the Council will have achieved WHQS compliance as is defined in statutory guidance. From April 2022, the WHQS will pass from a compliance target phase to a maintenance phase of the WHQS. We await the revised guidance documents from Welsh Government but anticipate the maintenance phase will introduce new statutory decarbonisation and fire safety elements in addition to other maintenance refinements.
- 4.3.11 The overall WHQS programme will continue to contribute significantly towards community benefits and employment opportunities. We will report at the end of the final quarter on the recruitment and training opportunities the programme provided during 2021/22.
- 4.3.12 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 20/21, 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. This will also be the site of a new build Welsh medium primary school, and will provide an opportunity to regenerate the area.
- 4.3.13 As part of the WG Phase 2 planning for homelessness, the Council is also developing 8 one bedroom homes at a former Education site in Uplands. This will be handed over in Nov 2021. A further 20 x1 bedroom acquisitions are planned for 21/22. Work has also started at West Cross, to develop 6 bungalows, which has also been awarded IHP funding to include the additional renewable technologies.
- 4.3.14 A planning application has been submitted to convert a former social services property in Gorseinon into 2 x 3 bedroom homes. The former

Education site at Brondeg House has also been acquired to develop for affordable housing. Cabinet has also been asked to approve the appropriation of 3 sites from the General Fund to develop for affordable housing. 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.

- 4.3.15 Quarter 2 covered a large proportion of the summer months with many of the City's attractions and facilities once again welcoming tourists and residents through their doors. Despite some ongoing restrictions during the early part of the quarter, the majority of services were able to re-open and able to capitalise on additional footfall in the City owing to staycations. In particular there was strong demand for all swimming activities across the city's leisure portfolio, consistent with the wider leisure restart across England and Wales and in some cases exceeding pre-covid income levels. However, more disappointingly fitness activity and membership are not rebuilding as quickly and is currently operating at around 75% income compared to pre-covid trading.
- 4.3.16 The response for outdoor activities soared during the summer months, with record participation numbers attending activities across the destination area, within parks and open spaces throughout the period. In order to meet the demands, the Council took a decision to extend lifeguarded beaches into September in partnership with the RNLI, as well as extending operating periods for the outdoor leisure attractions such as Blackpill Lido through to the last weekend of September. A decision which was welcomed by visitors and residents alike, who attended in significant numbers in good weather.
- 4.3.17 The Sport and Health Teams delivered a summer programme of 2021 that had added significance and importance as it was delivered during a period of the Covid pandemic whereby restrictions were easing and the public had both a huge appetite for participation in healthy activity alongside some trepidation that activities would be safe and appropriate in these unprecedented circumstances. For the first time, the school holiday programme 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. The team welcomed over 1400 users to over 150 sessions across 21 different venues, including leisure centres, parks, beaches, rivers and canals.
- 4.3.18 Funding sports clubs to use our facilities free of charge or apply for grants for operation of their own facilities has been welcomed and significant uptake on free permits has exceeded 1000 bookings, with an

in-kind value of over £40k. Meanwhile, Clubs that Self Manage their own facilities have benefited from grants of up to £1500, and the Council provided a total of £16k in the period to the end of September. The community development team continued to support the majority of community buildings and centres to reopen safely and successfully, whilst managing demands and expectations for some to be retained as vaccination/testing centres. Within the period, the team were also intrinsic to the facilitation of a community consultation within the Mayhill area, and were key in organising a series of sessions for the community to speak to the elected panel from which significant praise was given by all those involved.

