

# Team Caerphilly

## BETTER TOGETHER

Self-Assessment Report 2022/23



# Self-assessment Report 2022/23

Section 1:	Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive	2
Section 2:	Introduction	3
Section 3:	How do we carry out our self-assessment? Our approach	4
Section 4:	Monitoring Progress	5
Section 5:	Our Key Learning from 2022/23	6
	5.1 Corporate Planning	10
	5.2 Financial Planning	13
	5.3 Workforce Planning	17
	5.4 Procurement and Information Technology	22
	5.5 Assets	25
	5.6 Risk Management	29
	5.7 Performance Management	32
Section 6:	Other Key Council Health Checks	35
	6.1 Equalities and Welsh Language	35
	6.2 Decarbonisation	37
	6.3 Consultation and Engagement	40
	6.4 Good Governance - how good is the council's governance?	42
	6.5 Regulator Feedback	44
Section 7:	How to contact us	45

# Self-assessment Report 2022/23

## Section 1: Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive

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Caerphilly county borough council is transforming and improving the way we deliver our services, and a key part of this process is the continuous assessment of our performance to ensure we remain on track.

This, our second self-assessment report, provides an important opportunity for us to reflect on the performance of all parts of the organisation over the past 12 months and consider our future direction of travel.

We want our Team Caerphilly ethos to permeate everything the council does, and this is particularly important as we work together to tackle the significant financial challenges that lie ahead over the coming years.

The self-evaluation and understanding we have gained as an organisation has been enhanced through engagement with residents to gather important feedback from the heart of our community. This has been reinforced with our annual corporate performance assessment, confirming our place as a resilient, confident, and high performing Council.

The forthcoming years undoubtedly will require us to flex, focus and facilitate, but we are well-prepared to meet these challenges together and bring a welcomed certainty to the people and place of Caerphilly, as we continue to deliver together as Team Caerphilly.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Morgan'.

**Cllr Sean Morgan**  
**Leader of the Council**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy'.

**Christina Harrhy**  
**Chief Executive**

## Section 2: Introduction

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Welcome to Caerphilly County Borough Council's second annual self-assessment.

In 2021 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act came into law and set out a new approach for how a Council assesses and reports on their organisational effectiveness.

The intention of the legislation is for councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures can improve, to enable more effective planning, delivery, and decision-making to drive better outcomes.

In the Act, there is a duty to keep under review, the extent to which the Council is fulfilling its performance requirements, which reflects on the extent to which the Council:

- is exercising its functions effectively.
- is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.
- has effective governance in place for securing the above.

The Council must publish a Self-Assessment Report once in every financial period, which considers the main learning points, and what it will do to improve upon them. The Self-Assessment Report is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position, to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. This Self-Assessment Report replaces the former Annual Performance Report.

This report can be viewed as the Council's internal assessment for improving its organisational effectiveness.

The Council key messages are framed around the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies as outlined in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 \('the Act'\) Guidance](#), and more information can be found from [this link](#).

## Section 3: How do we carry out our self-assessment?

### Our approach

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The intention of self-assessment is to provide and act on organisational learning and provide an ongoing process of review about how good our performance is, and where it could be better. From this learning we produce a Self-Assessment Report.

We have chosen a range of information to use that will be reviewed to reach our conclusions, such as performance data, complaints, and finance data. Where possible, we aim to use existing sources of information to provide a joined-up approach.

Self-assessment is achieved by using intelligence in an insightful way, reflecting on how we are operating and identifying improvement actions. To inform our self-assessment it is important for us to know the following:

- What went well and why?
- What did not go well and why?
- What impact have we made and how do we know? What difference have we made?
- What have we learned?
- What actions do we intend to take in the next period to ensure that we are meeting our performance requirements?

An important tool in how we assess our performance, is the use of a '**Corporate Performance Assessment**', or CPA, which is a high-level strategic dashboard that includes a range of information to give a 'snapshot' of performance across the organisation. This is compiled from key data reported in several **Directorate Performance Assessments** (DPAs), from which, each directorate within the Council, provides a range of information to keep progress under review, provide knowledge, manage resources, and risks, providing intelligence to answer the question, what are we learning? and what are we doing about that learning?

Using a variety of data sets in one focused output, can help us better understand potential causes and effects of situations, so that data is not seen in isolation, and it can assist the identification of cause-and-effect correlations. It is about providing us with a rounded and balanced view of intelligence across the Council. In addition to the information gathered in the DPAs, we include other sources of information such as:

- Annual Equality and Welsh Language Reports
- The Annual Governance Statement
- Organisational Complaints data
- The Council's Director of Social Service's Annual Report
- Evidence from in year inspection and regulatory sources, including reports from Estyn, Audit Wales, and Care Inspectorate Wales, and other public interest reports where appropriate, although this list is not exhaustive.
- Consultation responses and service complaints data

We have a large pool of evidence around how we are performing and publishing all that data would be difficult to make such a large document accessible. This document seeks to provide a higher-level summary statement that assesses our performance from intelligence gathered through our internal monitoring and assessments in a balanced way.

# Section 4: Monitoring Progress

We make a draft of our Self-assessment Report available to our Governance and Audit committee. The committee will review the draft report and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions.

The Governance and Audit function is to gain assurance that processes are in place and are effective. They can challenge and suggest changes to the conclusions, for example if they believe there is further learning that should have been included.

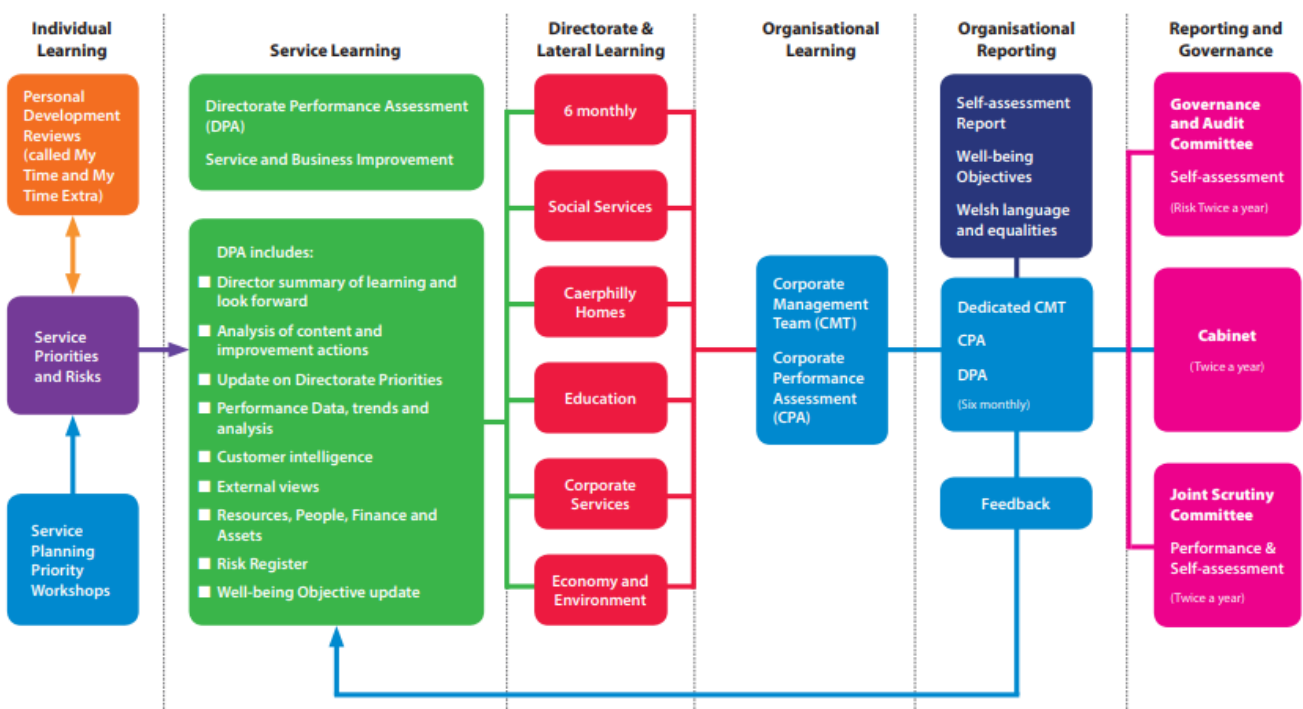
They can also suggest different actions to address an area of improvement and review if these are the right actions for effectiveness. The Self-Assessment will then go to the wider member groups such as Joint Scrutiny for a challenge session prior to going to Cabinet.

The flowchart below shows the system of which most of our information flows through to inform the high-level self-assessment and how actions to take forward within our self-assessment will be monitored.

This year we will also send the assessment more formally to our trade unions as part of the challenge process prior to Governance and Audit Committee.

The Self-Assessment process is noted below, although it is also informed by other evidence as noted on page 4.

**Self-assessment Process**



## Section 5: Our Key Learning from 2022/23

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### Overall Summary from our Chief Executive

**This summary reflects the end of the 2022/23 financial year.**

The last twelve months has been very challenging for our citizens, our communities, and our organisation. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis, post-Covid impact, the climate and humanitarian crisis has made this a very challenging environment in which to operate. The demands for our services and the complexity of those demands provides firm evidence that the civic leadership role of the Council and the services which we provide and enable, are needed more now than ever. This increasing demand, however, is set within a financial climate that over the medium term will require us to deliver more for less and operate differently.

We recognise the Council needs to evolve to ensure it remains fit for purpose and sustainable over the medium to long term. We have chosen not to approach this challenge by simply ‘salami slicing’ our services and shrinking our organisation. We have, instead, embarked upon an alternative approach which focuses upon realising financial savings through becoming more efficient and effective as a Council and re-shaping our services using different approaches, to enable us to continue to deliver the much-needed services, for and with our residents.

This approach is far from easy, it is the largest organisational change programme we have ever delivered. Whilst progress initially was hindered due to our collective focus upon the pandemic and more recently its recovery, through doing the right things we aim to make significant financial savings. There is now a sense of urgency and pace required to make this happen. We need to find around £50m savings within the next 2 years, which is a significant sum in a relatively short space of time, especially when you consider we have already delivered in excess of £100m savings during the period 2008/09 to 2022/23.

Having built the foundations of the new operating model over the last 12 months, the focus is now upon delivery. Evolving our organisation to ensure it is sustainable over the longer term, whilst still delivering the “day job” is a challenge we are juggling. We know we will need some assistance along the way, from both a capability and capacity perspective, but the focus remains upon investing to evolve our services.

The emerging Corporate Plan adopted by Council in November 2023, will bring further focus and synergy to the transformation journey. Binding the whole organisation to a set of shared priorities and outcomes for the next 5 years. The skills, staff and financial resources will become aligned to these shared objectives, providing clarity, and further reinforcing our shared purpose and values. Whilst we have one eye set firmly on the future, we certainly have not taken our eye off the ball with the current challenges and ambitions we have and there have been many achievements with much learning captured and shared along the way.

The Council's Placeshaping Capital investment programme is progressing well. Using Council Capital funding to lever in further funding opportunities, many key projects are progressing, including:

- New and enhanced school developments with integrated leisure, library and community use.
- New build passive, energy efficient, social housing, creating new sustainable communities.
- Integrated public service hubs with health and education.
- New centre for vulnerable learners
- New enhanced tourism destination at Cwmcarn.
- A469 north major repair works
- New Caerphilly market and Caerphilly transport interchange.
- Caerphilly well-being and leisure centre
- New community hubs, providing a one-stop shop access to the Council, informed by local community needs.