- 4.3.19 The focus of the tourism & marketing report during this quarter was on our digital performance and how it has supported the sector during a period that saw a move to level zero on August 7th. Our marketing has been flexible to the changing circumstances and the 'Make Swansea Bay your Happy Place' visitor campaign has tapped into the public's post lockdown need for a 'feel-good' staycation and has resulted in excellent engagement across online platforms. In addition, our focus to reach families with pets, resulted in our 'Dog Friendly' pages receiving nearly 22,000 page views, up 65% on the same period last year.
- 4.3.20 The highlight of this period was achieving over 1M page views on the destination website visitswanseabay.com, which is a staggering 76% more than in the last 'normal' year (2019). A contributing factor in this was the Council's decision to continue to offer the basic entry level of marketing support for businesses at no cost, which saw the numbers of private sector partners rise from 122 to 189, with an additional 67 new or returning partners. This added to the product offer, improved the search engine optimisation and resulted in more organic traffic, with a big increase in the numbers of visitors from surrounding counties. Our event (Enjoy Swansea Bay) pages also saw 137,000 page views, which relates to the events we supported across the destination and this saw £27K worth of tickets sold during the period.
- 4.3.21 An outcome of our marketing strategy has resulted in positive news for the hotel sector, with hotel occupancy levels for Sept at 84% (+24% from 2020 and +3% from 2019). Hotel room occupancy statistics for July - Sept 2021 are very positive, with July occupancy levels returning to pre-Covid (2019) levels, September seeing an increase of 3.7% and August 2021 seeing an increase of 10% on 2019 figures. More stats like this for the sector will be reported, but it is a good sign that the tourism sector is showing signs of recovery and the investment the council is making is reaching the right target audiences.
- 4.3.22 We launched our Economic Recovery funded Tourism Investment Fund and the early expressions of interest have been positive in terms of the number, but also the schemes the businesses have in mind to continue to adapt and improve their own product offer. Whilst it may be too early to be overly optimistic, the early signs of recovery are positive for the

remainder this year, 2022 and beyond. A planned busy summer events programme for 2022 will also help to support recovery of and for the tourism sector.

- 4.3.23 Quarter 2 has seen the reopening of the outdoor events sector with Covid mitigation in place and significant challenges with resources - both human resources and infrastructure supply. Singleton Park once again played host to several major events including Catfish and the Bottlemen, Olly Murs and The Foals with just under 40,000 people able to enjoy live music outdoors once more. This has also helped support the recovery of the tourism and hospitality sector by filling bed spaces, pre and post event food and beverage as well as other sectors such as transport and hopefully generally more footfall in the city centre.
- 4.3.24 In trying to reintroduce events safely and restore community confidence, the Events Team focused its efforts on 5 new events during August and September and Parks Fest saw family fun-days, films and live music taking place in five of our community parks. Mid-September saw the first live running event in Wales when just over 3,000 runners took their places on Oystermouth Road, dressed in leggings and colourful tops, for the Council's 80s-themed 40th anniversary Swansea Bay 10k event.
- 4.3.25 Financial support allocated from the Council's ERF fund has meant that small scale parks lettings and hires have been free and will continue to be so until March 31st 2022. This has enabled a range of community and small scale business operators to have new and suitable outdoor space to continue their business activity through increasing capacity and supporting their recovery.
- 4.3.26 Work has progressed to map out and plan for the opening of the new events spaces in and around the Arena, with the former Cranes music store being repurposed as a centre for arts activity, using new technology and digital skills to support long term input to the area by local creatives and artist collectives. Through the Council's Economic Recovery Fund, we have also been able to offer small grants and support packages to local clubs, artists and organisations to begin to resume their activities, put on events and exhibitions at a time when confidence remained low and audiences restricted in numbers.
- 4.3.27 Work also continued to remodel and present shared spaces and uses in the Grand theatre in preparation for reopening, following Welsh Govt. announcements for further easing. The launch of 'The World Reimagined' - as mentioned in previous updates, has also picked up pace, with workshops and presentations with community groups taking place to recruit artists and community participation, and we celebrated a new Fusion production 'Sanctuary' at the Taliesin, with a film screening of the very real human stories of our communities seeking sanctuary these last ten years in the city.

4.4 *Tackling Poverty*

4.4.1 The corporate plan sets out the Council's commitment to Tackle Poverty to ensure that every person in Swansea can achieve their potential. To meet this commitment the corporate Tackling Poverty Strategy ensures that Tackling Poverty is everybody's business.

4.4.2 *Continued impact of Covid-19 - Tackling Poverty.* The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on those already experiencing poverty and is driving those that were at risk of poverty, into poverty. The Universal Credit temporary uplift of £20 per week introduced at the start of the pandemic came to an end at the start of October 2021 and the furlough scheme finished at the end of September. Changes to the taper rate for the 40% UC claimants who work will be introduced in December 2021, meaning workers take home 8p more per extra pound earned after their work allowance. For some, this will make up for the loss of the £20 a week uplift, although most UC claimants are not working so will not benefit from this change.

4.4.3 The Bevan Foundation report on '*Debt in the Pandemic*' (Sept 21) highlighted that 10% of all households have fallen behind on a bill between January and May 21 and over the same period 17% of all households borrowed money. The majority of the population will borrow money at some point, but being in problem debt including struggling to make payments, having high credit compared to income, negatively affects people's lives.