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted upon our communities hard, and this has presented itself with a significant increase in demand to the Caerphilly Cares integrated support service. Through this approach we have been able to offer our residents access to various forms of funding and payments, food parcels and over 33 new welcome spaces to access across the county borough. Our free school meals holiday food voucher continued to operate successfully over the holiday periods, bring much needed relief to our vulnerable children and young people.

The humanitarian crisis became a local reality for us this year. The arrival of over 100 Ukrainians to the county borough, seeking sanctuary required us to respond quickly and compassionately. A new team has been created to provide ongoing arrival and resettlement support for our Ukrainian and Afghan citizens to ensure our new arrivals settle seamlessly into our communities.

The impact of the delays and backlogs within the Health Service is impacting our communities too. Overall performance across the Social Services Directorate has been strong despite significant pressures emerging from the NHS in terms of hospital discharges as well as increases in child safeguarding referrals. The number of children in our care has increased over that of last year and this has brought challenges associated with finding appropriate placements within the locality and the associated financial challenges. However, it is very pleasing to see the establishment of a second children's home this year and preparations taking place for a further two homes, to meet the increasing demand, we face across this area.

The replacement Local Development Plan has progressed well over the last year; however, the focus is currently on seeking agreement with Welsh Government on some local and regional policies. This Plan once agreed, will set out the Council's land-based framework for the next 10 years to develop the county borough economically and environmentally and this will be reported on as part of our new set of Well-being Objectives.

The Climate Emergency agreed by this Council a few years ago, has been brought to the forefront of our minds, following the hot summer and wet winter recently experienced. The Council's climate strategy is developing well through a series of "green" projects and a new waste strategy to improve our recycling performance over the medium term.



Our new build social housing targets are progressing well; however, we are currently managing a significant backlog of housing repairs and voids. We have a series of measures in place to address this performance decrease and will be monitoring this closely. Nationally, the housing shortage has been a topic of much debate, through the introduction of a new “empty homes” team, we have brought 104 empty (7%) private sector properties back into use.

The pandemic and its legacy impact can be seen in recent data presented from our schools and there is more information in our year-end report on our Well-being Objective progress for ‘Improving Education for All’.

Our economic performance as a local area and region remains a priority for us and the emergence of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Economic strategy, coupled with our local regeneration and economic strategies will bring further progress in this area over the forthcoming year. Our comprehensive and successful events programme has brought much needed energy, emphasis and cohesion to our communities and town centres over the past year. Our events programme for the next year looks equally exciting and ambitious.

In the last 2 years there has been a renewed focus on the Northern Valleys and taking advantage of the duelling of the A465 Heads of Valleys Road. The opportunities this brings in terms of regeneration, economic development, and improved transport links to residential areas. An initial task force involving all Chief Executives with Local Authorities bordering the area was set up with Welsh Government (WG) and CCR representatives and has been badged as the Northern Valleys Initiative (NVI). To stimulate the private sector investment required to generate additional jobs resulting in growth of vibrant and resilient communities and in Gross Value Added (GVA), the NVI will be targeted in six local authority areas (Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Torfaen, and Bridgend).

In the future the NVI will focus on 3 key areas: Sites and Premises by bringing forward industrial sites and premises that meet current and future market needs, providing financial support to unlock key sites; it aims to help improve digital connectivity overcoming existing barriers delaying fast digital services by providing a financial mechanism for investment into projects that use the best of breed network technologies (fixed and mobile); and in tourism it will explore opportunities for joined-up regional marketing as a visitor destination, enabling infrastructure projects to unlock new or expand existing opportunities.

Projects and initiatives will be focused on de-risking and therefore increasing the probability of other forms of investment both private and public.

Aligned with the CCR’s Regional Economic and Industrial Plan (REIP), NVI will allocate funds from several sources (£50m from Cardiff Capital Region City Deal / 5 Local Authorities with match funding from WG as appropriate). The programme will run over a five-year period with the aim of delivering projects in financial years 2024-2029. Whilst some initial benefits will be accrued during the programme, longer term benefit in the target areas will follow the project delivery.

In summary, the past twelve months has brought significant progress across several areas aligned to our corporate plan objectives. Through our corporate performance assessment and departmental performance assessments, we fully understand and are addressing our areas of improvement.

Our more detailed Self-Assessment based on the 7 Organisational Activities within the Well-being of Future Generations (2015) Act Wales is detailed from page 10 onwards.

The Self-Assessment includes an update against the actions we said we would take to improve on our previous Self-assessment. The colour code key for the progress of our action plans is shown as follows:

Not yet started or too early to report any progress (achievements/changes)	Black
Started but did not progress well – limited or no progress	Red
Started with reasonable progress achieved	Amber
Going well with good progress	Green
Completed	Blue

## 5.1 Corporate Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Overall, our corporate planning mechanisms are sound, we often refresh them when changes take place, however this year our focus was on the development of the new Corporate Plan for 2022-28 and the Transformation programme.

The Council's current Corporate Plan 2018-2023 concluded this year and progress on this is in our annual report, which will be part 2 of this self-assessment.

The new 5-year plan looks to the longer term with the use of data and population assessments combined with asking our citizens what is important to them, we conducted consultation activities to establish what matters to our residents, as a basis of the new plan.

We applied the sustainable development principle to our thinking to develop our Well-being Objectives to improve the lives of our residents and the environment they live in.

The Sustainable Development Principle is based on **five ways of working**:

- **Long Term** – looking at long term solutions without compromising the well-being of future generations.
- **Integrated** – helping other public bodies to meet their goals for the overall good of residents.
- **Involvement** – Involving those who have an interest in the well-being of the area and the delivery of our objectives.
- **Collaboration** – working with a range of people, and sharing ideas and resources, to help deliver the outcomes.
- **Prevention** – understanding the root causes of issues so we can put the right solutions in place to prevent problems arising or getting worse.

Using the above principles is the beginning of the process to develop our Well-being Objectives. We gathered a range of data and asked our communities what they thought by:

- Researching the local assessment of well-being that was conducted on behalf of the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB). Our teams conducted a thorough assessment of five community areas across the county borough using data, population statistics, consultation, and engagement. Caerphilly County Borough Council led on the development of the regional Well-being Plan for the PSB, and you can read more about the assessment in the link [Local Assessment of Well-being](#).
- Reviewing the Labour Party Manifesto, as this details the political commitment of the elected administration for the next five years and held several workshops with the Cabinet to confirm the vision.
- Consulting with our communities as part of the ongoing 'Caerphilly Conversation' to ask people 'what matters to them.' We aimed to reach as many people as possible and paid particular attention to hearing the voices of seldom heard groups. This was both an online and face to face consultation, held in libraries and community places across the county borough. You can read more about our consultation work and methods here [What Matters Conversation 2023-2024](#).
- The Gwent Public Services board has agreed to become a 'Marmot Region'. This means that we recognise that inequality exists in our communities, as identified in the Well-being Assessment and we will undertake actions to reduce inequalities in the

county borough as our contribution to the Public Services Board Well-being Plan. There are 8 Marmot Principles, and we have reviewed our objectives and steps, to see how they contribute towards those principles.

- We held workshops with our management networks to establish what outcomes services could deliver to meet the draft Well-being Objectives.
- Asked our employees what they thought and promoted an online consultation.
- Reviewed other consultations that took place in 2022.
- Asked the Caerphilly Local Delivery Group of Public Services Board partners to consider if our draft objectives supported their goals.
- Looked at data in performance reports to identify what areas to improve upon.
- Once formed, we took the draft Well-being Objectives to our elected members for their views and input. From the activities above we have drawn out five Well-being Objectives each with aspirational outcomes that we aim to deliver across 2023-2028.
- Audit Wales has reviewed the way we set our objectives (within the sustainable development duty) we will use any learning from this to evaluate our work.

The Corporate Plan journeyed through the committee process across October to December 2023 and has now been published.

Other legislative or planning works the Council has undertaken this year:

- The 2022/23 Draft Financial Accounts have been submitted to Audit Wales for the external audit review to be undertaken. Once this is completed, the audited Financial Accounts will be submitted to Council for approval in April 2024 followed by certification by the Auditor General for Wales.
- Social Partnership and Procurement Act, which requires public bodies which are in scope of the Social Partnership duty to seek greater consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions or (where there is not recognised trade union) other representatives of their staff, when setting their well-being objectives. The Act is about working together to improve public service delivery and well-being in Wales. The Act sets out an ambitious framework to use public-sector third-party expenditure to effectively support economic growth and develop strong local communities.
- The Council is currently working with the other 9 Local Authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) as well as the CCR staff in transitioning the CCR to the SE Wales Corporate Joint Committee which will have 3 main legal duties: economic well-being, spatial planning and regional transport planning. The SEW Corporate Joint Committee will help to formalise the region's role & impact through giving it corporate legal identity status but this new legal entity is not about competing with local services or eroding democratic legitimacy – it's about being complementary & understanding which organisations are best placed to deliver at local, regional & national levels.

## Action Update from 2022/23

Last year we said we would;	Progress Update	Status
Implement a new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 by May 2023	The Plan was developed as noted above but delayed in its publication to later in the 2023/2024 year to allow for greater alignment with new introduction of the Marmot Principles.	Good Progress
Publish a new Public Services Board Well-being Plan and Local Delivery Plan by May 2023	This is a regional PSB plan and was agreed at the board July 23.  <a href="https://www.gwentpsb.org">Gwent Well-being Plan - Gwent Public Services Board Gwent Public Services Board (gwentpsb.org)</a>	Completed

## New actions to enhance the Planning process for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
We are launching a new intranet which will aid staff in accessing plans and strategies.	Oct 2023-Feb 2024
We will develop a Performance Framework and reporting for the new Corporate Plan.	May 2024

## 5.2 Financial Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Due to the extended period of austerity and increasing demand for a number of services, the financial position for Local Government has been challenging for a number of years. The Council has a strong track record of delivering savings to balance its budget, and during the period 2008/09 to 2022/23 savings in excess of £100m have been identified to address reductions in funding and inescapable cost pressures.

### 2022/23 Revenue Budget Outturn

For the 2022/23 financial year the council reported a net overall underspend against its revenue budget of £8.331m. This includes schools and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and is summarised in the table below:

Service Area	Underspend / (Overspend) £m
Schools	(5.947)
Education & Lifelong Learning	2.858
Social Services	0.981
Economy & Environment	(0.603)
Corporate Services	2.327
General Fund Housing	(1.128)
Private Housing	(0.233)
Miscellaneous Finance	4.317
Council Tax Surplus	0.420
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	5.340
<b>Net Overall Underspend</b>	<b>8.331</b>

The underspend in 2022/23 was significantly lower than in recent years with net underspends of £38.517m and £37.815m being reported in 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively. This signifies the return of a more realistic picture of financial performance that is not impacted by the significant levels of external grant funding received in recent years in response to the pandemic.

For schools, the 2022/23 outturn position was a net overspend of £5.947m and this means that school balances reduced from £17.2m to £11.3m as of 31 March 2023. At the end of the 2021/22 financial year there were no schools with a deficit balance, but as of 31 March 2023 there were five primary schools and three secondary schools carrying forward deficit balances.

There was also a significant overspend of £1.128m in General Fund Housing which relates to Homelessness and the ongoing cost pressures experienced as a direct result of temporary accommodation (Bed and Breakfast placements). This is a legacy of the pandemic where these costs were fully funded by the Welsh Government in 2020/21 and 2021/22, but the level of funding has reduced significantly in 2022/23. Growth has been built into the Council's 2023/24 budget to meet this ongoing cost pressure and it is anticipated that additional budget will also need to be identified in future years.

## Future Financial Outlook

The Council managed the financial challenges presented by the legacy of pandemic and the subsequent Cost-of-Living crisis during the 2022/23 financial year, but the position is extremely challenging moving forward. The 2023/24 budget proposals approved by Council on 23 February 2023 included total cost pressures of £55.478m. These pressures are being funded through an increase in the Welsh Government Financial Settlement of £22.152m, permanent savings of £4.972m, temporary savings of £6.862m, the one-off use of reserves totalling £15.345m, and £6.147m from a 7.9% increase in Council Tax.

Due to the unprecedented levels of inflation experienced during 2022/23 (Consumer Prices Index (CPI) peaking at 11.1%), the current economic outlook, and the range of temporary budgetary measures that were approved for the 2023/24 financial year, the Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council alongside the 2023/24 budget proposals, showed a potential savings requirement of £48.335m for the two-year period 2024/25 to 2025/26. Following receipt of the 2024/25 Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement on 20 December 2023, the MTFP has been updated again and this now shows an anticipated savings requirement of £66.234m for the three-year period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Given the scale of the challenge that the Council faces, a financial strategy that seeks to continuously salami slice our services and deplete our reserves is not a sustainable or an appropriate approach, especially when the demands upon our services are far higher than ever, as our communities continue to present far greater and increasingly complex needs to us. To ensure we can meet the needs of our communities, whilst operating with reduced finances, a whole Council and a whole county borough holistic approach is needed.

The Council will require new approaches to service delivery, and this is being led by the Chief Executive, Leader, Corporate Management Team, and Cabinet and is being co-ordinated through our 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation and Placeshaping Investment Programmes. It is vital that the required changes are developed at pace and that key decisions are made early to ensure that the projected savings requirements for 2024/25 to 2026/27 can be delivered.

When delivering transformation, the Council will:

- focus on flexibility and finding different ways to deliver what our communities need, when they need it.
- engage with our communities to understand the needs of our residents and provide the right support to meet those needs as simply as possible.
- deliver channel shift across our council services moving from more expensive, face to face or telephone channels to online services where appropriate.
- explore alternative delivery models when it makes sense to do so.
- look at voluntary departure options and as colleagues move on to new opportunities or retire, carefully assess how roles can be managed going forward.
- use our reserves to help balance the budget in the short term whilst change programmes are fully developed and implemented; and
- use our reserves on an invest to save basis to fund one-off costs to deliver changes where required.

The Council's Placeshaping Capital Investment Programme is progressing well. Using Capital funding to lever further funding opportunities, many key projects are progressing, including:

- New and enhanced school developments with integrated leisure, library, and community use.
- New build passive, energy efficient, social housing, creating new sustainable communities.
- Integrated public service hubs with health and education.
- New centre for vulnerable learners
- New enhanced tourism destination at Cwmcarn.
- A469 north major repair works
- New Caerphilly market and Caerphilly transport interchange.
- Caerphilly well-being and leisure centre
- New community hubs, providing a one-stop shop access to the Council, informed by local community needs.

One area identified from the previous Financial Corporate Review from officer feedback is that there is a training need for budget holders to understand the financial regulations, so we will be delivering this in 2024.

### Action Update from 2022/23

Last year we said we would	By when	Progress Update	Status
Strengthen the links between the emerging Corporate Plan, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the TeamCaerphilly Transformation Programme by March 2023	March 2023	This has been delayed due to the ongoing work around developing the 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation Programme.	Limited progress
Undertake a review of the Council Reserves Strategy March 2023	March 2023	The Council's Reserves Strategy has not yet been reviewed due to ongoing work to refresh the Council's Financial Regulations.	No progress
Seek to progress the Council's Well-being and Place Shaping Programme at pace	Ongoing	A number of key projects have been approved as outlined above.  Work is ongoing to define the pipeline of new potential projects moving forward and these will be subject to the availability of funding and individual Business Case approvals.	Reasonable progress



## New actions to enhance Financial Effectiveness for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
Updated Medium-Term Financial Plan aligned to the Corporate Plan and 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation Programme to be presented to Council.	Spring 2024
Updated Financial Regulations to be presented to the Governance & Audit Committee for endorsement prior to Council approval.	April 2024
Undertake a review of the Council Reserves Strategy	April 2024
Training for budget holders is to be rolled out as part of the "Mobilising Team Caerphilly" programme.	To be agreed across 2024

## 5.3 Workforce Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

The Council has a workforce of just over 8,500 employees (6409.36 full-time equivalents (FTE)) including school staff, that provide 815 services to the public. Our workforce, therefore, are critical to the successful delivery of these services. During the pandemic we found ourselves redeploying our workforce to support the delivery of critical services and to introduce new services, and we are grateful for the flexibility of our employees. Like all Local Authorities, we have seen a change in recruitment since the pandemic and we are facing significant challenges recruiting to many roles across the Council.

The report to Council on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 entitled ‘Workforce Capacity and Associated Challenges’ outlined the national difficulties in recruitment (not just for Local Authorities) and also the Council’s challenges. Members consequently agreed funding for a specific Recruitment Team within People Services to focus on marketing and promoting the organisation to prospective candidates; making use of commercial recruitment tools to identify individuals that meet the Council’s needs and engaging potential candidates about the benefits of coming to work for Caerphilly. The Team will also promote more widely the opportunities that exist within the Council across social media and other professional channels, as well as hosting local recruitment events across the Borough on an ongoing basis and strengthen further the relationships with key partners such as Careers Wales, our schools, local colleges, and Universities to engage and encourage prospective applicants as well as developing tailored opportunities to join the Council.

Despite the recruitment challenges, HR have worked with Heads of Service to use some of the opportunities already available to the Council to support recruitment and retention. These include:

- workforce planning
- the appointment of apprentices
- consideration of run through grades
- review of contracts and hours
- introducing market supplements

Whilst there are national recruitment challenges, our employee numbers have increased slightly in comparison to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 as per the table below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Employee Headcount</b>	<b>Employee Full time Equivalent (FTE)</b>
31.03.22	8348	6245.04
31.03.23	8535	6409.36

The turnover for 2021/22 and 2022/23 is provided within the table below:

	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
<b>External joiners to the Council</b>	864	1091
<b>Leavers</b>	765	898

This information does not include internal appointments.

To support the Council to be an employer of choice and also to improve the overall recruitment experience for prospective candidates, the HR team are reviewing and modernising processes, reviewing HR policies and procedures, including the introductions of policies to support agile working, and have revised the exit survey process.

We also successfully recruited 28 Apprentices in 2022/23 to services across the Council and this recruitment exercise will be repeated every 2 years, providing budget remains available.

A Workforce Planning Toolkit is being finalised and will be piloted with 3 Heads of Service prior to being rolled out across the Council. This will assist services to properly plan resources and take account of skills gaps to support future service delivery and should also provide staff with development, which hopefully will also assist recruitment and retention. The Council participated in an Audit Wales Workforce Study which recommended improvements to workforce and succession planning, monitoring and review and this toolkit will address these recommendations.

We are upgrading the HR/Payroll system and developing new modules which will assist Managers to have more control in relation to the recruitment process. This will not, however, allow Managers to bypass the agreed safe recruitment process. The induction and onboarding process for employees is also being updated and modernised. The opportunity for data provision as a result of this upgrade will undoubtedly be of benefit to managers to consider their current and future employee resource requirements.

A Workforce Development Strategy 2021–24 and an Employee Well-being Strategy 2021-24 are in place. Both have an action plan which are reported in accordance with the governance within the strategies.

It has been identified within the Council's Risk Register that Resilience and Well-being of staff is a medium risk as staff have had to respond to the impacts of the pandemic, the Programme for Government, the war in Ukraine and, more recently the Cost-of-Living crisis. Expectation continues to rise, and the Council's resources are extremely stretched at present.

We have procured a dedicated Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) designed to support employees with their mental health and well-being. HR have also developed a dedicated resource on the intranet in relation to external well-being support that staff can access. This will be further developed with support from Communications when the new digital workspace is introduced.

We also introduced a staff benefits scheme which sits alongside the longstanding salary sacrifice car and cycle to work schemes, each of which offers a benefit to employees should they wish to take advantage of them. We collated information about a wide range of resources for staff, many of whom are residents, to assist with cost-of-living increases which are detailed on dedicated web pages.

The opportunity to work part time in posts across the Council's structure, is supported by an array of family friendly policies that offer employees the opportunity to find a balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities. Our Gender Pay Gap reported each March to date has confirmed that our situation is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. Research has shown that caring responsibilities and part time jobs continue to be shared/occupied unequally and that it is women who are predominantly drawn to part time jobs.

It is important to note that the Council's gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work but is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

The tables below provide a breakdown of the sex and age range of the workforce as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 2023:

	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>
	Headcount	Full-time equivalent	Headcount	Full-time equivalent
<b>Female</b>	6108	4373.86	6210	4485.18
<b>Male</b>	2239	1871.18	2324	1924.18
<b>Unspecified</b>	1	0	1	0

<b>Dates</b>	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Council Total</b>	<b>Council Total</b>
16-22	78	131	78	119	156	250
21-30	759	771	356	383	1115	1154
31-40	1436	1500	434	430	1870	1930
41-50	1653	1624	507	512	2160	2136
51-60	1613	1610	605	608	2219	2219
61-65	407	411	190	199	597	610
65+	162	163	69	73	231	236

There is 1 unspecified in the age range 51 – 60 in both years.