4.4.4 Arrears are concentrated in lower-income households: those with an income of less than £40,000 were significantly more likely to be in arrears in May 2021 than higher income households. Renters have been significantly more likely to fall into debt during the pandemic than owner occupiers. Disabled people have been twice as likely to be in arrears over the course of the pandemic as non-disabled people.

4.4.5 'A snapshot of poverty in spring 2021' Wales published in June 2021 found that:

- Incomes are still falling for some: more than one in five households with a net income of less than £20,000 have seen their income drop since January 2021.
- Living costs have increased: 43% of households are spending more on heating, electricity and/or water, 38% of households are spending more on food, and 20% of households are spending more on internet costs. Social renters and households with children appear to be disproportionately affected.

4.4.6 *Employability Support.* The number of people gaining employment through Employability support, supports the well-being objective steps; ensuring that young people are able to access employment, education and training after reaching 16 and individuals are supported to overcome

their barriers to employment through coordinated person centre employability support. More people have secured employment again this quarter compared to last quarter and this time last year. This has been through the employability support programmes; Swansea Working, Communities for Work, Communities for Work Plus, Workways STU and Workways Plus. There has been an increase in vacancies and employment across many sectors. There has been an increase in the number of people gaining employment through Employability Support in the second quarter of 2021/22 (135) compared to Quarter 2 2020/21 (46) and the pre-pandemic figures in Quarter 2 in 2019/20 (81).

- 4.4.7 *Welfare Benefit Entitlements.* The step to help address the impacts of Welfare reform, including supporting people to claim the full benefits they are entitled to so that they are able to maximise their income is reported through the amount of welfare benefits raised through securing rights and entitlements by the Welfare Rights team. The amount of benefits secured during Quarter 2 is £245274.99 a 16% increase on Quarter 1, but a significant decrease on the same period last year. The requests for appeal representation continues to be lower, one reasons is due to the automatic extension of awards of disability benefits and lifting of reviews for sickness benefits due to the pandemic, reducing the need for challenge. This is expected to pick up again once the DWP start undertaking re-assessments. The reduction is also attributed to welfare reform reducing financial increases of additional benefits. The team have had an 87% success rate with appeals during 2021/22 (13/15) and responded to 374 benefit enquiries.
- 4.4.8 *Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit.* The performance indicator of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) average time for processing new claims and processing notification of change in circumstances has decreased compared to last quarter with an average increase of 3 days. The dips in benefits and CTR processing times are a direct consequence of significantly increased numbers of benefits claims and changes in circumstances to process falling on the same fixed size workforce. This is a direct local consequence of the challenging economic environment the poorest in society face nationally and whilst disappointing was alas fully anticipated.
- 4.4.9 The time taken to process notifications of change in circumstances resulting in multiple changes to CTR has improved since this time last year and an improvement on last quarter. With Housing Benefit new claims and changes of circumstance there has been increase in the time taken are as expected recognising the impact of Covid, more customers on Universal Credit and the same team processing Isolation Payments.
- 4.4.10 *Housing.* The Council, along with partners in the housing sector and support charities continued response to addressing homelessness and many people have been supported to find a place to live and many moving on from emergency temporary accommodation into longer-term homes. This time last year there were less family homelessness

presentations due to the suspension of evictions and a hold on move-on from Home Office accommodation. The average number of days homeless families with children spent in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation increased in quarter two to 5 days from 3.8 days last quarter and increased from 2 days this quarter last year. This was as a result of two families in B&B, one for one night and the second family's stay was nine nights due to the availability of suitable family accommodation.

4.4.11 *Skills and Qualifications.* The number of accredited qualifications achieved by adults with local Authority support has increased in the last quarter (178) compared to the same period last year (71), this has been a slight decrease from last quarter (182) although this is due the summer period with increased non-attendance during August which will be addressed in future training calendars. There has been an increase in face to face training provision with infection control measures and online training has continued where possible. Non-accredited training continues with 1552 enrolments onto Lifelong Learning courses during 2021/22, this includes 262 enrolments on digital literacy courses. The non-accredited courses provide a pathway for learners to progress onto further learning and accredited courses. Partnership working between Swansea Working, Lifelong Learning, Employability Programmes and partners has continued offer participants accredited training and qualifications to meet employment opportunities.