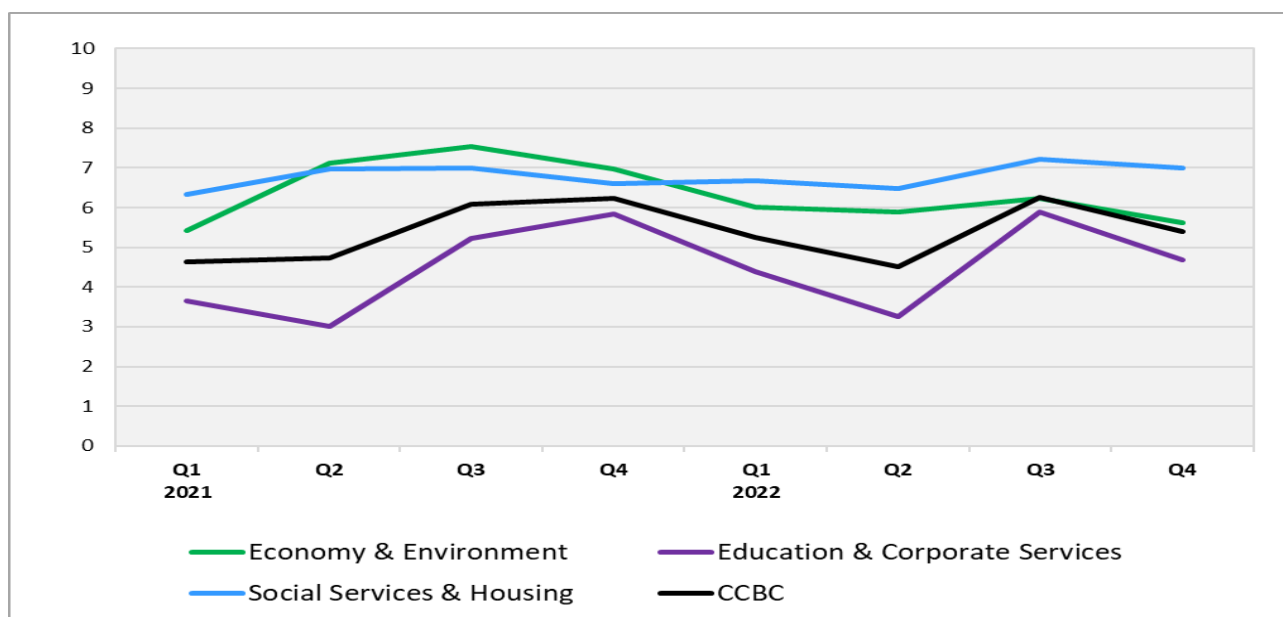
Turning to sickness absence, in 2021/22 we reported an increase in sickness absence rates to 14.12 FTE days lost per employee. This increase reflected the national picture for Welsh Local Authorities. For 2022 / 23 we reported a slight decrease in FTE days lost per employee to 13.92 and were in a minority of Welsh Local Authorities to do so.

Whilst it is pleasing that the FTE days lost per employee has reduced slightly, it is acknowledged that this absence level needs to reduce much more. High sickness absence levels can not only impact on service delivery, but also on the well-being of employees at work. It has to be understood that high numbers of our employees are dealing with serious matters in their personal lives that impact on their well-being, leading to personal stress being the number one reason for absence again in 2022/23. HR will continue to work with Managers to attempt to reduce sickness absence levels and engage nationally should any opportunities arise to support this reduction.

The percentage absence levels for the Council and each Directorate as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 2023 are also detailed below:

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>% Absence level 2022</b>	<b>% Absence level 2023</b>
Economy & Environment	6.86	5.97
Education & Corporate Services	4.43	4.40
Schools	4.13	4.64
Social Services & Housing	6.76	6.83
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>5.43</b>	<b>5.36</b>

Graph showing trends of absence levels from Quarter 1 2021/22 to Quarter 4 2022/23:



### Action Update from 2022/23

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Deliver the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024	This strategy is agreed and in place. The action plan within the strategy is subject to monitoring by Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Human Resources (HR) Strategy Group, Corporate & Regeneration Scrutiny and Cabinet.	Good progress
Deliver the Employee Well-being Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024	The strategy is agreed and in place. The action plan is subject to monitoring via CMT, HR Strategy Group, Corporate & Regeneration Scrutiny and Cabinet.	Good progress
Review and modernise the recruitment process	Autumn 2023	Good progress has been made as noted above and we will now work to review and modernise the recruitment process more fully with the new team.	Good progress
Embed workforce planning across the organisation	Autumn 2023	Draft workforce planning toolkit has been developed which is being piloted by 3 Heads of Service. Feedback will be reviewed, and any necessary amendments reflected in the toolkit which will then be rolled out across the Council in 2023/24.	Good progress
*Embed annual apprenticeship recruitment budget. See page 21	Ongoing	*We successful recruited 28 Apprentices in 2022. Recruitment campaigns to be undertaken in 2 yearly cycles.	Good progress

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Embed and formalise agile working practices	Early 2023	HR policies were agreed by Cabinet Dec 2022 The post categorisation now needs to be progressed by Heads of Service with staff so that staff. HR will write to staff to confirm the categorisation.	Good progress
Review our Human Resource Policies relating to agile working	Early 2023	Agile Working Policy, Flexi Scheme & Mileage Scheme agreed by Cabinet 14.12.22. The Annual Leave Policy has an additional cost of £2.459m and was agreed by Council in February 2023 as part of the budget setting process.	Good progress

\*An annual budget was agreed to support the employment of apprentices, with the intention of an annual intake, however following review a decision was made to recruit on an biennial basis and offer a minimum of a 2 year apprenticeship as this provided the best opportunities and learning experience for the apprentices including the achievement of formal qualifications and to position them to be able to apply for employment within the Council at the end of the apprenticeship.

#### **New actions to enhance Workforce effectiveness for 2023/24**

New Actions	By When
Appoint a recruitment team	31.10.23
Develop a Recruitment Strategy	31.06.24
Review relevant HR policies	31.03.24
Undertake a staff survey in relation to agile working, caring responsibilities, and well-being	31.03.24
Introduce the new digital workspace	31.10.23
Migrate the HR / Payroll system to the cloud and develop new modules for recruitment, onboarding & induction	31.03.24
Introduce the new flexi system in line with the Agile Working Policies	30.09.23
Develop and introduce employee service data via the HR / Payroll system	31.03.24
Finalise and roll out the Workforce Planning Toolkit	31.01.24
Introduce a new learner experience and management system	31.03.24

## 5.4 Procurement and Information Technology – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Our Procurement service continues to progress significant programmes of work supporting small and medium-term businesses (SME's). To give the reader some scope of our spend and procurement activity for the financial year of 2022/23.

Title	Financial Year		
	20/21	21/22	22/23
<b>Total Spend</b> ( <i>source Spikes Cavell</i> )	<b>£264m</b>	<b>£251m</b>	<b>£271m</b>
Totals spend with Caerphilly based Suppliers	<b>£55m</b>	<b>£59m</b>	<b>£66m</b>
Total spend with 'City Deal' based Suppliers	<b>£120m</b>	<b>£124m</b>	<b>£145m</b>
Total spend with Suppliers across Wales	<b>£133m</b>	<b>£138m</b>	<b>£162m</b>

The total number of invoices we paid within 30 days was 149,596 (the quicker we pay our invoices the quicker we put cash flow back into our SME's)

To further develop our approach to increase procuring locally, we initiated a project to grow our internal analytics and search capabilities to solve problems relating to supply voids associated with our third party spend. In particular an overarching aim is to ensure that the Council are sourcing suppliers from local and surrounding areas to support our existing Supplier Directory. Using the services of a local SME Technology provider, the prototype will be available in 2023/24. This involves raising awareness and highlighting Council opportunities across numerous social media platforms whilst considering the authenticity and legitimacy of the third parties that may be identified.

Over this reporting period, the Social Value Policy adopted in 2021/22 has resulted in £1.9million of Social Value being delivered (subject to project completion and formal verification). This includes outcomes linked to employment opportunities, supply chain, education, and community initiatives. Staff within procurement continued to work with other service areas highlighting the Social Value Policy and the use of the Themes, Outcomes and Measurements (TOMs) Methodology. The Community Benefits Methodology continues to be utilised within Sustainable Communities for Learning projects (School build programme) and was incorporated within projects during financial year 2022/23 and will be reported upon project completions.

The EdTech programme continued during 2022/23 with circa £16.3 million spend going through the Council's dynamic purchasing system covering infrastructure (£1.4million), end user devices (£11.4million) and teaching learning & audio visual (£3.5million).

In 2022/23 the world emerged from the pandemic, we saw another challenge and disruptor to supply chains in the form of the Ukraine War. This compounded supply chains issues already struggling to recover from the pandemic.

The cost-of-living crisis, European War and Fuel shortages continued to challenge out third party expenditure and delivery of projects continued to attract additional costs of delivery delays due to the escalation of costs and limitations on resources, it is envisaged that these demands and cost pressures will continue into 2023/24.

Staff within Procurement are now working with a Welsh Government and WLGA Procurement Network within a Market Intelligence Expert Group (MIEG) on strategic commodities and categories. MIEG representatives consult with external bodies including the supply chain and professional agencies to collate and share market conditions and intel across five commodity and category areas, namely Construction, Energy and Utilities, Food, Fuel and ICT. This information is then disseminated across the Welsh Public Sector. EdTech which informs the MIEG also work closely with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) such as Lenovo, HP, Cisco to understand product availability and constraints, which help inform approaches with stakeholders within Welsh Government and all Councils across Wales.

Customer and Digital Services continue to work to reduce the cyber threats in an ever-challenging environment and have successfully improved our security stance during 2022/23 and this will continue into 2023/24.

During 2022/23 the Council embarked on a cloud first strategy. We are employing the latest security technologies and tools to ensure the integrity and security of our data once migrated to Cloud Services. 2023/24 will see key strategy systems completing the cloud migration.

Digital Services is simplifying and modernising its Digital infrastructure, employing new technologies to support the Authorities' drive to implement and adopt Cloud Technologies, whilst continuing the consolidation, where possible, of solutions used. We have started to migrate from analogue technologies to Digital, in readiness for the industry shutdown of analogue services by December 2024/25. This is a corporate wide project and Digital Services will manage the migration of its infrastructure, and other areas of the Council will need to manage their own specific needs.

A key objective for the digital and information teams is to ensure the organisation is viewed as a trusted source of information, to adhere to information governance laws when holding and retaining information, during 2022/23 the organisation set protocols for Information Governance within the Council.

The Digital Solutions Board has developed and matured during the past 12 months, this has challenged the business units within the Council on their digital requirements, providing governance over introducing new or updating existing digital solutions. This has worked well but will now be superseded by the Initiative Board. We will continue to raise awareness training for all staff and councillors that started in 2022/23 and will continue into 2023/24.



## Action Update from 2022/23

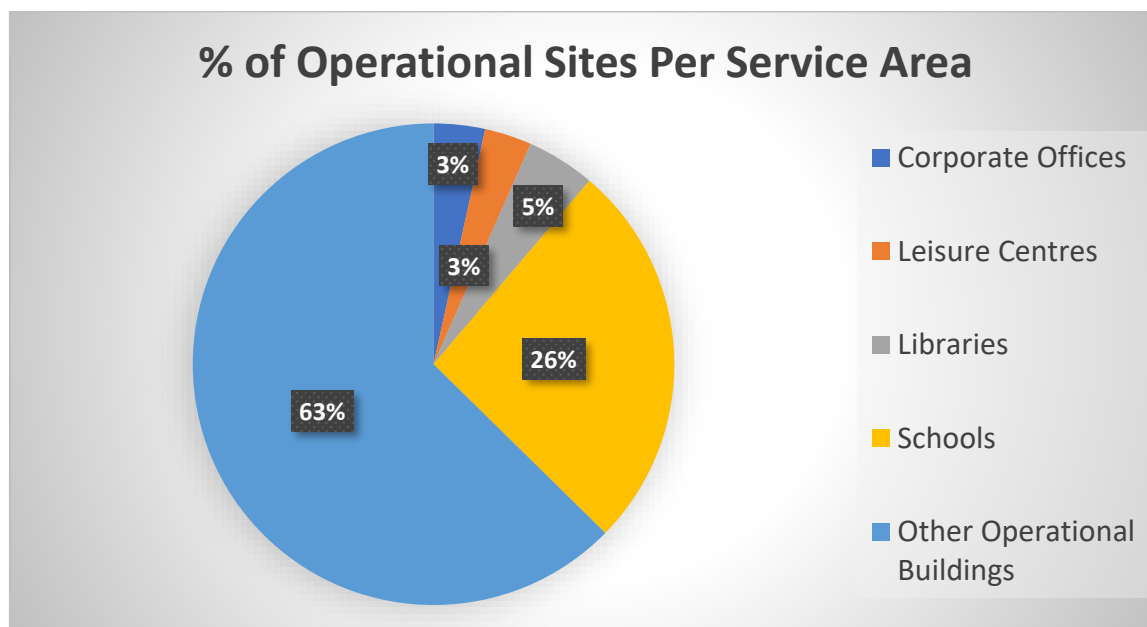
Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Promote our Social Value Policy, publicising and raising awareness of embedding social value across our third party spend to gain benefits for our community from our spending power and to report on the outcomes.	2023	The team continue to publicise and raise awareness of embedding social value across the Council's third party spend".	Good progress
Deploy the changes in procurement legislation as part of procurement reform agenda and the Social Partnership and Procurement Bills.	2024	Social partnership and procurement act is now law however it will not be a legal requirement until the statutory guidance is issued summer 2024. The new procurement legislation will also follow summer 2024 timescales. Until we get the guidance, we cannot say what it will mean for us at this stage. Procurement officers are supporting working groups which support the development and deployment of the legislation.	Not started yet

## New actions to enhance Procurement process effectiveness for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
The procurement function is currently upgrading the e-procurement system which will provide opportunities for innovation and automation within the procurement process.	Spring 2024
Implementation of the UK Public Procurement Act and Social Public Procurement Partnership (Wales) Act and undertake Procurement reform in line with new legislation as and when statutory guidance comes into force.	Autumn 2024
Filling the Supplier Void – 'Live' Supplier Directory	Spring 2024
Deployment of new All Wales Food Contract	Spring 2024

## 5.5 Assets – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

The portfolio is one of the largest public sector estates in Wales with approximately 348 operational sites (excluding Housing / HRA (Housing Revenue Account) These assets are integral to the services delivered to the residents of Caerphilly. Buildings range hugely in age, construction type and condition. and vary from highly efficient state of the art buildings like Islwyn High School to the historic Llancaiach Fawr Manor House, which dates to circa 1500.



(Other operational sites include those managed by Countryside, Early Years, Social Services, Community Centres, Infrastructure, Tourism, Bereavement Services and Sports Facilities. The data is stored per site e.g. a site such as a school or industrial park may have several buildings / blocks but is counted as 1 site).

Our objective is to have “The right buildings, in the right place, operating in the right way, facilitating the safe and effective delivery of Council Service’s”. There is a need to respond to unprecedented austerity measures whilst trying to provide sustainable, quality services to residents and visitors. It is vital that the Council's buildings are well used, operate efficiently and that the portfolio is streamlined where appropriate. The condition of the Council's buildings is regularly surveyed. The latest tranche of building condition surveys were completed circa 2019. The current condition ratings for the portfolio are summarised by service category below:

	A Good	B Satisfactory	C Operational Bad	D Bad
Corporate Offices	4.51%	86.90%	8.30%	0.28%
Libraries	7.77%	85.97%	5.51%	0.69%
Leisure Centres	9.71%	77.60%	12.22%	0.47%
Other Operational Buildings	4.49%	84.30%	9.47%	1.08%
Schools	6.99%	80.03%	12.46%	0.26%
<b>Total all buildings</b>	<b>5.99%</b>	<b>81.50%</b>	<b>11.21%</b>	<b>0.54%</b>

The ratings above are based on WG guidance using the Faithful and Gould method of calculation which includes new grades C+ and C-.

There is a maintenance programme in place with refurbishment schemes undertaken on a rolling basis. Budgets do not allow all backlog maintenance issues to be addressed, but the available asset management maintenance funding is fully utilised each year with projects selected as part of the maintenance strategy. This means that condition survey ratings and backlog maintenance costs are not always reflective of the current condition or the level of required repairs. The works undertaken help raise the quality of the estate and are managed by Property Services.

This table illustrates the estimated cost of the backlog maintenance based on the current survey information.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Priority 1 (Urgent)</b>	<b>Priority 2 (Essential)</b>	<b>Priority 3 (Desirable)</b>
Corporate Offices	£8,103	£793,826	£2,092,079
Leisure Centres	£54,648	£1,222,325	£2,654,598
Libraries	£5,057	£135,027	£337,044
Other Operational Buildings	£389,291	£6,337,519	£7,112,028
Schools	£384,934	£13,920,616	£20,688,458
<b>Total for all sites</b>	<b>£842,033</b>	<b>£22,409,313</b>	<b>£32,884,207</b>

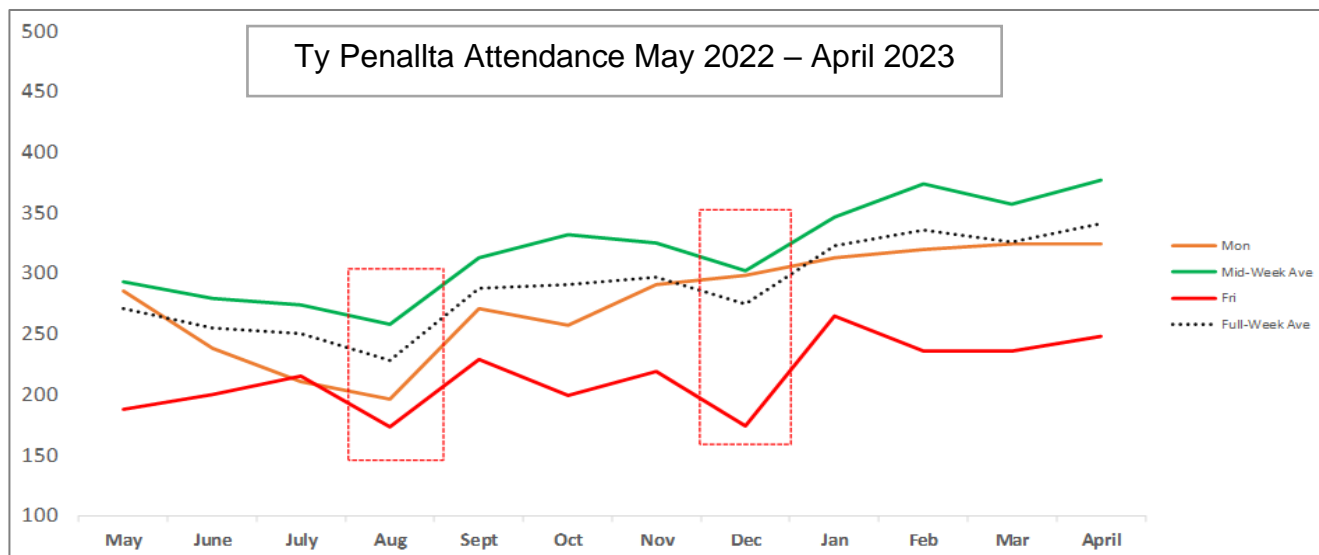
Information extracted from surveys completed in 2019.

Work has continued towards the development of a longer-term strategy with a focus on key objectives which take account of the economic environment. The council has now adopted an agile working policy and has begun the process of reducing its assets with the focus on maximising use at Ty Penallta and the Tredomen Campus.

The reconfiguration of Ty Penallta is underway which will provide more capacity to accommodate additional services, providing the opportunity to rationalise the estate elsewhere. The Tredomen campus will be invested in to create:

- Focused service areas based on a capacity of 30% desk allocation per full time employee.
- Agile working areas and desks to accommodate temporary spells of occupation and overflow from over occupied office areas.
- Hybrid meeting rooms and solutions.
- A café style working environment has been created on the ground floor in collaboration with the catering service.
- A flexible working environment encouraging more informal meetings and collaboration has been added to the first floor.

The physical redesign of the accommodation and investment in the digital infrastructure support the drive to reduce the number of assets, promote agile working and offer the flexible workspace within the main campus. Between April 2022 and April 2023 there has been a steady increase in the usage of Ty Penallta (see below).



It is anticipated that the relocation from other office buildings will now see a further increase in usage between April 2023 – 24 when more services and officers are relocated there.

To facilitate the relocation of office functions from other locations to the Tredomen Campus, building reviews have commenced with focus on understanding the requirements of the service areas occupying each building. Corporate office accommodation combines office and service delivery. Each site may include office space with also service user visits and other facilities. It is possible to relocate office use to the central location, however, it is evident that service user requirements will need to continue within localities. Work is ongoing with services to understand these requirements and identify suitable alternative venues.

Through the council’s ongoing engagement programme ‘The Caerphilly Conversation’, our communities are giving us useful insight into how they feel we should do things differently in future including using buildings for community use and with Income generation as a priority to mitigate against the need for further budgetary savings, whilst ensuring there is still easy access to services for all whether this be online, over the phone or face to face.

This work will tie in and progress with the review of community hub provision to identify viable solutions with potential to provide multiple services from a single location, further reducing the number of buildings the council requires to meet the needs of its residents.

There is also a commitment to facilitate engagement with partner organisations and consider opportunities for shared use of built assets. Exploring the opportunities for shared use and collaboration has been an ongoing key agenda item. Work will continue with the review of the community hub requirements and other opportunities for partnership work will continue to be explored via shared projects and membership of the Public Service Board.

Centralisation with increased use at Ty Penallta and rationalisation of other council assets is a key element to the development of the council’s asset management strategy. There is particular emphasis on achieving challenging financial savings over coming years and an

Agile Working Programme continues to develop these approaches with a set of defined actions:

- Focus on collecting accurate data in relation to assets and review of the property information systems to ensure we hold the correct information to assist analysis, reporting and decision making.
- Full review of processes including policies to cover the management of surplus assets, a disposal policy and an updated Community Asset Transfer approach to be part of the asset strategy.
- Consideration of opportunities to develop Community Hubs to review our face-to-face service delivery points,
- Adoption of a Corporate Landlord model to support efficiencies in management of the assets and property related expenditure.
- Next tranche of the condition surveys to commence as part of the rolling programme. This information is crucial to for decision making and to determine the programme of maintenance works.

### Action Update from 2022/23

We said last year we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Develop a longer-term Asset Strategy and assign resources to the delivery of the strategy.	April 2023	This work has been delayed due to the financial environment and a need to re-focus, and realignment of priorities as a result of Mobilising Team Caerphilly and development of a new corporate plan.	Reasonable progress
Evaluate the benefits of partnership working for a longer-term approach to a single public estate.	December 2022	This work is ongoing, member of the Public Service Board and new 5-year period objectives to be set. Also working with Partner organisations in relation to the asset rationalisation plans and potential shared use of assets and community hub discussions.	Reasonable progress
Introduce agile working policies that support asset management and visa-versa.	December 2022	This has been completed	Completed

### New actions to enhance Assets effectiveness for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
Finalise the draft Asset Management Strategy for approval in the beginning of 2024	Early 2024
Develop an appropriate Corporate Landlord Model	March 2024
Review the operational estate to identify opportunities for rationalisation	July 2023
Review opportunities across the estate for additional commercial opportunities	Ongoing
Review our approach to Community Asset Transfer.	March 2024
Explore more opportunities for Asset collaboration with public sector partners.	Ongoing

## 5.6 Risk Management – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

We have an established Risk Management Process in place. Corporate Risks, which are the most significant risks facing the organisation are captured in the Corporate Performance Assessment. The risks are formally reviewed by the Corporate Management Team on a routine basis and the Corporate Performance Assessment information dashboard is reviewed by Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.