4.4.12 *Partnership Working.* The Swansea Council Poverty Forum, Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum and Financial Inclusion Steering Group continue to meet, facilitating networking, sharing of good practice, information, trends, changes to services and new opportunities, encouraging partnership working and collaboration. During this quarter seven Men's Shed projects have been awarded grants, 38 projects have been funded to address Food Poverty have been supported, 13 community projects have been funded to support Period Dignity.

4.5 *Transformation & future Council development*

4.5.1 The Council continues to make progress on the steps within the Transformation & Future Council well-being objective including:

- Delivering the new transformation and recovery programme: Achieving Better Together. The programme has presented an update to Scrutiny. In addition, assurance has been provided through an internal audit.
- The Workforce Strategy continues, incorporating results from the staff survey and feedback from Directors and Heads of Service. Focus groups with a cross section of employees will be undertaken during the next quarter.
- The Integrated Impact Assessment process is now embedded into Council processes and decision-making.

- A new Digital Strategy has been developed and will be presented to Cabinet before the end March 2022. This delivers on the step so that citizens can access more Council services and information on-line. Progress on this is demonstrated through the performance indicator Cust 2a. Cust 2b has declined only because of the unusual spike in online form requests during the same period last year due to the pandemic and restrictions.
- The Council has a detailed action plan to respond to the new Local Government Act. Work on the new Corporate Joint Committees and further emphasis on regional working continues to be a focus.
- Work on strengthening and promoting the Welsh Language continues with a recent celebration of Shwmae Day.
- Performance on staff sickness has been generally improving over the past year and further resources have been allocated to continue to manage this effectively.

4.6 *Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity*

- 4.6.1 To assist the Council meet its Biodiversity duties a full time Planning Ecologist and part time Section 6 officer have recently been appointed - a recommendation of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry. The Section 6 officer will work corporately across the Council and has begun to meet with service leads to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for 2021/23. Other temporary full/part-time posts have been created through grant funding to assist with nature recovery, including a Local Nature Partnership Officer, Communities and Nature Project Officer (x2) and a Volunteer Coordinator - appointment to these roles is anticipated next quarter.
- 4.6.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance has been finalised for Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands, whilst a Fairness in Green Health Policy and a Council Tree Strategy are in the process of being finalised- the latter is due to be reported to Cabinet later this year. Initial meetings have also been held to engage key stakeholders in agreeing the framework, content and timescale for preparing a County Wide Green Infrastructure Strategy and a management strategy for Clyne Valley Country Park. A pilot initiative has been undertaken to map ecosystem resilience in the Gorseinon/Penllergaer area and an overall assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience has been undertaken across the County as part of the PSB Well-being Assessment. County wide ecosystem resilience mapping and mapping of potential locations for tree planting is due to commence next quarter following receipt of grant funding.
- 4.6.3 Grant funding to assist with improved management of Council owned grassland areas and Local Nature Reserves, as well as parks and verges for wildflower planting, has resulted in the purchase of specialist cut and

collect machinery. Additional grant funding has been obtained for a Nature Network Project to enhance and improve ecological connectivity within wildlife corridors and to create a new native woodland site in Penllergaer Valley Woods. Invasive Non-Native Species have been cleared from Ilston Valley and over 2ha mapped for clearance in Clyne Valley.

- 4.6.4 Covid has restricted natural environment awareness/training opportunities, with only a limited number of school field trips/events to Bishops Wood and Seashore Safaris able to be held this summer.
- 4.6.5 A Charter for Climate Change and Nature Action has been prepared and the Council continues to participate in and support the Low Carbon Swansea Initiative including rolling out a carbon retrofit programme and advancing Solar PV proposals on Council owned buildings and land. The Council is also finalising a first submission of benchmark emissions data to Welsh Government which will help inform Swansea's goal of reducing its carbon footprint going forward. Work in progress includes a Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy.
- 4.6.6 The percentage of municipal waste collected and prepared for reuse and/or recycled was 64.57% (data relates to Q1). While the quarterly recycling rate is below the figure achieved prior to Covid (2019/20) it is still above the statutory recycling target (64%) and is broadly similar to the figure achieved in 2020/21 (64.7%).

5.0 Integrated Assessment Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.1.1 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'.

5.1.2 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.

5.2 The report itself has no direct impact on the relevant groups considered within the IIA; however the performance indicators in this report are part of the way in which the Council measures and reports progress meeting its Well-being Objectives as described in the Corporate Plan.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 In the current and anticipated financial environment further discussion and consideration will be required around priorities and target setting for performance improvement as part of *Achieving Better Together*.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A Q2 2021/22 Performance Monitoring Report