Underpinning the Corporate Risks are a set of Directorate Risks. These are identified and monitored through the Directorate Performance Assessments, which are periodically reviewed by Directorate Management Teams on a quarterly basis, and during 2022/23 were also subject to review through numerous Scrutiny Committees. The Council's Governance and Audit Committee also monitor the Corporate Risk Register, last reviewed in July 23.

This year we refreshed and revised the Corporate Risk Register (in December 2022) and took this to Governance and Audit committee in January 2023. Governance and Audit committee members suggested that the Risk Register show better links to any recommendations made by Audit Wales in their assurance work.

The Risk Register was updated to reflect that suggestion for improvement so that risks are now linked to any Audit Wales recommendations. The recommendation tracker now also links to identified risks, so both are connected. The Risk Register is now kept in Teams so it can be updated more readily as changes occur.

The Risk Strategy and Guidance was updated in 2022. The strategy was not updated this year as anticipated, as the high-level strategy and definitions of risk for example remain unchanged, however, the operational parts of risk such as the guidance (to help for services, identify, manage, and report on risks) will be updated to reflect the changes noted to the template and to reflect the above. Both are available on the Council's intranet.

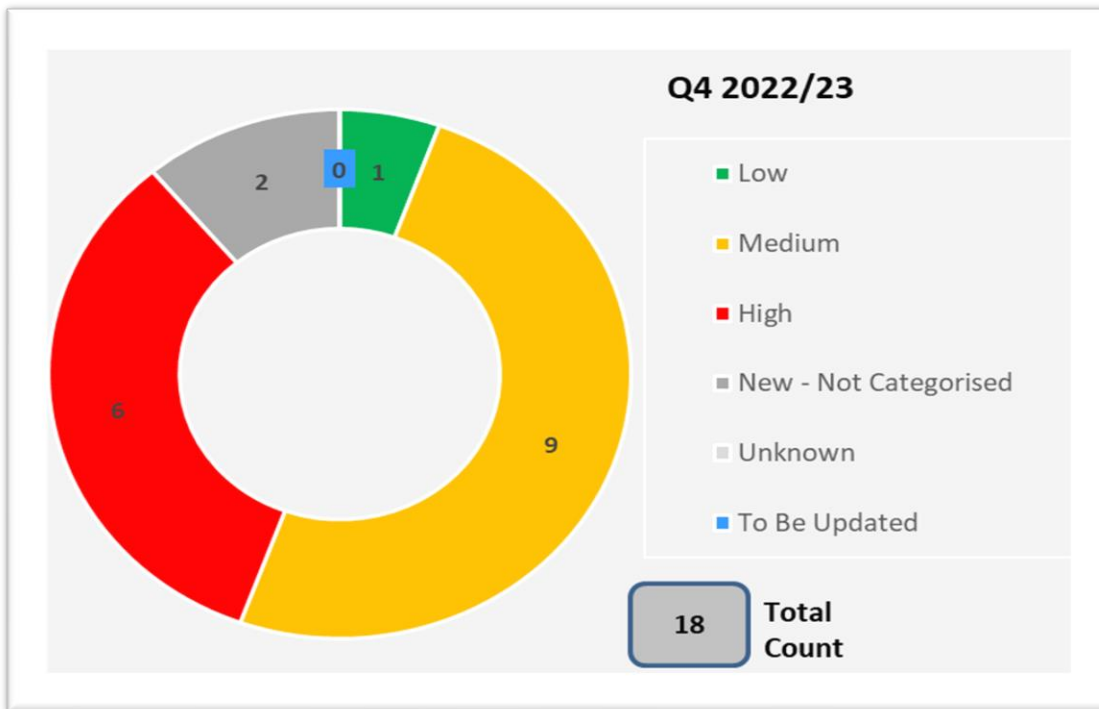
This year we joined the Welsh Local Government Association 'Risk Management Network' which has been set up to support local authorities to improve their risk management activity as identified by feedback from authorities after the first Self-Assessment report. Each session includes a range of peer support followed by specialists' presenters to educate on specific topics like climate change or currently 'reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete' in buildings.

We have not delivered any specific risk management training programme this year, however CIPFA training is being delivered for good governance training to members of the Governance and Audit committee and risk will form a part of this session.

We still need to provide more training and awareness raising of the council's financial regulations, decision making process, constitution, and other areas of governance, to help ensure our employees understand how governance works, however the importance of mobilising team Caerphilly work to identify improvements and financial savings mean this has been put back a little as any changes to processes that come about from the projects may mean it is better to train on new process.

We will be looking to promote a risk-based approach as part of greater use of project management learning in the coming years.

Our Risks at year-end for 2022-2023 were rated as below.



Of the key risks throughout the year, we have been seeking to mitigate, the top ten have been:

1. The impact of the cost-of-living to our citizens.
2. The impact of the cost-of-living to our Medium-Term Finances and the organisation (such as the rise of inflation meaning rising costs to our purchasing of supplies).
3. The pressure on social care.
4. Recruitment and retention of employees and our capacity to recruit.
5. Providing a fully operational and compliant fleet of vehicles and the need for qualified staff.
6. The displacement of Ukrainian nationals as part of the Ukraine war
7. The need to meet national Waste Recycling targets through the implementation of our new Waste Strategy.
8. Impact of climate change and frequency of adverse weather events.
9. Our Housing Supply is not enough for the waiting list of 6,500 people on the housing register.
10. The impact that the pandemic has had on our learners and their educational achievement.

## Internal Audit

Our Internal Audit Section carries out programmes of audits at an operational level to ensure good probity in service areas and schools. A risk based Internal audit plan is prepared and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee annually. This plan considers the inherent risks within a system, process or establishment and other factors such as previous findings, in order to prioritise the audit work performed. The plan is flexed if new or emerging risks are identified.

The findings or individual audits are reported to the service or location managers and escalated to a more senior level where serious weaknesses are noted. Findings and associated actions are recorded and tracked to ensure actions / improved controls are implemented within agreed timelines. Progress on implementation of agreed actions is reported to Governance and Audit Committee on a regular basis.

An annual report is produced for the Governance and Audit Committee in which the overall opinion on the internal control system is reported, and this is also included in the Annual Governance Statement.

### Action Update from 2022/23

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Review the Corporate Risk Register and ensure the process allows for ease of connection between the directorates and high-level risks including the promotion of how to raise risks.	April 2023	The corporate risk register has been updated	Completed
Finalise and submit for adoption, the revised Risk Management Strategy and new Risk Framework following a review of the risks processes.	July 2023	The above action has been completed but the strategy has not changed. We will review this in 2024	Not started
Training Elected Members in risk management, processes, and ways to scrutinise them, to gain assurance of good governance and controls.	September – December 2023	CIPFA training has been arranged for Dec 2023	Reasonable progress

### New actions to improve Risk Management effectiveness for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
Update changes to the guidance as per the template changes. Produce flow charts to show the organisational process 'at a glance' to aid understanding of the process.	May 2024
Support risk training in project management as part of the mobilising team Caerphilly project work.	Jan 2024 - Jan 2025
To further develop a training programme for the Governance and Audit Committee including governance, risk management and finance.	Ongoing



## 5.7 Performance Management– reflecting the financial year 2022/23

The Council has a multitude of established effective performance management arrangements in place, which helps it monitor, report, and scrutinise performance across such matters as:

- progress against Council priorities and strategic objectives
- performance against key indicators
- resource management, including people, finance, and other assets
- customer insight, including complaints and compliments
- and risk management



Our Performance Framework consists of a few levels, a Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) Dashboard, complimented by a series of Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) Dashboards. A 'dashboard' is a visual way of showing different data and information. There is one for each Directorate that aggregates to a high-level dashboard. These are regularly reviewed by the Directorate Management Teams, Corporate Management Teams, Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet. The monitoring flow is shown in section 4 page 5.

The spirit of the frameworks is to provide a balance of collective insight, to mix quality intelligence and quantity. Much of public sector performance can be either numerical, statistical with data or targets, or qualitative such as people's opinions from consultation or complaints. Our performance reporting is designed to integrate both these aspects to provide learning. Our reporting is based on the self-assessment process, with a focus on evaluating, what has gone well, and what has not gone so well and what can we learn.

This year CPA and each DPA was last reported to Joint Scrutiny in July 2023. To support the learning, we held a seminar earlier to explain the above reporting system with our elected members. To build on this we are looking at training that Data Cymru provides that is geared to members in how to read and understand statistics and we think this would be a good activity to research and introduce in 2024/25.

The new Corporate Plan has been developed over the last year and has a new set of Well-being Objectives (see Corporate Planning section). The Plan will go to members across November and December 2023 to approve this for the next 5 years. We will need to set up a performance reporting framework around the new Corporate Plan and set up baseline data so we can show if performance in the chosen areas is improving or not. Our draft well-being

objectives are not aligned necessarily with directorate responsibility but based on outcomes where there is a range of activities across directorates. As such this is likely to be an intensive project as we will want to set up baseline data, any comparators, identify trends reporting frequency and use a simplistic way to visually show this complexity.

In terms of the use of comparators, we use population data and ward profiling, so we can identify for example comparators on life expectancy between the county borough and other authorities, however for performance indicators, Welsh Government revoked the common data sets in 2016 as the data was available via other routes and this was duplication. They are no longer audited and are often counted in different ways. There is no requirement to report on them, although DataCymru did continue to collect them for a time, some authorities did not report on them so there is not a full set across Wales, nor can they be relied upon to provide a quality comparison. We still use the population data for providing context or identifying where we do less well in terms of setting objectives.

We have not been able to progress with automation of data with the use of power BI and data analytics in the dashboards this year as a result of a combination of financial and technical resourcing challenges. Work will be taken forward to try and unlock automation in this area over the next financial year.

### Action Update from 2022/23

Last year we said we would	By when	Progress Update	Status
Introduce a new Corporate Plan and embed into Performance Frameworks July 2023	Summer 2023	See planning comment on 5.1. Framework delayed until Plan completion.	Reasonable progress
Train and equip Members to engage with the Corporate Performance Assessment and challenge performance via Joint Scrutiny 2022-2023	2022-2023	Seminar held.	Good Progress
Further develop and streamline the collection, processing, analysis and reporting of data, using improved Microsoft digital platforms and tools throughout the organisation.	2022-2024	Development has been delayed.	Limited progress

### New actions to improve Performance Management effectiveness for 2023/24

New Actions	By When
Develop performance reporting framework for each new Well-being Objective	June 2024
Develop with the Decarbonisation team the inclusion of decarbonisation data reporting within all DPA's. Build annual reports on progress against the agreed Decarbonisation Action Plan.	May 2024

New Actions	By When
Review the system for reporting the DPA's to members, and to reintroduce DPA's back to scrutiny in terms of managing volume of information	Dec 2024
Research further opportunities for members to take up data training	April 24-March 25
Review the purpose and plan for potential power BI and data automation.	Sept 24

## Section 6: Other Key Council Health Checks

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### 6.1 Equalities and Welsh Language

We continue to deliver against the actions set in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#), focussing on making services as accessible as possible and to engage more with our residents.

The Council's [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) Template is used to ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. The assessment is linked to their respective committee reports so that decision-makers are informed and able to understand the impacts of any proposals when it comes to our decision-making.

Last year in our self-assessment we said that Elected Members would benefit from extra support in understanding the purpose of impact assessments and to ensure that they are adequately scrutinised as part of the decision-making process, however learning and development in this area has been delayed and we need to promote this further over 2024-2025.

We implemented our second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#). The document sets out actions on how we will promote the Welsh language, facilitate the use of the Welsh language, and increase the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough by working in partnership. The strategy can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation.

The [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023](#) showed that we received one Welsh Language complaint during this financial year. The complaint received raised multiple issues, but reference to the Welsh language related to the complainant wishing to only receive correspondence in English. In the response to the complainant, we explained why in some instances the Council must provide bilingual communication and outlined the relevant Welsh Language Standards.

For Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system, there was positively a slight increase for 2022-2023 across all 3 directorates.

Directorate Breakdown 2022-23	Total Staff	Welsh Speakers	%
Economy & Environment	2149	355	16.51%
Education & Corporate Services	4851	1461	30.11%
Social Services & Caerphilly Homes	1929	330	17.10%
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>8535</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>24.60%</b>

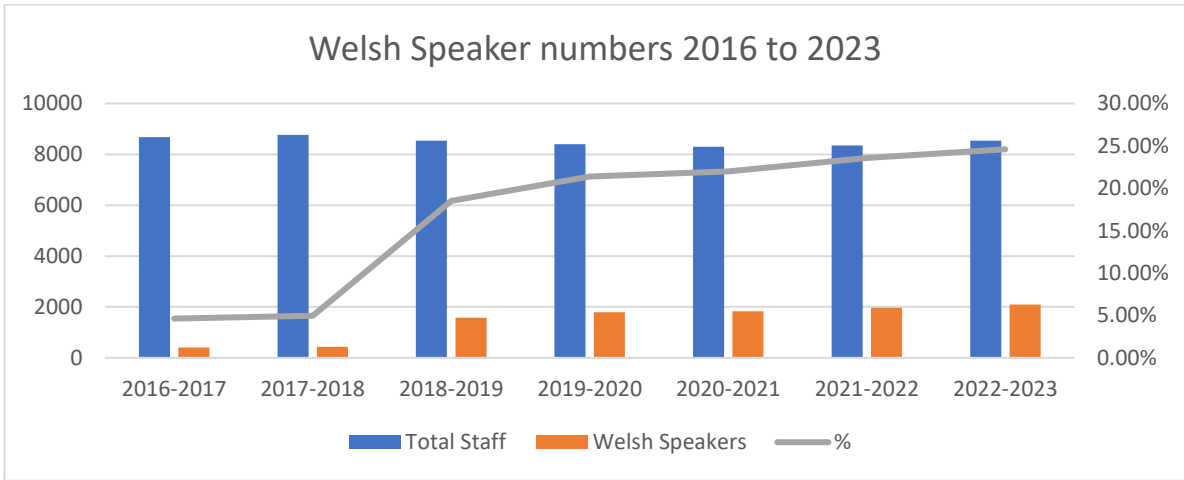
There were 2,100 people recorded with skills 0-5\*, 1,131 were school based staff and the remaining 1,015 are staff working within our corporate offices. The number of staff learning Welsh increased during this financial year to 61. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

\* *The scale is based on the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe)*

**Future focus for 2023/24**

We will undertake a Welsh Language Skills Assessment in Autumn 2023 of corporate office-based staff, to map where there are existing skills and to target training to those who wish to learn Welsh or refresh their Welsh language skills. The data will also be used by recruiting managers to determine new or vacant posts as requiring to be assessed where Welsh language skills are either desirable or essential.

We have recently been working to covert the 0-5 ALTE levels (noted above) to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) levels, which are what the Welsh Language Commissioner recognises. These are the levels that will be used in the WL Skills Audit in the autumn. Overall, we have had steady growth across the organisation as seen below.



In addition to the work on our Strategic Equalities Plan there is ongoing work to improve our recruitment practices to ensure that we are complying with the relevant Welsh Language Standards. A recent report commissioned by the Welsh Language Commissioner identified several areas where improvement is required, and we are currently taking steps to address the recommendations of that report.

**Accessibility**

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that our online communication both web and mobile meet the WCAG legislation, so that people with temporary or permanent disabilities can access our content and not be excluded from any information or service. We have a working group to improve ‘accessibility’ to our online content, acting as champions for accessibility around the organisation. This year we are piloting the roll-out

of a tool, developed by one of our IT accessibility members to help transfer content from documents into HTML. HTML stands for Hyper Text Markup Language and is the language used for creating Web pages and describes the structure of a Web page.

This is important because putting documents on the web can make it difficult for people to access information by opening big documents especially those on mobile phones and may not have access to laptops or PC's. Putting the content straight onto the web means there are no documents to open or download and the information can flow. To address the skills gap to do this, the tool has been developed to allow a regular report author to take their content and put it into the tool that will transfer it into the language of the web and reduce our reliance on big documents that can be inaccessible.

## 6.2 Decarbonisation

We are committed to making Caerphilly County Borough Council a net zero carbon organisation by 2030'. A Decarbonisation Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, containing 122 actions was approved in November 2020 and a Decarbonisation Team was appointed in 2022.

Over half of the 122 actions are either complete, or at least reasonable progress has been made. Some of the corporate and cross cutting actions are behind schedule due to the gap between the approval of the Action Plan and the appointment of a dedicated Decarbonisation Team, but good progress has been made against some important actions to catch up. We now have a much better understanding of the scale of the challenge ahead, and a step change and acceleration is required for the organisation to reach the 2030 targets.

The initial tasks for the new team were to submit carbon baseline data through the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Scheme, to assess the work done to date, and to make recommendations on the next actions required to enable the Council to achieve its target of being net zero carbon by 2030.

Following an analysis of progress, 9 recommendations have been made to enable us to meet the milestones set for 2026 in the Welsh Government route map for Decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector. These recommendations include the establishment of carbon budgets, the establishment of 4 working groups, and specific recommendations on renewable energy production, carbon offsetting and tackling supply chain emissions.

Although we submitted baseline data to Welsh Government (WG) for the reporting year 2019/20, there have been some fluctuations in the figures reported, mainly due to difficulties with obtaining accurate data and changes to reporting methodology and scope of emissions. This means that making comparisons on progress over these years compared to 2021/22 is not possible, however the reporting methodology and data is now more consistent, and it should hopefully be possible to make meaningful comparisons in future years.

For the reporting year 2022/23 Caerphilly CBC reported an emissions total of 103,308,185 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e (22,110,491 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e operational emissions plus 81,197,694 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e supply emissions). This was offset by -7,413,691 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e through our land use, giving a submitted carbon emissions figure of 95,894,494 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e (or 95,894tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

Reducing emissions from our corporate non-domestic buildings and street lighting are examples where good progress has been made. Business travel or grey fleet emissions (the emissions resulting from the miles travelled by employees, during work time, in their own vehicles) have reduced significantly, primarily due to changes in the way that we operate as the result of the pandemic.

53 of our schools now have photo-voltaic (PV) systems installed. The Cwm Ifor solar farm project, a 20MW solar farm development is progressing well with the submission of a planning application anticipated early in 2023. If we progress with an ownership stake in the project, it will be the largest Council owned solar farm in Wales and will generate enough electricity to power around 6,000 homes.

### **Looking Forward – Proposed approach to decarbonisation**

The approach to decarbonisation across the Council will be based on the 4 pillars of reduce, produce, offset and buy as set out in the Decarbonisation Strategy which you can read more about here [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#)

Around 20% of our emissions are “operational” emissions such as diesel used to fuel our vehicles or gas and electricity used in our buildings or street lighting. We have direct control over our operational emissions, and these are the key emissions for us to tackle as a key priority, with becoming net zero carbon on our operational emissions a key primary target.

The largest proportion (approximately 80%) of our emissions are identified as “supply chain” emissions resulting from the goods and services that we procure. These emissions will be much harder to reduce as they relate to the embedded carbon in the materials that we buy or the emissions of our suppliers. We must look to purchase materials with lower embedded carbon and influence our suppliers to reduce their emissions. However, it must be understood that we will still need to purchase goods and services, for example to construct new schools and to deliver social care etc so there will be considerable emissions related to this that we will not be able to eliminate.

Robust low carbon procurement policies need to ensure contracts are appraised in terms of their sustainability credentials and carbon emissions. Within the supply chain the largest emitters reported by the Council in 2021/22 were:

- Social Care; 21,331,517 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Construction; 16,857,359 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e
- Computer, electronic and optical products; 10,395,000 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.

An analysis of data calculates the 2021/22 carbon report enabled us to identify the emissions for each service area against the reporting categories in the WG report, both operational and supply chain. This has enabled us to produce detailed carbon baseline data for each of the 16 service areas across all emissions and offsetting.

To reduce our emissions, we have a detailed understanding of where they are from, and that those responsible for the emissions are also responsible for driving the reductions. It is proposed that each service area is given a detailed breakdown of its emissions in the same format as the organisation reports to WG. Support will then be provided to enable them to fully understand their emissions.

The proposed next stage is to use the baseline data to allocate a ‘carbon budget’ for each service area, in the same way that they would have a financial budget. The objective of this exercise is to empower each service area to take ownership of their carbon emissions and to develop robust action plans to reduce those emissions.



Allocating carbon budgets, with reduction targets will present varying degrees of difficulty for each service area. The emissions from some services are less avoidable than others, and some have more opportunities to offset than others. With supply chain emissions being hard to reduce, the primary focus, initially will be on operational emissions. It is proposed that the carbon budgets are reported as part of the Directorate Performance Assessments. Progress towards the overall Net Zero target will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will be reported on as part of an Annual Decarbonisation Report to be prepared each November.

Other key metrics include the number of trees planted, the number of kWh of electricity generated from renewable sources and the percentage of employees receiving carbon literacy training will be established with targets and timescales. Following the evaluation of baseline carbon emissions by each service area, individual carbon budgets will be agreed, and these will form a key element of year-on-year targets which will be assessed, reviewed and reported on an annual basis.

The following commitments will help progress:

- Net zero carbon considerations included in all major decisions as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment process.
- All new corporate buildings and schools designed to net zero carbon standards.
- All new heating system will transition to low carbon heat with appropriate insulation upgrades where possible with fossil fuels used only as a last resort.
- A low carbon travel hierarchy to be implemented for business travel which accelerates the transition to low carbon transport.
- Aim to plant 300,000 trees where land availability allows between November 2020, and November 2030. While this target seems challenging, we are currently in the process of developing a register of trees planted. At the end of April 2023, we had planted around 80,000 trees. The 5 phases of planting at Ynys Hywel will account for 100,000 trees.

Building knowledge, understanding, and skills, including raising awareness of decarbonisation issues will be vital in mobilising employees across the Council to play their part in delivering the Decarbonisation Strategy. Both general awareness raising and bespoke training for specific roles and tasks will be required. There will also be a need to increase technical knowledge and expertise in renewable energy and carbon reduction technology and processes.

Renewable energy production is an important element of our approach. Specific schemes in development which should continue are:

- Cwm Ifor – 20MW solar Farm near Caerphilly which has the potential to generate enough green energy to power around 6,000 homes.
- Hydrogen – Green hydrogen is seen as an increasingly important element of the decarbonisation programme and bids have been submitted to undertake feasibility studies to inform decisions on its generation and use.
- The installation of photovoltaic (PV) schemes in suitable locations on our estate.
- Other schemes are also being considered and developed, including wind power and green heat schemes.

Emissions which cannot be eliminated will need to be offset. There are two main ways this can be done, carbon sequestration (capturing carbon usually by planting trees or by habitat management) or by purchasing carbon units/offsetting credits. Sequestration should be the primary option. Service areas with high land ownership will need to review land assets to



identify opportunities for offsetting emissions through tree planting, improved land management and carbon sink habitats.

The supply of the quantities of locally sourced native trees is likely to be an issue and therefore partnership opportunities to develop our own tree nurseries are being investigated.

## 6.3 Consultation and Engagement

Effective engagement is central to the Council's decision-making processes and is key in helping to determine how we deliver our services and best support our communities across our county borough. Caerphilly's "Consultation and Engagement Framework" sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement processes across the organisation.

[TeamCaerphilly BETTER TOGETHER Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025](#)

Within the context of post-Covid recovery, the cost-of-living crisis and reduced budgets, effective engagement is more important than ever. Several actions have been put in place to support effective community engagement, strengthen relationships and work together with our communities, to design and deliver services that best meet their needs.

An example of this is the 'Caerphilly Cares' service which helps provide a central place to ensure people receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time by understanding the variety of needs an individual may face. This service focuses on early intervention, advice, support, and signposting and builds on our community resources. Its purpose is to give an 'end to end' journey for the customer, enabling people and communities to become more resilient and prevent people 'falling through the gaps. This is also another form of engagement.

This year we have adopted a new digital engagement platform that allows us to deliver online consultation and engagement in a coordinated way and can be accessed on the link below:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

The engagement platform launched in 2022 provides the opportunity for stakeholders to engage with 'live' consultations, it also provides access feedback to all previous consultations. The website also enables each consultation to be complemented by a range of supporting documentation, videos, imagery and structured surveys where appropriate.

We continue to take a mixed method approach to engagement which helps us to ensure that those who are not digitally enabled can easily get involved if they so wish. For example, as part of the "What Matters" conversation and budget consultation process at the end of 2022/early 2023, alongside our online and hard copy questionnaire, we reintroduced our in-person resident drop-in sessions at libraries and held our first face-to-face resident "Viewpoint Panel" meeting since before the pandemic.

We are working to align and streamline our strategic engagement and consultation activities and to take a more coordinated approach in the sharing of data outcomes from these. We have appointed an “Engagement Project Officer” to provide an additional resource to the Data and Insights team. Our internal Consultation and Engagement working group has been a key tool in supporting the coordination of engagement activities through the development of an action plan and consultation calendar. The group has become a useful mechanism for sharing of good practice, removing duplication, and working together across the organisation.

In 2021/22 the Council became organisational members of the Coproduction Network for Wales, and this continues to support our commitment to working alongside our communities and partner organisations to co-design and co-deliver services.

The Community Empowerment Fund launched in direct response to resident feedback. Elected members are crucial to this process and the fund in 2022/2023 has supported 80 local community projects.

Turning to engagement with the Business Community, the Caerphilly Business Club helps support local businesses by providing a space to encourage innovation, networking, and opportunities to learn. Over the past two years we have seen its membership increase significantly as local businesses recognise the value of association with the club. The board itself brings together leaders in education, skills, enterprise, local government, and law to help provide a platform for businesses to develop strategic alliances. The club holds regular breakfast meetings choosing local hospitality venues to support our members.

In partnership with Caerphilly council, the club are launching industry specific events designed to support local businesses and increase B2B collaboration, mentoring opportunities, advice, consultation, and guidance from leaders in their specific fields of expertise. The Caerphilly Business Club hosts an Expo event and awards ceremony. The Expo gives the opportunity for local businesses, regardless of industry, the chance to showcase their products and services to the wider business community. The Caerphilly Business Club Awards celebrates the success of our businesses and help recognise the diverse and varied industries that call the borough their home.

We regularly visit and engage with many different companies around the borough providing advice and guidance from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Start-Ups through to our large well-established businesses. This includes help with funding and grants, international trade, recruitment, marketing, and advertising as well as planning, inward investment, and relocation advice. Our team holds regular Business Support Clinics both online and in-person to encourage business engagement and support as have links to Welsh government and other local authorities. To give some context of the support (through the UK Government’s UKSPF fund) we have been able to offer local businesses up to £25,000 in capital and revenue grants to improve their businesses. In the financial year 2022- 2023, grants awarded to businesses exceeded £805,000. We have also administered several Start-up Grants, of £5000, that have supported embryonic and fledgling enterprises.

In August 2022 we recruited a new Principal Town Centre Officer and later another two members joined the town centre team to support the town centres. The development of the new town centre model during this period was to ensure that our towns become sustainable to support the business community, develop resilience and have the capacity to adapt to

change. The pilot has proved successful in bringing the towns centre businesses together to create a more cohesive environment.

## **6.4 Good Governance - how good is the council's governance?**

Corporate governance is essentially about doing the right things in the right way. Good governance demonstrates accountability and transparency in the actions and decisions taken by a Council and affects all residents. Good corporate governance within public services requires robust systems and processes, effective leadership and high standards of behaviour, a culture based on openness and honesty and an external focus on the needs of service users and the public.

This is the first year that the Council has included a specific section on governance within its Self-Assessment. While the Self-Assessment as a whole can be considered an evaluation of the Councils governance arrangements, there were a number of additional factors not previously referenced that the Council felt should be part of this Assessment moving forward.

### **Decision making**

Our governance arrangements are good. The Council's Policy Framework, Code of Corporate Governance, Performance Management Framework and Constitution explain how we work, how we are accountable and how decisions are made. These documents are complemented by the Member and Officer Code of Conduct, Officer Member Protocol, Standards Committee and Internal and External Audit arrangements ensure the Council operates with integrity, ethical values and within its legal powers.

Governance arrangements are reviewed each year by the Council's Corporate Management, Senior Leadership Team, and Corporate Governance Panel to update the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS It is considered and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

Key governance issues and consideration were identified in the Council's 2022-23 AGS, so in the past year we have made improvements including:

- Continuing to review of our Financial Regulations and Code of Corporate Governance to ensure they are improved and remain appropriate.
- Introduced a range of additional changes to our governance because of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- Carried out a significant programme of Member Induction following the Local Government Election to ensure new Members could engage effectively in the decision-making process.
- Making major changes to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee, including updating their terms of reference and recruiting additional lay members to the Committee, one of which now chairs the Committee.
- Installing the infrastructure to hold Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings virtually, recording and making them available on the Council's website for the public to access in order to make decision making more accessible and transparent.
- Continuing the implementation of an extensive training and development programme for elected Members that includes (Chairing Training? Scrutiny Training?)

- Continuing to revise and update the Council’s constitution to enhance and improve decision-making arrangements across the Council.

## Involvement in decision-making

Consultation with our residents and businesses is good. The Council has an Engagement Team that ensure that the Council is able to consult on relevant decisions and policy changes in a timely and effective way. The Council employs a broad range of engagement channels and mechanisms to engage. These range from its social media channels, in person opportunities and the use of a Viewpoint Panel, but centre around a dedicated online engagement platform called the Caerphilly Conversation:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

More information on how to access our consultations can be found on our [website](#).

The Council works well with recognised Trade Unions (TU’s) with clear and regular arrangements for consultation and engagement. Local and regional TU representatives meet HR officers at least monthly with other officers brought in as necessary. The relevant Cabinet members also attend TU meetings so that representatives can talk to them directly. All HR policy reviews are done with full consultation with TU’s. There is a separate Joint Consultative Committee in place for schools.

TU representatives play an important role in decision making and organisational change. They contribute different ideas and perspectives and support their members at meetings which focus on the workforce impacts of any changes.

Engagement with regulators is strong and systematic. Regular Engagement meetings take place between regulators and senior officers in the Council to discuss regulators’ work and the council’s improvement plans. An annual Audit and Risk Assurance workshop is also held with the Councils Regulators, Cabinet and Corporate Management Team.

## What will we do to improve?

New Actions	By When
Seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making by refining the Council’s approach to Scrutiny, procedures for handling Notices of Motion, the number of Questions that can be asked verbally at full Council Meetings and the introduction of a Ward Protocol for Members	March 2025
Continue to improve the use of Hybrid Meeting technology in Committee Rooms outside of the Council Chamber as well as the capability to Live Stream from meetings beyond the Chamber	March 2025
Undertake bespoke training for new Members to help improve their understanding of the Constitution and its role in decision-making as well as improve meeting conduct	March 2025
Continue to enhance the Council’s online engagement platform The Caerphilly Conversation.	March 2025

New Actions	By When
Monitoring the challenges facing our services (including outsourced services) as a result of rising prices, supply chain issues and staffing issues.	March 2025

## 6.5 Regulator Feedback

Each year our regulator Audit Wales, sets out their programme of work following a mutual workshop called the Assurance, Risk and Audit workshop with the leaders of the Council and other regulators from Education and Social services.

The Assurance and Risk Assessment Project is to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

- This determines their work programme for the year. For the year of 2022/23 the following work has been carried out.
- Financial Position – This is ongoing so there is no final output at this stage.
- Use of performance information – with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes, the report is being finalised so will fall into next year's reporting.
- Setting of well-being objectives, the report is being finalised and so will fall into next year's reporting.
- Thematic Review – Unscheduled Care A cross-sector review focusing on the flow of patients out of hospital. This review will consider how the Council is working with its partners to address the risks associated with the provision of social care to support hospital discharge, as well as prevent hospital admission. The work considers what steps are being taken to provide medium to longer-term solutions. The output is still being written.
- Digital A review of councils' strategic approach to digital, and the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle, the report is due late Autumn 2023
- The Waste recycling review report has been received (July 23) and is available on the Audit Wales website. The overall high-level judgement was that "*The Council understands why its performance has declined but has been slow to address this; and whilst the Council is developing a draft strategy there remain significant risks to its successful implementation*". There were 2 recommendations for improvement that are being acted upon as part of the new draft strategy.

Audit Wales Reports can be found here; [Homepage | Audit Wales](#)

## Section 7: How to contact us.

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Your views and opinions on the content of our reports and plans are important to us. We welcome your input so that we can continue to provide meaningful information that helps inform you of the service focus, ensuring that we are working on the things that are important to making a difference to you, our citizens, and our communities.

You can contact us by:

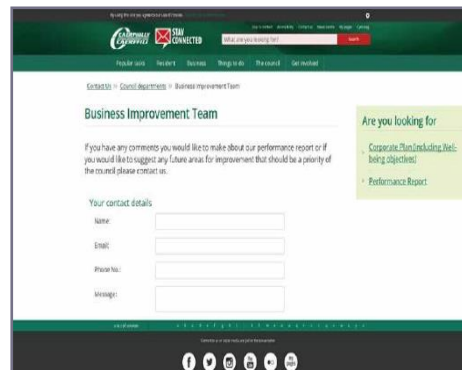
Email: [BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk) or via the Council Performance webpage and follow the instructions on screen.

Alternatively, please contact:

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You can contact us via social media.



This document is also available in different languages and formats upon request.

Further information can also be found on our website: [www.caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk).