

# ANNUAL REPORT

## IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PART II 2020 - 2021



## Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT.....	2
1.2 OVERALL STATUS OF OUR ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2020/21.....	5
1.3 OUR ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2020/21.....	6
2.0 OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.....	9
2.1 RECOVERY AND OPPORTUNITY.....	12
2.2 2.2 SPOTLIGHT ON: GREENLINKS COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICE.....	16
3.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1: WORK WITH AND FOR OUR COMMUNITIES.....	18
3.1 POSITION STATEMENT.....	18
3.2 ACHIEVEMENTS.....	29
3.3 CHALLENGES.....	31
3.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: DIGITAL INCLUSION.....	33
4.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPORT LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH.....	35
4.1 POSITION STATEMENT.....	35
4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS.....	47
4.3 CHALLENGES.....	51
4.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: INSPIRE TO WORK (I2W).....	53
5.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT PEOPLE AT HOME AND IN THEIR COMMUNITY.....	58
5.1 POSITION STATEMENT.....	58
5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS.....	69
5.3 CHALLENGES.....	75
5.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES THROUGH GATEWAYS AND TRAUMA INFORMED SERVICES.....	79
6.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4: TO RESPECT, ENHANCE AND ENJOY OUR ENVIRONMENT.....	83
6.1 POSITION STATEMENT.....	83
6.2 ACHIEVEMENTS.....	93
6.3 CHALLENGES.....	95
6.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: BARRY ISLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL “WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE”.....	97
7.0 WHAT OUR AUDITORS SAID ABOUT US.....	99
7.1 ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY (2019 - AUTUMN 2020).....	99
7.2 INSIGHT TRACKER.....	100
7.3 HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION ON COUNCIL: GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL 2020/2021.....	101
7.4 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/2021.....	102
7.5 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER: END OF YEAR POSITION SUMMARY 2020/2021...	103
8.0 OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.....	108

# ○ I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (LGM) and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA) both place specific duties on the Council in relation to objective setting and reporting duties. Under the WFG Act, the Council is required to publish its annual Well-being Objectives by 31st March and review these annually to ensure they remain relevant and also to report on progress in meeting its well-being objectives from the preceding financial year. Under the LGM, we are also required to publish two documents each year: the first is a forward-looking Improvement Plan setting out our improvement priorities, known as Improvement Objectives, for the financial year ahead (this is our Annual Delivery Plan); and the second is an annual report to reflect back on the performance of that Plan (this is the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Report).

This Annual Performance Report (2020/21) will be the final performance report published under the LGM. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (LG&E) which came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This replaces the current performance provision associated with the LGM and places comparable duties on all Welsh Local Authorities. The new performance and governance provisions in the Act are framed within the wider sustainable development duties of the WFG Act and align to the Socio-economic Duty (which came into effect on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021) and our audit, regulatory and partnership arrangements. The new performance framework requires the Council to keep performance under review, consult and report on our performance through self-assessment, and arrange and respond to a panel performance assessment once in every electoral cycle. These duties have informed the development of our Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22 (reported in October 2022) and the development of new performance management arrangements as we begin work to embed them.

In line with our approach towards a more integrated planning and reporting model, our new Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives for the period 2020/21 (under the WFG Act) and our Improvement Objectives for the same period (under the LGM) are one and the same. This has enabled us to focus on identifying the right steps to meet our objectives to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the Vale of Glamorgan whilst maximising our contribution to the Well-being Goals. We continue to strengthen our internal insight with a focus on the long-term, working better with people and communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and taking a more joined-up approach. This approach is in line with guidance from the Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner.

Our new Corporate Plan for 2020-25, Working Together for a Brighter Future, identified four new Well-being Objectives. These were informed by extensive engagement throughout the preceding year and considered: what our residents told us about our services and their priorities; the views of our partners; our understanding of the local area and the local community; commitments we have made to deliver with our partners e.g. the Public Services Board Well-being Plan and the Cardiff and Vale Area Plan; our annual performance report from the previous year; best practice and what we know works locally; the resources available to us; advice and recommendations from Welsh Language, Children's, Older People, and Equalities and Human Rights Commissioners and our regulators. Through our service planning and performance management arrangements, we have also reviewed the relevance of our Well-being Objectives, focusing on the intended outcomes, achievements and challenges. Through this work, we are assured that our Well-being Objectives are appropriate and also continue to remain relevant to the priorities outlined in the Public Services Board's (PSB) Well-being Plan 2018-2023 and will complement the work of the PSB going forward. Our Well-being and Improvement Objectives for 2020/21 were:

- Objective 1: To work with and for our communities
- Objective 2: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
- Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community
- Objective 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

Alongside the development of a new Corporate Plan in 2020, we have also responded to feedback by producing an Annual Delivery Plan to accompany the overarching five-year Corporate Plan. The Annual Delivery Plan enables us to focus on priorities for the year by detailing the actions that will be undertaken each year to improve local well-being and deliver the Council's four Well-being Objectives. The actions in place for 2020/21 have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders including elected members, staff, partners and residents.

This Annual Review of Performance looks back at how we did on delivering our Well-being Objectives as set out in the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 and is intended to comply with our legal duties under the WFG Act and the LGM as well as providing an assessment of our performance for our citizens. In the report we have attempted to build a coherent picture of how our integrated thinking and planning processes are helping us to take the necessary steps to meet our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and in so doing maximise our contribution to the national goals. Our approach to integrated planning is ensuring that where possible we are connecting our Well-being Objectives to achieve maximum impact. Within the Corporate Plan 2020-25 we have focused on a smaller number of objectives which together form a cohesive package of activity to deliver each of our local well-being outcomes and maximise our contribution to delivering the national well-being goals in an increasingly integrated way. Each objective will contribute to multiple goals and although under each objective we have set out a number of specific actions, we also recognise that many of our stated actions will deliver a range of outcomes reflecting the links between health, culture the environment and economic well-being. This approach is consistent with guidance from the Future Generations Commissioner's Office.

Due to the cross-cutting nature of our priorities and the extensiveness of activities being undertaken to contribute towards achieving our Well-being objectives, we have sought to minimise duplication in the annual report by focusing on outcomes for each individual Well-being Objective. For example, to demonstrate our progress towards, 'To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment' the report highlights performance in relation to a series of planned activities, however, these are not stand alone and should be viewed holistically within the context of our other Well-being Objectives.

Our Annual Performance report 2020/21, incorporates our statutory reporting requirements that include: outlining our progress towards achieving our Well-being Objectives; progress against our strategic collaborations; what our auditors say about us; and how we have used our resources and how we have engaged with our residents. Due to the suspension of our national performance data reporting obligations in the past year, there is limited benchmarking data available to compare our performance. Consequently, we have assessed progress in relation to all our planned activities for the period and have used local performance data where available. This report also provides an opportunity to celebrate our achievements including our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the lessons we have learned and our plans for recovery, as well as an acknowledgement of the significant challenges that have helped to shape our priorities going forward. Confirmation of our Well-being Objectives for 2021/22 are outlined in the Council's forward-looking Annual Delivery Plan which was published in April 2021.

On balance, positive progress has been made in delivering our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2020/21, giving us an overall performance (or RAG) status of **AMBER**. This is contributing to achieving our Corporate Plan well-being priorities and improving the well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens. Our four Well-being Objectives: 'to work with and for our communities', 'to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth', 'to support people at home and in their community' and 'to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment' were all attributed Amber performance status, reflecting the positive progress made under the most challenging of circumstances.

We regularly review our progress and report to elected members and the public on improvements which have been achieved throughout the year, challenges we have faced and how moving forward we plan to address these. Our Well-being Objectives are delivered through our Service Plans, which detail the relevant actions and measures, resources, timescales and accountabilities due to be delivered within the year. Progress in delivering our ADP commitments is formally scrutinised quarterly by elected members and our reports are published online at



[www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk). In line with corporate performance monitoring arrangements, progress against our Well-being Objectives is reported quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and to elected members via Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet, where areas of underperformance are challenged, and remedial actions agreed as appropriate.

This report captures our work amidst a period of global crisis, which started in March 2020. Since then, we have worked hard to keep services running and deliver vital support to Vale citizens including our most vulnerable. We have embraced new, innovative ways of working to deliver for our citizens. Across all services, colleagues have adapted to working differently and employed new technology to ensure the essential work of the Council can continue. We have had to change how we work to respond to the fast-evolving needs of our residents.

Whilst delivery has paused or slowed down in some areas, in others we have been able to make real progress. For example, we recycled 70.8% of our waste which has already exceeded Welsh Government's recycling target of 70% by 2025. The Goods Shed development, one of the first sustainable urban high street regeneration projects in the UK was completed and won the 'creating economic growth award' as well overall 'winner of winners' at the 2020 Ystadau Cymru awards. The state of the art £30.5m new build Whitmore High school opened to pupils four months ahead of schedule. During a year when numbers increased significantly, fewer children looked after (7.8%), experienced three or more placements as a result of our focus on strengthening placement stability. We also increased our pool of foster carers to over 100, which has enabled greater choice and matching for children in care. Nearly 80,000 residents subscribed to the Vale Connect App enabling them to keep up to date with our news and information bulletins. We sustained our reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training for 16 and 17 year olds with performance remaining under 1% (0.89% and 0.62% respectively). Nearly 1,000 council tenants had programmed works undertaken on their homes with a 96% satisfaction rate, ensuring that 100% of our council housing remained compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standards. We advised 2,500 local businesses including new start-ups on how to access funding and business planning and supported 328 new business start-ups and 29 community organisations financially. Since launching our One Stop Shop for housing support in April, nearly 1,000 people (76% of which had never had support previously) have accessed help which has successfully prevented homelessness, enabled tenancies to be sustained, mental health support, employment and employability training support and money advice. We achieved on average, 35% affordable housing across the Vale in all relevant planning applications for housing developments.




The recovery from the pandemic will dominate our lives for some time to come and we have been open in this report where our performance has been impacted by COVID-19 and, where possible set out how we are going to get back on track. The learning from our response to COVID-19, has informed our recovery priorities which are reflected in our Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22. However, we recognise that whilst the impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold these will remain under review and be supplemented as we continue to identify actions to help support our communities.

This report fulfils our statutory duty to report on our performance but more importantly, it provides a holistic picture of where we are and the changes we need to make together to achieve our vision of 'Stronger Communities with a Bright Future'.











## 1.2 OVERALL STATUS OF OUR ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2020/21











**Overall RAG status for the Annual Delivery Plan for 2020/21 is AMBER**











### Our Well-being Objective Summary Status

Presented below is a summary of our performance in relation to our four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and overall performance of the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21. The Direction of Travel provides an indication of the direction of performance when compared with the previous quarter. For instance, where our RAG status (performance) has improved it is indicated by , where our RAG status has remained the same compared with previous quarter it is shown by  and where our RAG Status has declined it is represented with .

At end of 2020/21, the overall performance (RAG) status for the Annual Delivery Plan as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives is **AMBER**. The direction of travel has remained static for all the Service Plan Actions and Performance Indicators since quarter 3. This performance is positive given the ongoing challenges faced throughout the year due to COVID-19.

Overall Actions	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
Annual Delivery Plan		




Overall PI's	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
Annual Delivery Plan		




Overall Objective	RAG	Direction of Travel
Objective 1		
Objective 2		
Objective 3		
Objective 4		
Annual Delivery Plan		

Performance Key			
Measures (RAG)	Direction of travel (DOT)	Actions (RAG)	Overall (RAG) status Well-being Objective
<b>Green:</b> Performance is on or above target	↑: Performance has improved on the same quarter last year	<b>Green:</b> Action completed or on track to be completed in full by due date.	<b>Green:</b> Indicates that we are well on track to deliver the key outcomes relating to the Well-being Objective as set out in the Corporate Plan.
<b>Amber:</b> Performance is within 10% of target	↔: Performance has remained the same as the same quarter last year	<b>Amber:</b> Minor delay but action is being taken to bring action back on track.	<b>Amber:</b> Indicates that at this stage, we are on target to deliver the Well-being Objective, but some aspects need to be addressed in order to ensure we remain on track to fully achieve the Well-being Objective.
<b>Red:</b> Performance missed target by more than 10%	↓: Performance has declined compared to the same quarter last year	<b>Red:</b> Action has slipped with limited progress made and an explanation must be provided including any planned remedial action(s) and where appropriate a revised completion date.	<b>Red:</b> Indicates that at this stage, we are not on target to deliver key outcomes relating to the Well-being Objective as set out in the Corporate Plan.

## 1.3 OUR ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2020/21

The RAG Status below shows the performance for the Annual Delivery Plan Actions and the Performance Measures for 2020/21 and the overall Performance (RAG) for the Annual Delivery Plan.

All Service Plan Actions and All Performance Measures		PERFORMANCE STATUS								Overall RAG Status
		 <b>GREEN</b>		 <b>AMBER</b>		 <b>RED</b>		N/A		
Actions Measures		Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions Measures		Actions Measures
234	156	141(60%)	42 (62%)	0	6 (9%)	93(40%)	20(29%)	0	88	<b>AMBER</b>

Combined total of Service Plan Actions and Performance Measures	PERFORMANCE STATUS				Overall RAG Status for all Well-being Objectives
	 <b>GREEN</b>	 <b>AMBER</b>	 <b>RED</b>	N/A	
Total	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	
390	183 (61%)	6(2%)	113(37%)	88	<b>AMBER</b>




ACTIONS SLIPPED	
COVID-19 Related reasons	85/93 (91%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	8/93 (9%)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related reasons	17/20 (85%)
NON-COVID Related reasons	3/ 20(15%)

## Performance Breakdown by Well-being Objective

### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1: To work with and for our communities




Our overall RAG status for 'Working with and for our communities' is **AMBER**

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 1		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 1
		 GREEN	 AMBER	 RED				
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions and Measures
100	16	61(61%)	12 (75%)	0	1 (6%)	39(39%)	3 (19%)	AMBER

ACTIONS SLIPPED		PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related	35/39 (90%)	COVID-19 Related reasons	3/3 (100%)
NON-COVID Related	4/39(10%)	NON-COVID Related reasons	0/0 (0%)

### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

Our overall RAG status for 'supporting learning, employment and sustainable economic growth' is **AMBER**




Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 2		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 2
		 GREEN	 AMBER	 RED				
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions Measures
41	21	25(61%)	10 (48%)	0	3 (14%)	16(39%)	8 (38%)	AMBER

ACTIONS SLIPPED		PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related	14/16 (88%)	COVID-19 Related reasons	6/8 (75%)
NON-COVID Related	2/16 (12%)	NON-COVID Related reasons	2/8 (25%)



### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3: To support people at home and in their community




Our overall RAG status for 'supporting people at home and in their community' is **AMBER**

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 3		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 3
		 GREEN	 AMBER	 RED				
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Overall RAG Status
63	18	36(57%)	12(67%)	0	2(11%)	27(43%)	4 (22%)	AMBER

ACTIONS SLIPPED		PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related	26/27 (96%)	COVID-19 Related reasons	4/4 (100%)
NON-COVID Related	1/27 (4%)	NON-COVID Related reasons	0/4 (0%)

### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

Our overall RAG status for 'respecting, enhancing and enjoying our environment' is **AMBER**

Actions and Measures aligned to Well-being Objective 4		PERFORMANCE STATUS						Overall RAG Status for Well-being Objective 4	
		 <b>GREEN</b>		 <b>AMBER</b>		 <b>RED</b>			
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
29	13	19(66%)	8(62%)	0	0	10(34%)	5(38%)	<b>AMBER</b>	

ACTIONS SLIPPED		PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
COVID-19 Related	9/10 (90%)	COVID-19 Related reasons	4/5 (80%)
NON-COVID Related	1/10 (10%)	NON-COVID Related reasons	1/5 (20%)

## 2.0 OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The national restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have been necessary to **protect our communities and tackle the spread of the virus whilst limiting the pressures placed on the National Health Service and social care services.** However, there have been wide ranging effects resulting in increased pressure being placed on people's wellbeing. Whether financial, social, educational or health related, there are particular concerns in both the short and longer-term, about the impact that the pandemic is having, and will continue to have, on people across the Vale of Glamorgan.



Whilst the pandemic has had an impact on all lives, there are indicators that suggest that this **impact has been experienced disproportionately by some people, groups and communities.** Many, who prior to the outbreak may have reported good economic, social, mental and physical well-being, will now have experienced hardship. For those who were struggling prior to the pandemic, research and data suggests that their experiences will have worsened as a result.



In February 2020, our initial activity was a **response to the pandemic.** Working together we successfully refocused and repurposed our resources and directed employees to the front line where they were needed most. Our capacity to respond quickly to the crisis has been further supported by our collaborative efforts with our partners, including in the health and third sectors. **By working closely with our partners, communities and volunteers we have been able to maximise our resources and help those most in need during a time of global crisis.**

The achievements below highlight how we have continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020/21 while demonstrating the extraordinary efforts of staff to support the needs of our residents.

## ACHIEVEMENTS



We successfully redeployed staff into a range of business-critical areas such as domiciliary and residential care, our Crisis Support Team and our Neighbourhood Services Team (refuse and recycling). During the pandemic, **168 members of staff volunteered to be redeployed** and approximately **65 staff were redeployed** into new roles.

6,680 children engaged in virtual physical activity challenges aimed at school children with limited opportunities to participate in activity during the pandemic.

3,480 participants took part in the Daily Mile challenge. 2,000 pupils in the Four Challenges Competition and 1,200 pupils took part in multi-sport festivals/ opportunities.

The Community Safety Team purchased **5 deployable CCTV cameras** to assist the Council and the Police in managing hotspot areas such as Maslin Park Barry, Romilly Park Barry, Caerwent Gardens Dinas Powys, Rhose Point and Ogmere. The cameras have proved to be a valuable asset in reducing ASB in areas, or where ASB has continued it has assisted officers to identify those responsible.

In recognition of the dedication of our front-line staff such as care workers and refuse collectors we **awarded a 10% pay enhancement during 2020. We were the first local authority in Wales to have taken this action** which shows our gratitude to colleagues who have worked in some of the most challenging circumstances.

As at 31st March 2021 we had distributed **22,245,236 items of PPE, 12,883 cleaning and hygiene products, plus 109,000 LFD Test Kits.** We also **provided PPE support** to:

- 216 people in receipt of Direct Payments
- 148 unpaid carers
- 19 third sector organisations
- 50 residential & nursing care homes
- 42 domiciliary care providers
- 57 schools and nurseries
- Plus many more local authority front line staff

The Healthy Living team have supported Sport Wales in assessing applications for 'Be Active Wales' Funding from Vale organisations, which aims to support organisations through the Covid crisis and assist with restarting activity and responding innovatively moving forward. **33 Vale organisations have received £224,599 to date.**

We have worked in collaboration with the construction firm ISG, who are working on two of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century School projects, to adapt an existing app **used as a resource by school-based staff to support the safe operation and movement of pupils in our schools.** The app offers general information and examples of how to manage social distancing in a school setting, as well as highlights good practice in a range of classroom scenarios.

Since lockdown commenced (and upto April 2021) **67,000 supermarket vouchers were issued to almost 4,000 pupils to replace meals** normally received at school and to support families during school holidays. Pulling together resources and working collaboratively with other service areas across the Council, we quickly **set up electronic payments for approximately 4,000 pupils** so that payments could be made during isolation and school holiday periods.



Bed and breakfast accommodation continues to be provided for homeless persons in accordance with the Welsh Government Covid-19 Homelessness Plan. **126 hotel rooms now block booked until 30th September 2021.** All clients placed in hotels are allocated key support workers, as well as being able to access twice weekly face to face support sessions at the hotel from Pobl. Since **March 2020, over 517 people were provided with bed and breakfast accommodation.**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

**Partnered with Cardiff & Vale Health Board** to use Vale premises at Colcot Sports Centre as a **COVID Testing Centre** and **Holm View Leisure Centre** as an **Immunisation Centre** which has contributed to reducing spread of the virus and a successful mass vaccination scheme.

Working in partnership with WG, GVS and Age Connects, our Crisis Support Team **called over 6,000 people on the Shielding List** to offer support with food, packages shopping and befriending during the lockdown. We also **supported 157 people to return home** following hospital admission through the provision of PPE to their family and friend support networks.

As a response to the challenges associated with lockdown, in July 2020 we set up the Vale Play Pavilion to support families requiring respite over the school holiday period.

Over 4 School holidays the team provided, 27 days of provision (135 hours) and 540 packed lunches. Since inception, they have supported 60 children and engaged 458 participants, 43% with additional needs.

Continued to support physical activity for deprived children by **loaning 32 equipment bags to 158 children** and distributing **158 physical literacy equipment packs** within Flying Start settings. We also worked with youth services to provide more than **120 sports bags**, increasing **physical activity opportunities for young people** who required additional support during lockdown.

We have continued to raise the profile of volunteering through the Vale Heroes website and **over 2,000 volunteers have come forward to support vulnerable residents in their communities**. We also awarded Glamorgan Voluntary Service a £2,000 grant to support small volunteer groups such as Bro Radio, Barry Round Table, Barry Waterfront Residents' Association, Sully Village Group, Llandow Village Hall and Oakfield PTA.



During 2020/21, the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) carried out **54 Infection Prevention and Control Assessments in care settings** and made **2,098** visits to businesses to check compliance with regulations in respect of social distancing and business closures.

During the pandemic, **28 Officers were seconded from SRS to support Test, Trace and Protect** across Bridgend, Cardiff & Vale Authority areas.

Our Learning and Skills team have worked closely with our Schools to **establish 14 childcare hubs for the children of key workers at schools across the Vale**. These facilities, run by school and council staff, provide vital support to those who are working in key roles to keep us all safe.

During 2020/21 we continued to partner with our schools to deliver improvements in line with the **WG Education Digital Agenda**. We provided **6,500 pupil and teacher devices** to support learning. **Re-cabled 49 schools** to improve network speed and **deployed servers to applicable secondary schools with 38 servers** deployed to our primary schools.

During 2020/21 we **waived all fees related to 416 Telecare alarm installations (usually £59.95)**. Our operators have also **handled 161,371 calls** from service users with almost **1,000 calls** resulting in emergency action (Fire, Police, Ambulance) and **8,084 calls** resulting in non-emergency action. This information clearly highlights how critical the service has been to our most vulnerable citizens and also how technology can play such an important part in allowing people to remain living in their homes independently whilst keeping them safe.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Embraced digital solutions and technology which enabled us to improve quality and efficiency of the care and support services we provide. e.g. introduced the Insight App, which enabled people with learning disabilities to develop their digital skills and access online activities; the See Me project which enabled service users to create profiles about what is important to them through a video which helps to effectively tailor care and support to needs; undertook digital service assessments and statutory reviews; introduced video conferencing between care home residents and their families to maintain social interaction and relationships, increased telecare installations to support safety and independence; introduced video conferencing to maintain contact with service users and sustain their engagement with services; and introduced new online services for users of our Day services and Carer services.

Our PPE team also made over 6,000 calls to care providers, distributed over 106,000 test kits, supported 148 unpaid carers and 157 hospital discharges.

Through the Carers Gateway, we supported carers in our communities to access 1-3 hours of support tailored to their needs, which provided some respite during the height of the pandemic. 20 of our carers who had been adversely affected by the pandemic were able to access additional financial support and 20 Chrome books provided by Welsh Government were distributed to support young carers.



## 2.1 RECOVERY AND OPPORTUNITY

Our [Coronavirus Recovery Strategy](#) is structured around three phases to the Council's management of the pandemic: **Response, Transition and Recovery**. Reflecting on the learning from the response phase, we widely consulted upon and identified a series of recovery themes which have been aligned with the Council's Well-being Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2020-25.

As the Council **moves out of response and into the transition and recovery phases**, we recognise that it is always possible that changes could be reversed and this would see a movement back to a response phase. But as we continue to move forward, we will pursue **a series of 19 strategic recovery priorities, taking advantage of opportunities and minimising the threats** associated with the virus. This work will require **effective involvement, engagement and communication, understanding our partners' issues, working together with the community to focus on the longer-term** while seeking to understand and prevent the root-causes of issues.

The Coronavirus pandemic is likely to have a profound long-term impact on our services, but it has provided an **opportunity to transform services at a pace and scale that would be unimaginable in 'normal' circumstances. It is important that the learning from our response phase is not lost and that we purposely create the next version of normal.** Recovery will be influenced by challenges that at times may impede our progress and at other times present us with opportunities. How we respond to these emerging challenges will be critical to how we manoeuvre our way out of the crisis.

Outlined below are some **key challenges** we anticipate the Council will face over the coming months and years:

- The ongoing nature of the pandemic continues to place adverse pressure on the Council's services and significantly challenge how we fulfil our statutory roles and functions. Against a **backdrop of existing funding pressures, the financial costs of the pandemic are unprecedented in modern times** and it is clear that the financial impact is likely to continue throughout 2021/22 and into future years regardless the path of the pandemic.
- The pandemic continues to test how we operate our services therefore this unique situation provides us with an opportunity to look towards new ways of working and delivering services that matter most to our citizens. The challenge going forward is how we **involve and engage our workforce and our citizens in shaping these changes to transform our services, so they are sustainable in the future**. The scale of transformation required will only be possible with the involvement and support of our workforce and the citizens we serve.
- Digital technology has been incredibly important in coping with the isolation caused by COVID-19 restrictions and many of our services have adapted by 'going online' to limit face to face contact and protect our citizens. However, as we move towards utilising more digital technology, **there is the danger that this could exacerbate the issue of digital exclusion**. We need to be mindful that this movement could potentially disadvantage our most vulnerable and deprived citizens who do not have access to the Internet or the skills to navigate technology and online services.
- The pandemic has meant that the majority of our workforce have worked from home during this year. For some this has been welcomed and provided a better work/life balance however, others have struggled. The most recent Wellbeing Survey which was conducted in May 2021 revealed that the **biggest challenges faced by staff included social isolation, a lack of contact with co-workers and anxiety around the pandemic**. After engaging and listening to what our staff want, we have been clear about our intention to move towards a mix of remote working, blended with office-based work (where appropriate). As we move towards and trial new approaches, **we will need to consider the impact this crisis has had on our staff and support them with their wellbeing ensuring a smooth transition to what will ultimately be a new way of working for the majority of our workforce**.
- We are seeing an **emergence of greater health and economic inequalities and increased need for crisis support and intervention for families including vulnerable children and young people**, as evidenced by the significant increase in demand for these services across the Council. Causes of the increase have been multiple and the impact on children, young people and their families and therefore our services, is expected to be enduring.
- Concerns about the **deterioration in the social, emotional and mental health of children and young people** pre-dated the pandemic, but recent surveys carried out with young people aged 3-18 have shown further deterioration. A **key emerging challenge for schools is the increasing number of children and young people displaying very complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties** which in turn have a significant impact on their ability to learn and to interact positively with adults and peers.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted education and learning at all levels. It has seen our schools repurposed for a period of time to care for the children of key workers and the most vulnerable. It has also seen a departure from classroom teaching to home-based learning, where schools have enabled children to continue with their learning remotely. Although this has been positive, the new approach will not replace the learning time lost from school and **there is the real danger that in the longer-term, educational inequalities will emerge amongst our most vulnerable learners**. The hurdle going forward is how we **re-engage with our most vulnerable learners and best support those who have fallen behind academically as well as those with complex and additional learning needs**. Another issue over the coming months will be how we can best **support the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and teachers, whilst they continue to adjust to new ways of learning and deal with continuing isolation requirements**.



- We expect a **greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs as a result of the pandemic**. For example, recent research suggests that carers' caring hours have increased which has affected their mental health and they are feeling more exhausted as a result of COVID-19. This is resulting in increased demand for care.
- We know that there are links between **age, ill health, mental illness, sexual orientation, material deprivation and marital status associated with increased feelings of loneliness**. There are concerns that suicide rates may increase (as seen in previous international epidemics) as the pandemic continues and longer-term effects on the economy and people become apparent.
- The financial support packages offered by the government have been welcomed in terms of providing financial relief to local businesses. However, this level of financial support will not be available indefinitely and a slow economic recovery is likely to put many businesses and people's livelihoods in jeopardy. We will need to continue to work hard to **stimulate our local economies and secure jobs into the longer term at a time when our resources are likely to diminish**. For example, the retail sector had been in decline prior to COVID-19, and despite the positive progress we have made to enhance our local town spaces, the rapid decline in footfall has been damaging to our shops. Despite the lifting of restrictions, more people have turned towards online shopping, so **shoppers will need some encouragement to return to their local town centres to give our shops, cafes and restaurants a chance of survival**.
- In June 2021, 3,665 people (4.5% of the working-age population in the Vale) were not in employment and in search of work. This figure has decreased over the last few months but there is concern that **the financial impact of the pandemic will be felt by those living in low income households**. The challenge facing the Council is how we **plan for increased demand for our support services such as benefits advice and support, access to new courses/training to develop new skills and employability for those who become unemployed and find themselves in financial difficulties**.
- There is also concern that the **economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be disproportionately felt by young people (18-24-year olds)**. Young people aged 18-24 years tend to be at the start of their working lives and are commonly employed in the hospitality sector, a sector that has been largely shut down during the pandemic. Young people are likely to face the most difficult jobs market in a generation and many will be entering the employment market at a time when jobs are scarce, and competition is high. The challenge will be to work effectively with our key partners to support **the creation of sufficient entry point opportunities to meet the growing demand for jobs**. These challenges will ultimately **impact on how we plan and deliver targeted programmes of support and interventions to our most vulnerable young people in need**.
- In keeping with the national trend, an unprecedented increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has been experienced in the Vale of Glamorgan. **The number of incidents rose from 1,933 in April 2019- March 2020 to 5,555 in April 2020-March 2021, a 187% increase with some months such as May 2020 seeing as much as a 378% increase from the same month in the previous year**. The restrictions imposed during the lockdowns resulted in a large number of residents being reported for breaching the COVID-19 guidelines, and the particularly warm summer weather resulted in several very large gatherings that not only breached COVID guidance but also involved individuals who perpetrated ASB in the form of alcohol misuse, graffiti, litter, noise disturbance and other antisocial behaviour. As part of the Safer Vale partnership we have worked closely with our partners (including the Police) and the local community to successfully mitigate and prevent mass gatherings and anti-social behaviour. **The challenge going forward is how the Council can put in place longer term solutions that will be an effective deterrent to anti-social behaviour while working in partnership with colleagues in Housing, Enforcement and partners in South Wales Police to enforce the measures put in place**.
- Across the UK survivors of domestic violence have reported the pandemic has impacted their abuse and many living with their abuse report the abuse has worsened. In the Vale, we have only seen small increases in the number of Public Protection Notices and referrals issued to victims of domestic abuse/violence when compared to the same period in the previous year but we recognise that domestic abuse is an under reported crime and these figures may not reflect the true extent of the

issue. Whilst people were confined to their homes, they have had less access to support services and networks. Consequently, adults and children at risk from domestic and child abuse may have been left feeling isolated in precarious situations. The challenge for the Council is to **engage with this group of individuals which the Council sometimes finds 'hard to reach' and encourage them to access help and support at an early stage to co-produce outcomes that will help keep them safe and enhance their wellbeing.**

- Now, more than ever, we recognise the importance of our environment and green spaces as well as the negative impact we can have on it. We also know that there are links between poor environment and our more deprived communities. Our **challenge will be to improve engagement across our communities particularly with children and young people to raise awareness of climate and nature emergencies and support a wider movement of change.** We also have to **continue making significant changes if we want to achieve our ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2030.**
- Prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, the Council organised and supported an annual and diverse programme of events which have contributed towards boosting the local economy and increasing the tourism offer within the Vale of Glamorgan. According to the **2019 STEAM survey, the economic impact of tourism in the Vale during 2019 was £275 million, supporting 3,191 jobs.** This highlights the importance of tourism to the local economy and raises concerns regarding the potential impact that the lockdown could have had on Vale businesses. The introduction of restrictions, including stay-local restrictions have also had a direct impact on the events programme in the Vale with all Council and externally organised events either cancelled for the year or postponed. Moving forward, **the Council aims deliver a refocused events programme aimed at delivering safe, community focused events that support the economy of Town Centres, the coast and country parks in line with the relevant Welsh Government COVID-19 Event legislation.**
- The Pandemic struck at a time when the UK was still in talks with the European Union on a potential Brexit trade deal. After months of negotiating, a post-Brexit trade deal was announced on the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020 defining how we live, work and trade with the EU. This came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and will inevitably present immense challenges as we deal with both Brexit and COVID-19 across two fronts. There is **a risk that whilst our attention and resources are drawn to immediately address the priorities arising from COVID-19, our capacity to adapt to policy and legislative changes as a result of Brexit could be compromised.** The workforce pressures in some parts of social services were challenging pre-Brexit. Post Brexit these pressures have been exacerbated as predicted.
- Research has found that during the first lockdown, people were doing more than before to help their community. **Between May 2020 and January 2021, 860 calls were answered by the Vale Heroes Support Team** with the largest number of calls taken in May 2020 (451 calls). The number of calls decreased over the summer and autumn months and fewer people report volunteering when compared to the first lockdown. The challenge will be how we **encourage community spirit and sustain the volunteering** seen across communities in response to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 crisis continues to fundamentally challenge our outlook not only in terms of who and what we value in society, but the way public services can be delivered. Future recovery now depends on how governments and society respond to the pandemic and its economic aftershock. Our intention is to use this crisis to rebuild and produce something better, emerging as a stronger organisation for our residents and colleagues.

## 2.2 SPOTLIGHT ON: GREENLINKS COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICE

Greenlinks is the Council's Community Transport Scheme which quietly celebrated it's **10 years' service in June 2020**. The scheme offers a **demand responsive transport service** to residents of the Vale, providing transport for those who have no access to local public or private transport or those who are unable to access public transport due to physical or mental disabilities.

First established via the European Rural Development Fund (ERDF), the Council recognises the value of the Greenlinks Community Transport Service and continues to support it via Section 106 funding, recently secured until March 2023.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Greenlinks regularly provided **1,000 passenger journeys a month**, catering for up to **350 active members and 25 group members**. In 2019/20, Greenlinks provided nearly **11,300 passenger journeys** (an increase on the 10,069 journeys in 2018/19) and worked with other Council departments and organisations to make best use of the scheme. Greenlinks comprises the use of 7 accessible vehicles, one paid driver and up to 16 volunteers.

In March 2020, the service was suspended as a result of the pandemic however, **working in collaboration with other Council departments**, our driver, office staff and some of the vehicles were re-deployed to provide support for emergency duties such as delivering recycling equipment to residents; delivering PPE equipment to Schools; provision of a bus to the Cleansing Team whilst their own bus was off the road; erecting notices and leaflet drops for consultations. Since July 2020 (to date), the Greenlinks service has also assisted with PPE deliveries and therefore contributed to the delivery of **22,245,236 PPE items during 2020/21**.

During September 2020, in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines, a COVID-19 risk assessed service was re-introduced. Whilst the number of people on the bus at any one time has drastically reduced due to social distancing requirements, it still provides a **much-needed service for passengers throughout the rural Vale** allowing residents to access local amenities such as shopping, health appointments and visiting loved ones at care homes (when it is safe to do so). This type of provision is a **vital lifeline and goes a long way towards preventing social isolation which we know is prevalent in rural areas**. Although the service was suspended once more in December 2020, Greenlinks stepped up again by helping out with the mass vaccination programme, transporting residents from their homes to Holm View Leisure Centre for their COVID-19 vaccinations and ensuring a safe return home. Residents could also access the service for vaccination appointments with their GP if required.

Partnership working has been fundamental to the success of the Greenlinks service, allowing the scheme to have far reaching benefits across the Vale, for example we have an **ongoing arrangement with Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern (DPVC)** which has continued throughout the pandemic. DPVC share one of our vehicles allowing the organisation to transport local residents to the Medical Centre at the top of Murch Road (which has no public transport routes). Before the pandemic Greenlinks **worked in partnership with Social Services** to provide transport for young carers attending respite services and with **Sight Cymru** to provide transport for partially sighted and/or mobility impaired members to attend community groups in the Vale. We look forward to resuming these **collaborations and working together with our partners to assist the community and achieve a common set of goals, when it is safe to do so**.

Recruitment of volunteer drivers is a continual process, **working with partners such Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and Job Centres to bring new volunteers on board** and meet the requirements of the service. Eligible volunteers can also benefit from the Council's Timebanking scheme, whereby they can earn credits for the time volunteered. The use of credits has been suspended throughout the pandemic, but it is anticipated that this incentive will resume when viable to do so.

As we move into our recovery phase, we recognise that the Greenlinks service remains an **integral part of the Council's public transportation plan**, with the flexibility to adapt and grow. **Involving our community, we will continue to listen and respond to their transportation needs enabling residents to live independently in their homes for the longer term.** The use of Greenlinks and other Community Transport services will also be vital to providing passenger transport services where they do not exist, particularly in rural areas, and assisting with filling the gaps where regular bus services may be lost following the fallout of the pandemic.

## 3.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1: WORK WITH AND FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Our overall performance status for this Well-being Objective is **AMBER**

### 3.1 POSITION STATEMENT

We could not reflect on 2020/21 without mentioning the impact that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on delivering the annual commitments aligned to our well-being objective 'work with and for our communities'. Whilst the pandemic has significantly changed the way we work and deliver our services; it has also provided us with opportunities to refresh and transform how we deliver them.

Throughout the year we have continued to work with and for our communities while reflecting upon the importance of effective involvement, communication and engagement to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our community. Moving forward, we will continue to consult our stakeholders, embrace innovation and work with our partners to ensure services meet the needs of the current generation and leave behind a positive legacy for future generations.

Despite the significant challenges of the year, we have determined that on balance, we have made positive progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments that contribute to Well-being Objective 1 for the period 2020/21. This has contributed to an overall **Amber** status for the objective at end of year. 61% (61 out of 100) of planned activities have been successfully delivered. Across the objective, actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for 39% (39) of all planned activities for 2020/21. Of the 39 actions contributing to the Well-being Objective, which have been attributed a Red performance status, 35 (90%) were as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of performance indicators (PI's), 75% (12/16) of indicators aligned to Objective 1 were attributed a Green status with 6% (1) attributed an Amber status and 19% (3) attributed a Red status. In relation to the 3 Performance Indicators attributed a Red status, all of these measures were affected by the impact of COVID-19. Work in relation to slipped actions and indicators remain priority and therefore they have been carried forward into respective Service Plans for 2021/22.

Inevitably, the pandemic has featured heavily in our activity this year, but we want to recognise the outstanding work that has taken place under incredible pressure and at extraordinary pace. We owe our success to our dedicated workforce, our community, partners and volunteers who have been very much on board even before the pandemic began in March 2020. Working together, we have supported each other during a time of crisis, and we have all learned a lot from our experiences.



Despite challenges, the majority of planned engagement activities with Vale communities, service users and partners have progressed where possible, mainly by way of a virtual format, and feedback is being used to shape future service delivery. During the year we have successfully engaged with citizens and stakeholders, especially those that are vulnerable, on initiatives including; an Accessibility Strategy which has informed our school asset renewal programme; a public art proposal at Paget Road, Penarth; future proofing of Additional Learning Needs provision and centralised provision for Well-being and trauma involving a resource base at Gladstone School, managed by Ysgol Y Deri. We also sought the views of citizens in relation to a new Centre for Learning and Well-being at the

Court Road site in Barry from January 2023 and widely consulted with staff, teachers and schools through a variety of different channels to develop our Climate Change Challenge Plan, an emergency plan to cut carbon

emissions across the district and encourage behaviour change. These consultations have informed our proposals and show the difference this activity makes in reaching decisions.

Whilst we did not undertake our bi-ennial public opinion survey last year, the results of the National Survey for Wales published in July 2020 indicate very positive resident satisfaction in a number of areas for example, 88% adults 16 plus were satisfied with the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live and 82% were satisfied with the ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they needed. This performance is consistent with our last survey in 2018/19 which highlighted high satisfaction (98%) with the Vale as a place to live and 87% satisfaction with access to council services. In addition, early findings from the ongoing Well-being survey being undertaken as part of the Public Services Board's Well-being Assessment 2022 (currently live till 19th September 2021) indicate positive satisfaction levels in similar areas. Satisfaction with the Vale as a place to live currently stands at 83% and satisfaction with Council services at 65% (as at 2nd August 2021, there has been in excess of 1,100 responses to the survey).

We have worked hard to be more open and inclusive through our engagement approaches, offering a wide range of accessible engagement tools and processes to ensure that our strategic and management decisions reflect the needs of our diverse communities; however, we recognise that this remains an area for on-going improvement. With this in mind, we have further enhanced our communications hub and proactively promote the Council via a wide variety of media. In addition, we have widely publicised the opportunities available for residents to express their views in respect of any aspect of the Council's business including budget and service priorities.

Due to a franchise change, long campaigned for by young people, this year was the first time that 16 and 17-year olds could vote in the Welsh Senedd election. To promote this change and further engage young people, the Council's Electoral Registration team ran a prize draw ahead of the Senedd election, incentivising young people aged 14-17 to register for their vote by offering a chance to win 1 of 5 i-pads. This successful campaign encouraged 3,239 young people to join the electoral register with 1,969 aged 16 and 17 therefore able to vote in the recent Senedd election and also the upcoming Local Government election, which will take place in May next year. Our Electoral Registration team are keen to visit schools before future elections, once COVID-19 restrictions allow, to deliver presentations and to walk young people through the voting process, alleviating young people's fears of what to expect at the polling station. The franchise change has also allowed our young people to get involved with democracy, giving them a voice and allowing them to vote towards decisions that will affect their future.

Over the coming year, we will continue to engage with communities to support their involvement in a wider range of strategic planning processes, to deliver the agreed improvements for our communities, businesses and the economy. This will be especially important if we are to maximise our resources to enable us to successfully transition from our crisis response to recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Throughout the year we have worked to review our Customer Service Competency Framework with the aim of launching new corporate service standards and behaviours that focus on a high standard of customer service for all customers. Our occupational development team have also begun conversations with senior officers regarding how we further embed this in the organisation. This activity will be continued during 2021/22.

A 'digital revolution' was transforming our lives well before COVID-19, although the speed of the transformation has been significantly accelerated by the pandemic. Technology is transforming the way that many people live their lives, from the way we purchase goods and services to the way we communicate with others. It also presents a significant opportunity for local authorities to harness new and emerging technologies to redesign public services in a way which meets the expectations of residents.



We know that digital technology has the potential to enable the Council and our partners to deliver services in a more efficient, productive and cost-effective way and for these reasons, we have recognised 'digital' as a key enabling project within the Council's transformational change programme, Reshaping. In line with our Digital Strategy 2017-20, we have continued to roll out and maximise the potential of Office 365 and Teams to promote sustainable and agile working across the Council and with our partners. This activity has allowed us to move our services forward, support our staff so that they become more digitally aware and continue to deliver quality services.



Despite these opportunities, local authorities are presented with a unique set of challenges in this field. This includes the ongoing availability of financial and other resources to harness cutting edge technology to deliver services. It is also recognised that there are 'digital skills gaps' in the workforce, the need to adhere to strict data security standards and, most significantly, unprecedented cuts to budgets. We also know that the shift to online, digital services may have had a negative effect on some of our residents who do not enjoy the benefits that digital technology offers because they are digitally excluded, whether through lack of infrastructure, personal choice or socio-economic exclusion. With this in mind, we are committed to equipping residents with the digital skills and technologies they need to enhance their lives and we recognise that there is a continued need to maintain and further enhance our developments post-pandemic if we are to ensure sustainability of key services.

Our Corporate Asset Management Plan is another key driver in ensuring that we implement a sustainable approach to how we manage our assets to support delivery of our Corporate Plan objectives especially in this challenging financial climate. Much of the work to look after and improve our assets is delivered through our Capital Programme, which includes community regeneration projects, a schools' investment programme, a housing improvement programme, a highway improvement programme and projects that invest in the Vale of Glamorgan's infrastructure.

During the year we have continued to use our property and assets to support changes in service delivery for example during the pandemic the Council's Property Section supported the establishment of new services, such as the distribution of PPE. The team have also worked closely with colleagues from the Department of Health & Social Care (Welsh Government) and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board to enable the Council's property assets to be utilised for Local Test sites, Mobile Test Sites and a Mass Vaccination Centre. This work was undertaken at pace and involved significant input from officers across the Council. The relationships that have developed with colleagues across the public sector during this time have been very positive and opportunities for further asset related collaboration continue to be explored.

The local highway network is another valuable asset to our community and during the year we have made excellent progress in delivering our Highway Resurfacing Programme. The continual cost effective use of micro asphalt surface treatments as well as targeted prioritisation of roads with planned maintenance works to arrest any deterioration in their overall condition has resulted in a significant reduction in the percentage of our busy non-principle A and C roads that were previously in poor condition. It is anticipated that micro asphalt surface treatments will continue, ensuring comparable achievements providing similar budget allocations in future financial years.

Deterioration of our highways may also have paused during the pandemic as for a number of months people worked remotely at home and were travelling less due to restrictions on movement. Whilst COVID-19 has undoubtedly had a hugely negative impact on society, it has also reinforced just how much potential there could be for change in how we live, and the ability of society and the economy to adapt. There has been a huge growth in home working, acceleration of online shopping, remote education and a shift to more localised deliveries. The challenge will be in putting in place the right balance of measures and strategies that will build upon the positive changes already made to date in this area. We continue to work collaboratively both locally and across the region to support greener measures that enable a more balanced distribution of public space across the different modes

of transport, promoting active travel within our communities and thereby harnessing its well-known benefits for our citizens and our communities.

We have also used our land assets to make a more positive contribution to the environment through schemes such as reducing energy use, tree planting and re-wilding projects. Working in partnership with the Vale Local Nature Partnership we have introduced an innovative grass-cutting regime to a range of green spaces to create meadow areas of wildflowers. Research has shown that not only are wild meadows valuable wildlife habitats, but they are really efficient at absorbing and storing carbon. Even after the meadow has been cut every year it will carry on absorbing carbon dioxide each time there is new growth, creating a rich soil full of carbon. Schemes such as this contribute towards offsetting our carbon footprint, one of our goals under Objective four “Work to reduce the organisation’s carbon emissions to net zero before 2030 and encourage others to follow our lead as part of minimising the negative impact of our activities on the environment”. This example also illustrates the holistic approach we are taking to deliver the objectives in our Corporate Plan and how plans such as the Climate Challenge Plan, Biodiversity Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy feed into the work we do in this area.

One of our largest assets is our staff and as at 31st March 2020, the Vale of Glamorgan Council directly employed 5,870 people. Again, the pandemic has further emphasised the importance of taking care of our Well-being and mental health therefore we have continued to invest heavily in our staff through development and well-being initiatives while working on a new HR Strategy. Staff well-being is regularly promoted by senior management and our 40+ Well-being Champions continue to support staff and organise Well-being activities such as Yoga, mindfulness, HIIT classes, Hump Day Head Space, online nutrition and finance workshops and outdoor Woodland Well-being sessions (when restrictions have allowed). These support mechanisms link in well with other goals in our Corporate Plan. For example Woodland Well-being sessions held regularly at Porthkerry Country Park allow us to “protect, preserve and where possible enhance our natural environment” (Objective 4) as well as enhance biodiversity and off set carbon emissions due to the nature of the work undertaken by staff volunteers e.g. Staff are also getting hands on and physical thereby meeting our goal at Objective 3 to “encourage people of all ages to have active and healthy lifestyles to promote better physical and mental well-being” become more important than ever as colleagues adjust to new ways of working and contend with anxiety and stress triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.



Armed with the most recent information collected from the staff Well-being Survey, we are actively considering how we will transition to a new style of blended working. The most recent survey conducted in May 2021 revealed that 91% of respondents would still prefer to carry on working from home (41%) or return to a blended approach of home and office-based work (50%) in the future. The survey which also revealed that the biggest challenges faced by staff included social isolation, a lack of contact with co-workers and anxiety around the pandemic. Listening to what our staff say they want, we have been clear about our intention to continue with a blended approach (where appropriate). As we move towards this, we will need to consider the impact this crisis has had on our staff and support them with their Well-being ensuring a smooth transition to what will ultimately be a new way of working for the majority of our workforce.



There has been a significant decrease in absence levels across all directorates in the Council during 2020/2021. Rates show a decrease from 10.51 days lost per FTE in 2019/20 to 8.59 days lost per FTE in 2020/21. Non work-related stress was the most common reason for sickness absence with 26% of staff reporting this as their absence reason during the year. The second and third reasons for absence being musculoskeletal (16%) and work-related stress (13%). This information is useful for understanding the reasons for sickness absence as well as looking at ways to assist the health and welfare of employees and inform Occupational Health and the Employee Counselling service.

It is considered that the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic has played a large part in the overall lower absence levels during 2020/21. Where an employee has experienced COVID-19 symptoms and/or a positive test, they are able to undertake a ten-day self-isolation period which does not count towards absence or sickness triggers. In addition, staff may be working from home currently where sickness may not be reported, this is especially the case for the short-term absences and is known as “presenteeism”. Presenteeism is where a member of staff is attending work, rather than taking a type of leave or sickness absence and we recognise that this could result in a loss of productive days. A number of initiatives have been introduced by the Council to manage the key drivers in tackling presenteeism, such as improving digital applications and access, lifestyle and Well-being programmes and managing the use of annual leave. Line managers are always instrumental in looking after employee health and Well-being and the continued hard work and support from the Strategic Leadership Team, Human Resources, Managers and Trade Unions will be important to keep track of future absence levels within the Council.

With staff at the forefront of our mind, we can report that progress has been made in respect of creating an inclusive culture and workplace environment for all employees in the Council. During the year we have started to engage with diversity groups within the Council and their thoughts have contributed to our Culture Book and Talent Attraction Strategy. This work also links to the review of the Council's reward and benefits strategy from a recruitment and retention perspective. This work will continue into 2021/22 along with our commitment to invest in our staff and create a new Employee Development Programme.

Austerity is set to continue, exacerbated by the impact of the recent global pandemic and Britain exiting the European Union. Consequently, it is now more important than ever that we procure sustainably. We are making more use of standard specifications for appropriate goods and services, using partnering and collaboration as a means of achieving economies of scale and securing sustainability of some of our services for the future. We have also reviewed our procurement arrangements and are emphasising a more holistic approach supported by improved procedures and processes that reflect the WBFGA's sustainable development principles. Procurement is also contributing to our efforts to mitigate the negative effects of climate change, including references to reductions in carbon emissions and the use of single-use plastic for example. Procurement is one of key corporate planning aspects considered by our Insight Board, ensuring we take an integrated approach in planning to meet our Well-being Objectives and maximise contribution to the seven national well-being goals. Whilst still early days, our approach will help to ensure that we are procuring in ways that will support the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the Vale of Glamorgan and our residents for the long-term.

The Coronavirus pandemic has provided an opportunity to transform services at pace and scale and it is important that the learning from this is not lost with any return to normalcy. Our existing Reshaping Services strategy has provided a framework for the Council since 2015, providing a proactive response to central government's austerity drive that created a period of unprecedented financial pressure in the public sector. It is now timely to rethink our opportunities, pressures and challenges for the coming years and refocus our reshaping work. This work has already begun via us taking a more integrated approach in developing the Corporate Plan and supporting Annual Delivery Plan with both Plans containing a series of transformational

change related commitments providing an opportunity to influence and inform the future direction of the Council.

We are now working on developing the next iteration of our Reshaping in line with our Recovery Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan, setting out new ambitious challenges for the Council's transformation programme around three arenas of work: Reshaping with our community, with our work and with our resources. These three arenas of transformation encapsulate all areas of the Council's work and are reflective of a desire to make greater links across our community and with our partners. They will be enabled through our use of digital technology, supporting our workforce and partners to develop and learn, further development of our organisational culture, involving, engaging and communicating effectively and ensuring strong programme management and governance arrangements in place. Work to prepare the portfolio for 2021/22 and onwards is currently underway.

To ensure we make fairer and more inclusive decisions, much emphasis has been placed on integrating assessment of equality implications (through Equality Impact Assessments) to ensure decisions on any service or policy changes are transparent and that we consider the needs and rights of different members of our communities. This past year has been challenging for us all, and it has become evident that whilst we are all in the same storm we are not in the same boat. It is clear that those already facing inequality (for example due to their sex, age, disability, race or those in vulnerable situations due to poverty) have been impacted to the greatest extent. The innovation shown during this difficult time by working together across all sectors has highlighted that change is possible and that with the commitment, enthusiasm and the right resources, it can happen quickly. Throughout the past year, our COVID-19 impact assessments have been key in informing our corporate response to the pandemic and also in providing the evidence base to inform our recovery. We are engaging with our partners and communities to build on the positive progress made during the past year with a firm focus on tackling and reducing inequality to ensure the future wellbeing of our citizens is protected.

In line with the priorities in our Strategic Equality Plan, we have also continued to engage with children, young people and families, including those with protected characteristics. Whilst the pandemic has meant that we have been limited in meeting face to face, we have maintained regular remote contact via a variety of digital platforms. The Council's Equalities Consultative Forum has continued to meet to discuss and inform the Council's work on a range of equalities and corporate issues. We have also established a focus group with parents whose children are the subject of placement with parent regulations and are pleased to have engaged a parent who will co-run this group. Collaboration has continued during 2020/21, working together regionally and with Cardiff Council to support the needs of refugees in line with the regional Global Resettlement initiative. All settled refugees in the region have continued to be supported remotely with integration, employment, housing and education support throughout the year.



We continue to focus on developing a range of activities to improve inclusivity in the workplace. In December 2021, we completed a training programme focussing on race awareness and unconscious bias, undertaken on our behalf by Show Racism the Red Card, the programme was attended by Members and all Chief Officers. StaffNet now features a Racism Awareness page, which celebrates black history, culture and achievement, whilst also featuring our local history with black people connected to Barry.

More recently we have responded to Welsh Government's consultation on their draft Race Equality Plan aimed at making Wales an anti-racist nation and make the Welsh Government and all public bodies become anti-racist organisations by 2030. Along with all other local authorities in 2020, the Vale of Glamorgan Council pledged a commitment to anti-racism by signing the #ZeroRacismWales pledge and has since supported the development of an Ethnic Minorities Network for staff. As a Council we are proudly and fervently anti-racist and continue to promote and support the staff network who work closely with our Senior Leadership team.



In a response to the issues arising from the Black Lives Matter movement we have also commenced work to review street names, statues and monuments across the County.

The Welsh Government's Plan will, however, require an even more concerted effort to become anti-racist in a relatively short timescale. Whilst much of the Plan is about what the Welsh Government will do, there are challenges for all public bodies to improve engagement and involvement, as well as services and employment practices. This work will continue long term ensuring that we become a more equal Wales and a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

The latest Welsh Government projections from 2018-2028 show a projected increase in those aged 65+ across all local authorities in Wales, with the greatest percentage increase in the Vale of Glamorgan (up 20.5%). This research has focused our work with our partners through the Public Service Board (PSB) to ensure that we continue to work together to achieve Age Friendly status for the Vale and take steps to become more child friendly and more dementia friendly. During April 2021, PSB partners agreed to progress an application to achieve Age Friendly Status and work has since commenced to involve the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum and the multi-agency Cardiff and Vale Ageing Well Group with the support of the team at the Older Peoples Commissioners Office. We will continue to build on the community connections strengthened with older people during the pandemic during 2021/22 and map where we need to be in the context of recovery from COVID-19.

Despite the ongoing Coronavirus restrictions, we have continued to enhance and promote Welsh Language Services and increase the Welsh Language skills of Council staff. As at January 2021, 41 staff had enrolled onto the Welsh welcome course made available online to all staff members with a dedicated module for Social Services staff in response to the More Than Just Words Framework. This framework aims to ensure that organisations recognise that language is an intrinsic part of care and that people who require services in Health, Social Care and Social Services settings are actively offered them in Welsh. In order to support the Welsh Language Strategy, the Director of Social Services has himself enrolled onto a Welsh language course and is committed to learning and supporting the language within the directorate. This progress, as well as our commitment to lead on our 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and expand Welsh-medium education provision, will help us on our way to achieving a national goal of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

During the year, staff in Children's Services have participated in a Welsh Language Project which included the development of Welsh Language adoption related resources. We have also continued to provide a range of local youth services in the medium of English and Welsh for young people aged 11-25 which support their well-being. We have and will continue to use our digital platforms and increased social media presence to engage young people and have provided virtual group activities, doorstep sessions, information and service signposting in both mediums.



The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill was passed by the Senedd on 18th November 2020 and received Royal Assent on 20th January 2021. The new Act is substantial and covers a range of topics from electoral reform, public participation, governance, collaboration and performance through to regional working. Whilst a number of the provisions have come into force, the majority will come into force via Ministerial statutory instruments throughout 2021/21. Despite the pressures associated with COVID-19, we have made good progress in responding to the new provisions of the Act. For example, we have established a project group to take forward an Action Plan which reflects the various provisions of the Act; we have rebranded and refreshed the terms of our newly titled Governance & Audit Committee; extended the right to vote to our younger citizens aged 16-17 and developed a new Performance Framework to reflect the new performance monitoring requirements of the Corporate Plan.

Our performance framework enables us to extract data and action updates across a breadth of service areas that can then be fed into multiple cross-cutting aspects of the Corporate Plan. To complement this, a quarterly

performance reporting template was developed in consultation with an Elected Members working group (comprising Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen and political party group leads) to enable a more holistic reporting of performance and encourage effective scrutiny against the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. The cross-cutting nature of the report enables us to better demonstrate how multiple aspects of what we are doing are contributing to the achievement of our Well-being Objectives as outlined in our Corporate Plan and towards the Welsh Government's Well-being Goals. In addition, as part of our work to enhance our internal insight to support decision making, we are reviewing our Risk Management Strategy and risk appetite to reflect the changes made to our ways of working in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving forward we will continue to progress our Action Plan and monitor the Vale of Glamorgan Council's preparedness for the various provisions set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act.

Complementing the work mentioned above, the Council's Insight Board, made up of colleagues from across the Council, oversees a number of integrated business management arrangements across the Council ensuring that there is strong leadership and accountability and that we work together to make impactful and meaningful changes and reports to the Strategic Leadership Team. This integrated approach to corporate business planning also brings together all of our key strategic priorities, our five ways of working and resources to enable us to make connections and take appropriate steps to achieve multiple benefits for Vale citizens. During the year we have continued to develop our insight function to further enhance decision making with a focus on several key workstreams including COVID-19, Britain's exit from the European Union, Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, asset management, Project Zero, Well-being and Reshaping. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the world's attention, like never before, the need for accurate and timely data to guide decisions and solve problems. The opportunity has been taken to develop the Council's use of 'insight' data to understand the impact (in community and economic terms) that the pandemic has had on residents in the Vale of Glamorgan. We have produced assessments synthesising a range of global, UK, Welsh and local level data around a series of themes to identify the impacts and inform the future actions to progress in our (2021/22) Annual Delivery Plan. Never before has the Board had a more critical role to play in shaping the work of the Council, ensuring that we maximise our contribution towards our Well-being Objectives and the seven national Well-being goals.

Like all local authorities, the Vale has been at the forefront of the response to the coronavirus pandemic which has put further pressure on its finances. Supporting communities and keeping vital services running has never been more critical but this has led to unforeseen expenditure and loss of income for the Council. Financial emergency support packages provided by both Westminster and the Welsh Government such as the Emergency Hardship Grant awarded during 2020/21, have been welcomed. This support has now been confirmed for 2021/22 however, the long term financial impact of the pandemic is exacerbating an already challenging financial position and impacting on the financial resilience of the Council. The additional funding, we received from Welsh Government for COVID-19 to cover additional expenditure and lost income totalled £19M and this was utilised to support the delivery of Council services. A further £45M was distributed locally by the Council on behalf of Welsh Government to support local businesses.

WHERE THE COUNCIL'S MONEY COMES FROM



The 2020/21 settlement from Welsh Government was for the first time in many years an increase in funding representing an increase of £6.626M (4.29%), taking into account adjustments, from the previous year. Based on this funding level, the Council was ranked 21st out of 22 Councils in Wales on a funding per head of population, which is £191 per head below the Welsh average of £1,426 (£168 per head below in 2019/20). With a positive settlement the Council was able to set a lower savings target for the year of £247k, with no savings being requested from schools. Service areas were able to achieve this target during 2020/21 but budgets remain under considerable pressure in Learning and Skills, Social Services and Neighbourhood Services directorates. At



the end of 2020/21, the Council provisionally [reported](#) a breakeven position for its revenue budget, after transferring £12.206m into reserves (subject to the audit of accounts in September 2021).

We spent £228.232m on delivering public services for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. With a population of 133,587 this equates to £1,708 per person (£1,691 in 2019/20). In line with our priorities, Learning and Skills and Social Care accounted for 74.03% (78.1% in 2019/20) of the Council's budgeted expenditure in 2020/21, delivering our key priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Welsh Government has confirmed that it will provide funding for additional expenditure incurred and income lost for 2021/22. After this date there is no additional funding confirmed and it is difficult to predict what the impact of the pandemic will be especially if the local economy falls into recession, spending is not easily reduced back to pre-pandemic level and income streams do not bounce back quickly. The Council is now planning how it will be able to provide services going forward as the effects of the crisis will be long-lasting and far reaching. We consider we have sufficient balances and reserves; however, they will be put under pressure in the coming months with the level of uncertainty surrounding future funding. This will be further assessed as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which will be updated during the coming year.

The Council has long recognised the value that collaborative working has in providing efficient and effective services to our residents. Collaboration activity has increased at pace in response to the challenging financial climate and more recently COVID-19. During the year we have continued to work in partnership with a range of public, private and third sector organisations on a local, regional and national basis in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which identifies collaboration as one of the key ways of working to support sustainable development.



Progress against our key strategic projects has been reported quarterly to Cabinet along with a [Compendium of Strategic Working Initiatives](#) which provides an oversight of the activity in which the Council is involved.

Our local response to the challenges and impact of COVID-19 has cut across all Council services and responsibilities. We have responded quickly to create new services to support national policy for example, supporting our most vulnerable citizens. We have overcome practical issues relating to democratic decision making by moving to a digital platform ensuring democratic accountability remained central to decision-making; we have reshaped and redesigned core services in response to COVID-19; led on work to support infection control; played a central role in the employment and economic support that has been provided to residents and businesses and used our leadership and influence to establish partnerships that have and continue to make a difference to our citizens.

By drawing on our local knowledge and expertise, we have played significant roles in partnerships across the public, private, voluntary and community sector to respond quickly to the evolving impacts of the pandemic. Alongside our response to the pandemic, we have continued to work collaboratively to tackle some of the complex issues facing our citizens and communities. These strategic partnerships have allowed us to operate in a more effective and efficient way, ensuring sustainability of services, delivering financial savings, contributing to all our Well-being Objectives and to the overall well-being of our citizens.

During the year, the Council has contributed to a number of initiatives including the Vale Heroes partnership with Glamorgan Voluntary Services to provide vital links between the community and third sector groups and Council services for our residents. Across the South Wales Police area, the Council has continued to play an active role in the Local Resilience Forum both during the response phase to the pandemic and now during the recovery phase. The Council's Emergency Planning lead, the South Wales Local Resilience Forum Coordinator (employed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council) and the Council's Managing Director have all been involved in the response and recovery phases and as a consequence have met regularly with Welsh Government officials to inform and feedback on the situation at a regional and national level.

A Coronavirus Response and Control Plan is in operation across the region which involves an Incident Management Team (IMT) being convened fortnightly to review the current statistical and descriptive epidemiology across the region. The IMT consists of the Health Board, Public Health, Local Authorities, Fire and Higher Education who report to a Strategic Leadership Group. The role of this mechanism is to take local decisions in response to the pandemic and to make recommendations to Welsh Government for action where this is within the powers of Ministers.

The Council also continues to contribute to the regional arrangements for Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) as one of the most significant mechanisms available to prevent the onward spread of the virus. These arrangements draw together colleagues from various partner organisations, including Shared Regulatory Services, Public Health, Communications HR and Social Services. The Council leads the communications workstream for TTP on behalf of the partnership and this work has informed the communications associated with the mass vaccination programme, with the Council working alongside the UHB to promote the importance of vaccination to residents across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Further examples of our existing partnerships include the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board (PSB) which was established through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and of which the Council is a statutory member. Through its Well-being Plan, the PSB is working to improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of the Vale of Glamorgan. Similarly, the Integrated Care Fund, The Regional Collaborative Group and the Welsh Community Care Information Service initiatives are assisting in meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.



The Central South Consortium (CSC) was established in 2012 and is a Joint Education Service for five local authorities. Pre-pandemic there has been year on year improvement in learner outcomes across the region at every level and in every local authority involved in the Consortium. We know that COVID-19 has had a significant impact across the region, and this has exacerbated some of the challenges our children and young people face.

Many of our communities face significant poverty related challenges; others are amongst the most prosperous in the country. Throughout the pandemic, schools have worked tirelessly to provide educational opportunities for children and young people in a range of ways. As we incorporate our learning from the pandemic, we will continue to work together to ensure that schools are empowered to continue to improve outcomes for all learners.

The Domestic Violence Strategic Partnership is a multi-agency partnership responsible for developing a robust strategic response to preventing and tackling domestic violence in the Vale of Glamorgan. In the past year, the Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Coordination Service has received and processed 1204 PPN referrals where consent was given by the victim. The service made 3143 onward referrals for the victim to receive the right service at the right time, contributing to victims feeling safer and improved outcomes for victims and their families. 435 cases were referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for high risk victims during the same period. These cases involved 875 children. A new system of twice weekly meetings has been implemented where cases are discussed via a multi-agency online video call to both enable cases to be discussed faster and to reduce the number of cases being discussed in the fortnightly MARAC meetings. Since September, when this new system was implemented, 225 cases were discussed of which 74 went on to be discussed at MARAC, demonstrating a diversion of 67% of cases away from MARACs. To support victims to remain in their own home, 95 victims received target hardening (appropriate safeguarding) on their homes in order for them to feel safe and 92% of victims who provided feedback of the target hardening system reported that they feel safer as a result of target hardening and 95% were happy with the service.



Further successes include: the work of the Regional Skills Partnership (local authority cluster group) which is informing policy and action to meet the skills and employability needs of the region over the next three years; the Shared Regulatory Service which has been at the forefront of enforcing Coronavirus regulations and carried out nearly 2,100 visits to businesses to check compliance, seconded 28 officers to support the Test, Trace and Protect initiative and through its inspection regime ensured 97% of food establishments were broadly compliant with hygiene standards; and Prosiect Gwyrdd which has continued to support the Council's work to meet the Welsh Government's 'Towards Zero Waste' commitments.

We also recognise the importance and long-term benefits of a strong leisure infrastructure on citizen well-being and have continued to progress that agenda. Consequently, we have supported our partner, Legacy Leisure through the past year and are taking a partnership-focused approach in working to identify what will work best for them and, in the long-term, our communities to progress our priorities. Through our learning from the pandemic, we are taking a renewed energy, purpose and commitment to partnership working building on our recent achievements as we move towards recovery and beyond.

Looking forward to 2021/22 and beyond, the financial and economic challenges facing the Council remain, which is, a continuation of public sector funding reduction at the same time as demographic changes are increasing the demand for core Council services. Alongside key service pressures, the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) and the global COVID-19 pandemic will have significant implications which bring uncertain times ahead. What is clear is that, the scale and breadth of disruption from COVID-19, affecting the Council and all aspects of life within our communities, in addition to our existing challenges pre-COVID-19, will make post-crisis turnaround and recovery uniquely challenging. In response, the Council is using the lessons learned from its response to the crisis to inform its recovery strategy in a number of ways; firstly, with regard to pandemic preparedness and crisis management and secondly, involving key stakeholders and our communities in maximising opportunities to mainstream the good practice adopted during the crisis. Together we will transform the way in which the Council operates to achieve sustainable communities with a bright future in the Vale of Glamorgan.

## 3.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 1: To work with and for our Communities

70% of staff continue to work from home embracing digital working practices and 91% of our workforce reported that they would prefer a blend of home and office based work in future. Reduction in travel, printing and building use will have a positive impact on our carbon emissions thereby contributing towards the priorities of Project Zero.

Continued to engage with our community through Vale Connect. During 2020/21, **Vale Connect subscribers grew by 16,960 (27%) and subscription by 48,000.** Our engagement rate for bulletins remains **high at 69%.**

We have **accelerated improvements in our use of digital technology** to develop online services and engage with residents and service users. This work has informed future service operating models. Despite increased service demand, **86% of customer enquiries to C1V were resolved at first contact and 95% of ICT service desk calls were resolved within agreed timescales.**



By April 19, 3,239 young people aged 14-17 had registered to vote for the first time in the Vale of

Glamorgan, of which 1,969 were aged 16 and 17 and so eligible to vote in the Senedd election on 6th May 2020 and the upcoming election in May 2021.

Partnered with schools to deliver improvements in line with WG Education Digital Agenda. During the year **49 schools have been re-cabled with Cat6 network cable to improve network connection and efficiency.** Servers have also been deployed to **applicable secondary schools with 38 servers to primary schools.** We have also **provided 6,500 pupil and teacher devices** across the county to support learning.

The latest Public Opinion Survey carried out in 2019/20 revealed that **87% of customers were satisfied with the services provided by the Council.** This is positive when seen within the context of significantly reduced funding and rising demand for Council services.

As at January 2021, 41 staff had enrolled onto the Welsh welcome course made available online to all staff members with a dedicated a module for Social Services staff in response to the More Than Just Words Framework. We have also continued to provide a range of local youth services in the medium of Welsh for young people aged 11-25 to support their well-being.



Under the **Armed Forces Covenant** we assisted **12 people** in relation to Housing Benefit (8 cases) and Council Tax Reduction (10 cases) claims and supported **6 families of Armed Forces personnel** by registering them with Homes4U giving them access to social housing

Cost effective use of micro asphalt surface treatments and targeted prioritisation of roads that require specific intervention (with planned maintenance works to arrest any deterioration) **has resulted in a significant reduction in the percentage of non-principle A and C roads that were previously in poor condition.** In 2020/21, only 5.1% of A roads were in poor condition compared to 6% last year and only 8.1% of C roads were in poor





## 3.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 1: To work with and for our Communities



Work has continued in improving the employment prospects of young people. **30 Kickstart job placement opportunities were created for 18-24-year olds with a further 30 opportunities advertised to date. 20 apprenticeship roles were also provided.**

There has been a significant decrease in staff absence levels across all directorates in the council during 2020/2021. **Rates show a decrease from 10.51 days lost per FTE in 2019/20 to 8.59 days lost per FTE in 2020/21.**

Big Fresh Catering Company (est. 2019) was set up to be a self-sustaining commercial operation providing nutritious meals for Vale school pupils without relying on Council subsidy. During 2021 they took over the café at Penarth Pier allowing them to contribute to the upkeep of the Pavilion, but also directly benefiting pupils as all surpluses generated will go towards creating top quality, healthy school lunches.

**Successfully engaged with key stakeholders** virtually on initiatives including an Accessibility Strategy which has informed our school asset renewal programme, a public art proposal at Paget Road, Penarth, currently being progressed and future proofing of Additional Learning Needs provision.

The combined elections for the Senedd and Police and Crime Commissioner were held on Thursday 6th May 2021 with a successful turnout of **54.4%**. **78 polling stations were sited around the Vale of Glamorgan with 214 people employed to ensure that electors were kept safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.** The Vale of Glamorgan Constituency received a total of **43,068 votes** and the verification was held over 3 days at 2 different venues to ensure that social distancing was adhered to.

During 2019/20, most Vale residents reported that they **feel very or fairly safe at home (98%), walking in their local area (96%) and travelling by public transport (97%)**. This performance mirrored previous survey results in 2016/17. Safety when walking in local area

**Almost 40 staff Wellbeing Champions** have undertaken training delivered by Time to Change Wales. Working together they have launched "Your Wellbeing" pages on StaffNet Plus, supported and signposted colleagues and delivered and promoted wellbeing initiatives throughout the year.

Voluntary staff turnover for 2020/2021 stands at 5.35% which is significantly less than 8.9% reported in 2019/2020.



Despite restrictions, we have continued to **provide local youth services for young people aged 11-25 which support their well-being** through online youth club sessions and workshops. The Youth Engagement Programme continued to offer their PSE digitally then reopened for face to face sessions when restrictions allowed. Schemes such as **Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work have also supported people digitally and delivered wellbeing and activity packs across the county.**

### 3.3 CHALLENGES

A number of challenges have presented as a direct result of the pandemic and in other instances many were pre-existing challenges that have been further exacerbated by COVID-19. Whilst the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic still exists, there have been opportunities to learn from the experience to explore and establish new ways of working that will enable us to transform our services in the future. Since we are likely to have to learn to live with COVID-19, the main challenge will be in ensuring that we can future proof our services from any negative impacts or disruption to service delivery. As we transition from our emergency response to recovery, it presents us with a unique opportunity to develop our understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and how as a Council we plan to evolve and change our response over time.

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The Council's **Digital Strategy** sets out how technology will support and enable the Council to grow and develop in the coming years. A key challenge in this area is the **fast pace of new technology developments which highlights the need to constantly iterate the business use of technology across the Council to maximise our opportunities to improve efficiency and accessibility of services for Vale citizens**. New technology is changing the needs of the workforce and presents challenges in terms of the skills required to support and use the technology to its greatest effect. The need to develop robust financial business cases is a challenge the Council will continue to work to meet. Our continued emphasis on a 'one Council' approach via the Digital Strategy will focus on creating a seamless experience for Vale citizens when accessing Council services, developing more efficient ways of working and overall seek to reduce costs. The use of engagement mechanisms, such as the management development sessions, our manager and employee core competency frameworks and our staff appraisal and development scheme, will be instrumental in ensuring the organisation has the skillsets needed to make best use of technology. A refresh of the Digital Strategy will be completed in 2021/22.

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Achieving digital inclusion is an incremental process which also requires the necessary training and skills development of staff to support customers. The issue of digital inclusion underpins the Council's Digital Strategy and influences how it designs and delivers services and equips customers with the skills and infrastructure to access those services. Also, a cohesive channel shift approach is key in helping to realise efficiencies while providing targeted assistance through the most appropriate methods. Whilst positive progress has been made, we acknowledge **there is still a way to go to improve online self-sufficiency for a proportion of Vale residents** and key to this will be in ensuring we work effectively with our partners to share information and resources to maximise our opportunities to improve efficiency and accessibility of services for all Vale citizens.

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We recognise that many of our services have had to adapt and change quickly as a response to the pandemic which has resulted in many of our services being delivered online and as we continue to move towards utilising more digital technology there is a **risk of digital exclusion and inequality**. For many citizens, utilising digital services is a more convenient however, we are mindful of the potential disadvantages to our most vulnerable and deprived citizens who do not have the access or ability to navigate online services. We will continue to engage with our citizens to ensure equality of access to all our services.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the rapid take up of remote working which could deliver cost savings for the Council. However, the rapid uptake means that consideration will need to be given to mitigating the **impacts of increased remote working on Council staff well-being**, especially work/life balance and mental health. We also recognise that presenteeism could affect productivity and that Line Managers will need to be equipped with the skills needed to support staff.



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Our workforce is our greatest asset. Initially the challenge has been centred on how we can keep our key frontline workers safe whilst continuing to operate our critical services. As we move from crisis towards recovery and more of our operations begin to restart, the challenge will be how we can **safely manage the return of staff to the workplace where staff are unable to undertake their duties at home**. We anticipate a blended approach of home and office working but recognise that for some staff the experience has been challenging as they have had to balance the demands of work with home schooling and/or other caring responsibilities. Going forward we will need to consider the **social impact this crisis has had on our staff and how we can continue to check in and connect with our workforce, whilst supporting their mental health and well-being**.

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Like most other local authorities in the UK, the Vale is faced with **limited resources and increasing demand for most of its services** and will need to find the most efficient ways of working whilst complying with statutory requirements and the rising expectations of its citizens and communities. In response to these challenges, we continue to work with our partners, residents, and our communities to ensure we are able to meet these challenges without compromising the quality of the services we provide or commission.

The pandemic will test how we operate our services both now and, in the future, therefore this unique situation provides us with an opportunity to look towards new ways of working and delivering services that matter most to our citizens. The challenge going forward is how we **involve and engage our workforce and our citizens in shaping these changes to transform our services, so they are sustainable in the future**. The scale of transformation required will only be possible with the involvement and support of our workforce, the citizens, and the communities we serve.

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The recent COVID-19 pandemic will have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future. **Sustaining and improving levels of service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for services at a time when resources are stretched is going to become increasingly more challenging**. As a consequence of the pandemic we anticipate there will be the emergence of greater health and economic inequalities and increased need for crisis support for families, a greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs. We anticipate that the impact of COVID-19 will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable in our society.

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**Our financial position is set to become even more challenging given the emerging impacts of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.** Like all local authorities across the country, the Vale has been at the forefront of the response to the coronavirus pandemic which has put immense pressure on its finances. Supporting communities and keeping vital services running has never been more critical but this has led to high increases in demand and necessary unforeseen expenditure for the Council. At the very same time, however, we are facing significant and immediate reductions in income which is likely to impact on our ability to meet the agreed 2021/22 budget. The financial emergency support packages provided by both Westminster and the Welsh Government to help local authorities respond have been welcomed, However, this support is likely to only be available in the short term, potentially contributing to a **significant increase in funding shortfall and impacting on the financial resilience of the Council**.

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The Council's ability to fully deliver its **Reshaping Programme** remains an on-going challenge given the continuing period of austerity and increasing service demand across most Council services. The unprecedented impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic presents an **opportunity for the Council to fundamentally review the way it operates and ensure synergy between its recovery strategy and the longer term transformation of the organisation**. This will ensure that the actions taken are consistent and integrated in line with the Council's vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future.

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Work in relation to maximising **income generation** and **commercialisation** opportunities is progressing as part of the Reshaping Programme. A significant amount of work is being undertaken to develop this area which is relatively new to the Council.

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Welsh Government's emerging proposals relating to **Local Government Reform** will continue to be a key area of activity, impacting on Council services specifically in identifying and pursuing any collaborative activity that will benefit the Council in the long term. Given the current economic climate of limited resources, increasing demands on services and complex community expectations, the Council is committed to developing new strategic collaborations and partnerships as a key response to these challenges.

### 3.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: DIGITAL INCLUSION

The pandemic has accelerated our exploration and investment **into the long-term use of digital solutions** to improve service provision, responsiveness, poverty, and well-being. With enforced national lockdowns and social distancing measures in place, the Council rapidly expanded and upgraded its ICT infrastructure to enable remote working of staff, ensure continuity of services and connect people online where it was appropriate to do so.



At the start of the pandemic, schools were the first to close and we were concerned that some children did not have access to digital devices or Wi-Fi to enable them to continue learning from home. Digital inclusion is a key element of the Council's Digital Strategy therefore we immediately set about providing laptops, tablets and Wi-fi devices to those in need. **Working in collaboration** with the Welsh Ambulance Service and A & LH Environmental Services Ltd we were also able to secure 107 pre-loved refurbished laptops for our schools. Not only has this scheme benefitted our learners, but it is evidence of our **environmental conscience**. **Being able to re-use**

**equipment rather than recycle it is a small but positive step towards minimising our environmental impact** and achieving our goals under the umbrella of **Project Zero**.

During the year we continued to **“invest in our schools to provide the right learning environment for the 21st century”** complementing our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme which sees more than £135 million invested in schools across the Vale between April 2019 and March 2024. To **support digital inclusion**, we invested in network infrastructure improvements in line with the Welsh Government's Education Digital agenda and have now provided **over 6,500 pupil and teacher devices** to support learning remotely. We have also improved network connections in **49 of our schools through re-cabling and installation of wireless devices as well as installed servers in all relevant secondary schools plus 38 primary schools** to ensure they are fit for the future.

We were also quick to adapt our courses for our adult learners. For example, 32 Welsh courses for adults (provided by Dysgu Cymraeg and Council teachers) were converted from classroom lessons into Zoom format, allowing adults to continue learning from home. While people were confined to their homes and unable to socialise face to face, these sessions provided learners with an opportunity to chat and socialise too. Feedback has shown that this move has positively benefited the mental health and Well-being of our learners, **preventing feelings of loneliness and social isolation** during the pandemic.

At the start of the outbreak we also **invested £100,000 into our library services** so they could expand online services and offer digital classes to our citizens. The investment has allowed us to increase the number of digital magazines and e-comics; offer a free subscription to Ancestry.com; offer online reading groups and forums; digitally deliver Rhyme and Sign and bilingual story time sessions and run Lego workshops for children.

During the year we have continued to explore opportunities to maximise the use of our digital platforms and **enhance our engagement with customers for communication purposes** to enable access to key Council services. For example, during lockdown we rolled out Office 365 and Teams to promote sustainable and agile working across the Council; introduced a You Tube channel to support people with profound and multiple learning disabilities to achieve their personal outcomes; delivered highly valued outreach services for New Horizons and Rondel House alongside a digital activity programme; increased telecare installations to support vulnerable people to live safely and independently; established and promoted an online portal which enables SRS customers to interact and access services digitally; enhanced our CCTV service which positively reduced anti-social behaviour and COVID-19 breaches in hotspot areas across the Vale; undertook statutory assessments and interventions digitally to ensure continuity of care; and supported users of the National Exercise Referral Service via a range of live virtual activities to help **“encourage people of all ages to have active and healthy lifestyles to promote better physical and mental well-being”**.

More recently we have launched free Wi-fi across the county offering a speedier coverage of 400Mbps, compared to the previous maximum bandwidth of 56 Mbps. This can be accessed from all our buildings, 25 hot spots and expanding, and is **another step towards digital inclusion**.



As we move forward and the digital universe becomes the norm, we recognise the challenges associated with digital inclusion particularly for our most vulnerable citizens. With this in mind, **we are taking an integrated approach by involving** and working with colleagues in adult services, youth services and housing as well as organisations such as Digital Communities Wales, Newydd Housing Association and the Older People's Forum to refresh our Get the Vale Online (GTVO) campaign. Addressing this issue in an integrated way allows us to maximise our resources and contribute towards other Council Well-being Objectives such as **‘to work with and for our communities’** and **‘to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth’**.

Working **collaboratively**, we are refreshing our GTVO webpage and bringing together a **“one stop shop” for digital inclusion in the Vale** allowing citizens to identify where they can access devices for loan or free and where they can get support to use devices and digital services. We are also relaunching our Digital Champions initiative. **Working together with our communities, stakeholders and partners and involving** them in our decisions, we are confident that we can continue to provide support and access to online, digital services. Our combined initiatives and significant investment in this area will have also have a **long-term preventative impact** ensuring that our services are more sustainable for the future. As we provide the support and technology to get people online and make them more digitally aware, we are also enabling citizens to gain access to sources of employment and education whilst helping to address social exclusion and the poverty agenda by ensuring citizens have access to the best rates for utilities, lending and other services.

## 4.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPORT LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Our overall performance status for this Well-being Objective is **AMBER**

### 4.1 POSITION STATEMENT

It is widely acknowledged that providing people with education and opportunities to develop the right set of skills for their future is a significant determinant of life outcomes including health, socio-economic position and life expectancy as well as overall well-being. Equally, having a highly skilled workforce is a major factor in determining both business and economic growth, as our economy becomes more productive as the proportion of educated and skilled workers increase. Consequently, ensuring that all citizens have access to lifelong learning opportunities to develop their skills and aptitudes is fundamental to ensuring the Vale of Glamorgan's future prosperity and achievement of this and our other three Well-being Objectives.

The changes we have experienced since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic are some of the most unexpected and profound seen since World War II. In addition to critical public health challenges, the Council has had to respond to the huge economic and social changes as a result of social distancing and other policies aimed at reducing the transmission of COVID-19. This has included supporting businesses through the furlough scheme, enforcing the closure of non-essential businesses, and the cessation of face-to-face teaching at all our education settings for most children and young people between March and September 2020, and again in early 2021. Due to the pandemic, there has been a significant change in people's daily lives with significant numbers working remotely from home rather than in an office and shopping has been increasingly done online rather than in our retail outlets and town centres. A blended approach, that is, a combination of digital (remote) and face to face learning is fast becoming the norm for our children and young people. The same is happening in terms of access to our venue based services which have traditionally relied on footfall and face to face contact, for example,



leisure centres, tourism, arts and events venues and performing arts. Whilst this accelerated digitalisation has been positive in reducing our impact on the environment and providing flexibility in how we work, it has impacted adversely on our communities and town centre economies. We also anticipate that the withdrawal of government financial support provided during the pandemic is likely to trigger a further rise in unemployment, further adversely affecting our local economy. Overall, the impact of pandemic will exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in accessing education, training and employment which in turn will

impact negatively on the health and mental well-being and prosperity of our citizens, particularly vulnerable groups. Coming off the back of over a decade of austerity for public services and pay freezes, this poses significant challenges for our recovery and economic growth. Addressing these inequalities through our recovery strategy and plans will require sustained investment and collaboration across all sectors, building on the current enthusiasm to work differently and creatively to meet our significant challenges.

Despite the challenges of the year, we have determined that on balance, we have made positive progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments that contribute to Well-being Objective 2 for the period 2020/21. This has contributed to an overall **Amber** status for the objective at end of year. 61% (25 out of 41) of planned activities have been successfully delivered. Across the objective, actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for just under 39% (16) of all planned activities for 2020/21. Of the 16 actions contributing to the Well-being Objective, which have been attributed a Red performance status, 14 (88%) were as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Work in relation to these areas remain priorities and have been carried forward within respective Service Plans for 2021/22.

48% (10/21) of performance indicators aligned to Well-being Objective 2 were attributed a Green status, 3% (14) were attributed an Amber status and 38% (8) were attributed a Red status. In relation to the 8 measures attributed a Red status, 4 were affected by COVID-19 related issues which has contributed to missing agreed targets.

For most of last year, as an essential priority, we have focussed on the basics of keeping schools open in a safe and secure way and supporting education at home for the majority of our learners. At the same time, we have also worked collaboratively to ensure that we are fully prepared to meet the challenges of educating our learners at home for short or long periods should the need arise in the future given the uncertainty of the development of COVID-19 pandemic. Looking ahead the support needed to ensure our learners successfully transition back to school life, engage and 'catch up' on learning lost during the past year will be paramount to achieving strong educational outcomes and reducing the learning gaps between different groups of our children and young people. Irrespective of their particular backgrounds, needs or experiences during the pandemic, **our ambition is for all learners to make good progress in their education and grow in confidence to achieve their full potential and contribute to a more prosperous, resilient and equal Vale of Glamorgan.** This vision is in line with the key principles of the new Curriculum for Wales.

This year, due to the pandemic and changes to data reporting requirements, there is limited data to demonstrate the progress, trends and outcomes we have achieved. However, **Esytn's review of Support for Learning Communities in Schools and Pupil Referral Units in the Vale of Glamorgan** (January 2021) during the pandemic was positive and although it did not formulate a judgement of the Council's support for learning communities as part of the review, it highlighted a number of noteworthy practice cameos relating to: supporting health and safety arrangements; local use of the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) system; supporting vulnerable learners; responding to need; assessing the level of learner engagement and well-being; brokered support to improve distance learning provision; supporting young people's mental health, and supporting schools to re-open safely. Since the review was undertaken further improvements have been delivered in these areas to enhance learning approaches and experiences for pupils, and we are building on these successful innovations as part of our recovery (recruit, recover and raise standards programme) and preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales which will be implemented from September 2022. A collaborative approach with our Improvement Partners from the Central South Consortium and school leaders has been key in making good progress in this area. Over the past year, in line with the core principles of the new Curriculum for Wales, we have further **strengthened our engagement with communities, parents and carers, and learners to understand their experiences and priorities for learning and this is informing our learning recovery plan.** We will continue to build on and embed this collaborative approach as we move towards implementing the new curriculum.



The positive progress achieved under such challenging circumstances would not have happened without the **dedication and commitment of staff in our schools, across the Council and the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service** who not only supported children and young people's learning at home but also volunteered in the childcare hubs; supported distribution of free school vouchers and food parcel deliveries; and maintained a care and support role for children, young people and their families during this challenging time. This has in many cases included working long hours and adapting to rapidly changing situations for months on end. Their creativity and efforts are a strong reflection of the collective commitment to our vision and ambition to support all learners to achieve their potential regardless of circumstances. Looking ahead we will need to consider the implications on staff well-being, particularly if further outbreaks are experienced in the coming year.





This year more than any other we have seen the best of partnership working across public, voluntary and third sector organisations and community groups in the Vale of Glamorgan. The response has been as impressive as the pandemic has been challenging. Work has focused on where support is needed most. For example, we have worked with schools in **accelerating the integration of digital technology within our learning establishments** to enable all learners, including children, young people and adults to continue learning in line with the new 'blended learning' strategies. To ensure that no child is left behind, we have ensured all learners are able to access curriculum-based learning resources by **providing 6,500 pupil and teacher devices to support pupils without ICT equipment or connectivity**. Distance learning approaches continue to be enhanced and is being tailored in response to pupil and parental feedback. School staff have accessed a range of professional learning aimed at effective remote delivery and assessment for learning. We have **taken steps to ensure that as far as possible, no learner is disadvantaged because of access to technology, where they live, their age, their additional learning needs, or their demographic profile** and have targeted our support with this in mind.

As well as support to ensure vulnerable learners have equitable access to learning, significant resource is being deployed on monitoring those learners who have not returned to school. Collaboration with schools, Children and Young People's services, Health services and other council services has been key to ensuring that our children, particularly vulnerable pupils have been effectively supported. For example, the work of the **Vulnerable Children Tactical Group**, which supported vulnerable children and young people in accessing school hubs, school holiday play provision and assisted their return to schools has continued to work to ensure a cohesive approach in supporting our vulnerable children. Through additional funding from Welsh Government, the group has also **supported schools to provide holiday provisions at five schools (4 schools across Barry and 1 in Llantwit Major), with over 500 pupils participating**. The newly created **Attainment, Well-being and Engagement (AWE)** Team is providing well-being and support for attendance and engagement in a flexible way, responding to evolving COVID-19 needs and issues, for example, to support the increase in numbers of elected home educated pupils (EHE) and to support engagement with remote learning. Alongside this, the wider Inclusion Team have also supported families to re-engage effectively with schools as in some instances, the length of time spent not in school and potential effects of the pandemic has created anxiety in families regarding the return. Our collaborative approach to problem solving for example, ensured that vulnerable families were able to access activities that were permitted within COVID-19 restrictions, such as join and access library books and clubs and activities online. Throughout the pandemic, we have provided food vouchers for over 3,000 children as well as food parcels for the families of pupils hit hardest by the crisis. To further enhance provision, we have successfully rolled out electronic direct payments to parents of pupils entitled to free school meals during school closure periods. The free school meals voucher system used at the height of the pandemic has been retained as an interim measure to manage any issues.

We have continued to place strong emphasis on **supporting the social, emotional and mental well-being of our learners**. In response to increased need, the capacity of the **Engagement Service** which works with schools to meet the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of children and young people in the Vale has been increased and schools have been provided with comprehensive resources alongside increased supervision to build the emotional resilience of staff. Our Social Emotional Mental Health Panel (SEMHP) switched to a virtual platform during the pandemic to ensure the multi-agency panel could continue to consider and address the referrals from schools of pupils with the most significant SEMH needs. These pupils are often from vulnerable backgrounds where well-being is an significant issue. All pupils have access to 'Motional', an online tool for identifying, assessing, and improving the emotional health and well-being of children and young people which is enabling timely referrals to the Engagement Service and the social, emotional, and mental health panel. **Confidential counselling services have been increased** to meet the greater demand for the service amongst learners, particularly secondary learners and those in year 6. Younger learners in primary schools are being supported by a newly appointed play therapist. The increased demand highlights the impact of the pandemic on learners experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Since returning in September, work has focused on re-engaging with learners and supporting their emotional and well-being needs. Alongside this, schools have been supported in managing the **Welsh Government Accelerated Learning Programme** Grant

targeted to support year groups 7, 11, 12 and 13, recognising that learners will have experienced various levels of learning loss. In recognising our ambitions for the coming year, none of us can underestimate the task we have in overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19 on our learners. However, we are building on the very positive and growing relationships we established during the pandemic, which have been central to our achievements in 2020/21. Those relationships will be core to our continued drive to ensure that every learner in the Vale of Glamorgan has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

We are committed to ensuring there is **appropriate and equitable access to quality provision for our citizens across all learning settings**. An example of this is our work with alternative providers through the periods impacted by lockdowns. Through our rigorous commissioning arrangements and quality assurance we ensured vulnerable young people across the spectrum received either in person or distanced learning packages from alternative providers to meet their needs, thus facilitating educational continuity. To ensure that we are meeting the need of our learners, we have continued to engage with pupils and their parents/carers and our partners on key improvements and services to ensure that their views inform future provision. Through this process we have also improved the quality of information available to parents to enable them to make informed decisions about their child's education. It has also strengthened partnership working with a focus on meeting the needs of pupils, particularly vulnerable children and young people and those with additional learning needs, through a person-centred approach. Our adult learners have also benefited from more targeted provision. During the year, we have **consulted on our proposals for school improvements under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme, future proofing of additional learning needs provision, an Accessibility Strategy for our learning establishments, the use and impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant, the health and well-being of our pupils, schools admissions policies and learning opportunities delivered through the Cardiff & Vale Adult and Community Learning partnership**, to name a few. Inclusivity is a key aim of driving up quality of our provision. Consequently, we recognise and value the key role our partners, parents and carers and learners play in informing provision, ensuring that development and provision is equitable and of high quality across all learning settings.



**Early years provision** is a key Council priority, as we recognise the importance and impact that a good quality early years education has on young children's development, especially disadvantaged children's lives overall. Evidence suggests that by the time disadvantaged young people sit their GCSEs at age 16 they are, on average, 18.4 months behind their peers and around 40% of that gap has already emerged by age five. Early years has almost as much impact on a child's education achievement at age 11 as primary school did – and the impact is even greater for those at risk of developing learning difficulties. Consequently, we have focused on working collaboratively with partners across the public, voluntary and third sector in tackling disadvantage through Welsh Government's Children and Community grant schemes such as **Flying Start, Families First, Childcare and Play and Promoting Positive Engagement with Young People and Communities for Work**. These have sought to mitigate disadvantage to vulnerable families through early intervention and prevention services to enable them to have the same life chances as most. Despite the challenges of the past year which has seen significantly increased numbers of referrals to our services, we have continued to engage with families digitally and on an outreach basis where face to face is required to provide much needed support.

Our work through the **Early Years Forum and Early Years toolkit** continue to play a key role in helping us to identify earlier on how we can effectively plan for and support the learning needs of early years learners and their well-being, especially children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Working in partnership with parents and carers and consulting them about children's early years' experience, has helped in planning for effective learning as well as identifying the support that parents need in order to continue their children's learning development at home. Our focus on reducing environmental and social barriers to inclusion and offering



accessible learning opportunities for all our children to achieve their full potential in preparation for further learning, remain a key priority and will help to reduce inequalities in accessing education in the long term.

Alongside significant work to support learners to re-engage and catch up, work has continued in implementing the **Additional Learning Needs Act**. Comprehensive training has been delivered to further strengthen the role of Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators in schools as set out in the Act. **Person-Centred Planning (PCP)** and **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)** are being trialled in all schools and **provision mapping is being developed to enable enhanced and targeted provision, intervention and pupil tracking to deliver improved pupil learning outcomes**. Throughout the year, there has been a strong focus on supporting learners including those with additional learning needs and their families to access and engage with learning opportunities. Pupils have been supported via a wide variety of methods including daily well-being phone calls, live 'check-in' online sessions, targeted learning activities on digital platforms, video calls from one to one Learning Support Assistants to support work and well-being, home visits and loan of additional resources. An example of this strong collaboration is the work of the Youth Service in partnership with the Y Daith Pupil referral Unit, which ensured all of the vulnerable learners on roll received regular welfare checks and were in receipt of school meals as appropriate. This work has been supported by the **Engagement Service**, who have the dual role of building capacity in trauma informed approaches in schools as well as providing interventions to meet the needs of complex and vulnerable learners within an evidence based, psychologically informed framework that incorporates an understanding of Developmental Trauma, ACEs, attachment and the neuroscience of mental health and ill health. We will be building on this programme of change by formally establishing a Centre for Learning and Well-being from September 2021.

In line with our duties, we have reviewed our **schools' place planning framework and admissions policies** to ensure they remain fair to all learners, that there are enough school spaces for all our pupils, and to take account of the challenges that a new cohort of pupils could potentially bring. Whilst the pace of births in the Vale has reduced in recent years, there is still overall a trend of rising pupil numbers, with increasing numbers having additional learning needs. In the latest round of admissions for 2021, we were able to offer 95% of reception applicants and 87% of secondary applicants a place at a preferred school (first preference) on national offer day. Only 104 secondary pupils received no offer of a place on national offer day, although only 12 of the 104 pupils were resident within the Vale of Glamorgan. These figures are above the national average for meeting parental preference. Looking ahead to the coming year, a number of proposals are being implemented as part of the School Reorganisation and Investment Programme and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme to meet the growing demand for places for pupils with additional learning needs and Welsh language provision.

**Improving attendance rates and reducing persistent absence** in schools continue to be a priority. However, as for most of the academic year, schools have been closed to most learners, the challenge has been in ensuring that all pupils across the Vale of Glamorgan have the resources and are effectively engaged in a programme of 'blended learning' (tailored in response to pupil and parental feedback), so they are not left behind. The pandemic has seen the number of pupils (especially younger children) electively home educated (EHE) increase by 22% as families kept their children home wherever possible. However, of concern is the unknown impact this will have for child development and school readiness in the coming years. This has added significant pressure with the need to provide individual support to children and their families. The work of the **Attainment, Well-being and Engagement Service (AWE)**, **Youth Intervention Team (YIT)**, **Education Welfare Service (EWS)** have played a key role in providing well-being and support for attendance and engagement in a flexible way, responding to pupil needs and issues, for example, to support the increase in numbers of EHE pupils and to support engagement with remote learning. Additional support has also been provided via the **Vulnerable Groups Tactical Group** which has supported vulnerable children and young people and their families in accessing school hubs, school holiday play provision and assisted their return to schools. This work has continued and is ensuring a cohesive approach in supporting our vulnerable children.

Children and young people continue to benefit from high quality learning environments through significant capital investment in schools via the **School Reorganisation and Investment Programme and the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme**, which is one of the highest and most ambitious in the country. Our collaboration with contractors, the third and public sector organisations on the initiative has helped deliver a range of community benefits which are contributing to improving outcomes for residents, the environment and the local economy. During the year, the programme has provided 10,000 weeks of new jobs and 5,300 weeks of training opportunities, delivered 44 community initiatives, including supporting 3 community gardens with improvement works and donating to local charities. Utilising local contractors (90%) and labour (56%) has also contributed to the Vale's economy. These achievements have been recognised in the Council winning '**Best Procurement delivery**' at the **GO Wales 2021 awards**.

We are on track to complete the **Barry Secondary Learning Communities** project by July 2022, which has seen the investment of £88.6 million in three secondary schools to create modern learning centres with low carbon footprint to meet future demand and enable our children and young people to fulfil their full potential whilst also providing improved and accessible local facilities for the wider community to enjoy. Alongside this investment, work has also started on the **expansion and refurbishment of our Special School, Ysgol y Deri** (£11 million) to meet the fast growing demand for complex pupil placements; **Ysgol Sant Baruc** (£7.4 million), **St David's Church in Wales Primary** (£4.2 million) and **St. Nicholas Church in Wales Primary** (£4.2 million) to meet the projected increase in pupil numbers. A new **Centre for Learning and Well-being** (£4.4 million) is also well underway and will help meet the needs of some of the Vale's most vulnerable pupils. These improvements in infrastructure will not only contribute towards lowering our carbon footprint and increasing access to modern community facilities, indeed, they will enhance our work towards building community focused learning centres, effectively harnessing the power of schools, families and communities working together for a brighter future. These modern facilities will also increase opportunities for residents to participate in lifelong learning, sports, leisure and cultural activities, active travel and increase access to green spaces and a clean environment to highlight a few.



As part of the programme to improve our learning environments, we are **working towards decarbonising our new schools** which supports Welsh Government's commitment of **achieving a net-zero carbon public sector in Wales by 2030** and our Corporate Plan Well-being Objective, 'to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment'. During the year we have made good progress on the design of a **low in use carbon school at St. David's** and on **construction of the first net zero carbon school in Wales, Llanccarfan**. We have also worked collaboratively to improve the local environment and active travel routes around schools by planting 500 trees with a further 700 in the works, adopting a Biodiversity Strategy for schools, installing scooter pods, cycle racks, cycle pods and balance bikes. These community improvements will also contribute to our other Corporate Plan well-being objectives.

We continue to work collaboratively to fulfil our statutory duties and **mitigate the risk of young people finding themselves not in employment, education or training (NEETs)**. Our success to date can be attributed to effective partnership working via the Youth Engagement & Progression Framework and a focus on prevention and early intervention alongside a comprehensive alternative education offer. Local interventions such as the **Kickstart scheme**, the **Youth services offer**, the **Council's apprenticeship scheme**, **Council housing building programme**, the **21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme** and the **European Social Fund (ESF) programmes Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W)** have all developed strong links to other council services including homelessness, youth services, youth offending, benefits and social services which is enabling us to deliver better outcomes for young people. However, it has been a challenging year with a reduced number of training, employment and apprenticeship opportunities available to young people. **COVID-19 restrictions have limited the apprenticeship**

**opportunities available in the council, through the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools programme and also with local employers.** Early indications are that the career prospects of our young people will be adversely affected by the pandemic. Young people who are currently in education or approaching the juncture to transition into further or higher education have found their studies paused or partially continuing digitally. Consequently, many may have missed out on face-to-face careers advice and support to make an effective transition to further or higher education, training or employment. Most would have also missed out on the personal development curriculum, including employer interaction and work experience, which is fundamental to choosing the appropriate academic or vocational career pathway. Young people who have additional barriers or come from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to be most adversely impacted. Despite our best efforts to keep in touch during the pandemic, some of these young people are unlikely to receive the advice and support needed, which could adversely impact their chances of progressing into education, training or employment.

During the year, 140 young people went on to further education or training, and 136 achieved qualifications through the I2A programme. I2W has continued to support the progress for post 16 learners in the Vale of Glamorgan and has already exceeded its targets for the remaining two years of the project. Although, we have seen a significant rise in referrals to I2W due to higher levels of unemployment in young people, a direct impact of the pandemic, 100 young people achieved qualifications, 101 secured employment and 26 went on to further education or training through this scheme. Whilst our performance in relation to Years' 11 (1.4% to 1%) and 12 (0.8% to 0.62%) NEETs continued to improve in 2020, the numbers of NEET young people who left school in year 13 doubled (1.55% to 3.10%). Work has also continued in improving the employment prospects of young people with 30 Kickstart job placement opportunities created for 18–24-year-olds with a further 30 opportunities advertised to date. 20 apprenticeship roles were also created within the Council under the council's own apprenticeship scheme. As part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, a further 63 apprenticeships were created per £1million invested. On balance this performance is positive when considered within the context of the global pandemic and its associated impact. However, we also recognise that significantly more needs to be done if we are to ensure that our young people are not further disadvantaged by the pandemic. The Welsh Government's prompt action and announcements of investment in skills and measures to create jobs, apprenticeships and opportunities for young people are welcome. However, these can only be successful if they are localised by building on local intelligence and delivery models, working in partnership. We are working with local employers, education and training establishments and via the Cardiff City Region Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that we focus our investment on addressing identified skills gaps and opportunities, for example, harnessing the opportunities of accelerated digital transformation brought about by COVID-19, to meet the needs of the local and national economy in the long term.



Through our **Community Investment Strategy**, we are supporting skills development, training, employment and volunteering opportunities for council tenants and this work has carried on during the pandemic, albeit digitally. To date nearly 370 hours of training has been secured through training clauses via our housing development programme; 110 residents have gained employment; 961 have gained accredited vocational qualifications; 7 have become self-employed; 7 have secured apprenticeships and 230 have been supported with CV writing, interview skills and employability boot camps. The Communities for Work (CfW) initiative quickly adapted to delivering a blended model of working during the pandemic enabling the continuation of support to service users, predominantly the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training. Working closely with partners including Job Centre Plus, KickStart and the Vale of Glamorgan Adult and Community Learning team, key resources have been provided, for example, the digital chrome book roll out for CfW, online CV workshops and employability sessions, alongside targeted mentorship to help secure employment opportunities, work placements and training for clients needing qualifications or training to facilitate employment. The use of technology including social media e.g. Facebook, has been particularly successful in engaging with the target audience is one we can be looking to take forward.

Recognising the importance of and investing in the upskilling and reskilling of post 16 and adult learners to ensure economic recovery has never been as important as it is now. We know that skilling our young people and adults will enable them to make a valuable contribution to their communities, both economically and socially, and also help improve community resilience in response to COVID-19. Alongside our focus on developing the skills of young people for the future, we have continued to **increase community learning opportunities available to adults and take up in many areas remain high**. Community learning continues to make a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens by supporting the lifelong development of skills of both our young people, adults, employed and unemployed learners, improving their prospects and ultimately their health and well-being. Despite the disruption of the pandemic, the Cardiff & Vale Adult Learning in the Community Partnership, and Cardiff and Vale College have ensured continuity of learning by implementing online and blended learning models some examples of which were highlighted in Estyn's remit report on post 16 blended learning. We are committed to ensuring our citizens continue to enjoy lifelong learning opportunities and are working collaboratively at local, regional and national levels to enable us to sustain and increase the opportunities available with a particular focus on digital inclusion, which was brought sharply into focus during the lockdown periods. The Service has received some national recognition with 2 tutors awarded highly commended certificates at the Welsh tutor awards and 1 of our learners winning a national learner of the year award in the Essential Skills category.

Coronavirus in the Vale:  
Economic Impact Update



Mirroring the picture across most of the UK, since March 2020, **unemployment in the Vale has risen and there are fewer job vacancies available for those who have become unemployed**. The number of people claiming unemployment related support has increased by 103% since March 2020. This increase is mirrored in

the number of people claiming Universal Credit (approximately 10,074 people, 12.3% of the Vale's working-age population at end of April 2021). The largest proportion of people in receipt of Universal Credit can be seen in those areas of the Vale which have been identified as 'Most Deprived' in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. Alongside increased pressures placed on household incomes for example through job losses and furlough, there have been increases in living costs as a result of the pandemic, with increases in energy bills, food costs and digital connectivity costs reported. These financial and other pressures have contributed to an increase in the number of people presenting as homeless due to falling behind on rent or mortgage payments. During the past year, we have supported more vulnerable residents across the Vale as the impact of the pandemic continues to unfold. The **Housing Support Grant Programme** helped over 1,000 vulnerable residents to address the, sometimes multiple problems they face such as debt, employment, tenancy management, substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health issues. Support has focused on securing and maintaining suitable housing, development of the skills needed to maintain a tenancy, which have included money advice and debt support, training and volunteering to improve employability and employment opportunities, and health and well-being. To date the Council's '**One Stop Shop**' for housing related support which was established in April 2020, has been crucial in meeting the increased demand for assistance as it provides a wide range of support options to meet the varying needs of residents. The aftercare for service users who no longer need housing related services by signposting them to appropriate local services, is also helping to sustain the progress achieved by most service users. Some have gone on to become advocates for the service and are successfully volunteering within their communities.

Alongside the above, there are a number of initiatives across the council aimed at providing support to the unemployed and those furthest from the labour market to help them return to employment including **the Employability Hub, Get Back on Track, Skills for the Workplace, Vale Communities for Work**, all of which provide support in building skills and aptitudes to improve employability and ultimately prospects of residents. These initiatives work collaboratively alongside other council services to reduce barriers to employment in order to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes for service users.

One of the most positive and impressive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been **the upsurge in the numbers of people volunteering** to support vulnerable people. This brings enormous opportunities to harness this asset but also some challenges in building capacity and ensuring it is effectively mobilised, for example, in shaping local services and in improving communities. We have seen positive changes to volunteering, with an **overall increase in volunteering numbers from a diverse range of people, many of whom were volunteering for the first time**. As services moved online so did the number of volunteer roles being carried out remotely. This has opened up new ways of volunteering, through digital and remote practices, and introduced a more diverse group in terms of skills and demographics than would otherwise have been involved in volunteering. To ensure we sustain and build on these changes, we are working collaboratively across council services, the third and voluntary sectors and our communities to increase the opportunities available for all Vale citizens to participate. During the year, we appointed a **Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer** to expand our timebanking scheme which is currently only open to Council tenants. Alongside this, we have focused on developing more digital and other opportunities that will not be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, for example, through our community libraries, the Vale Learning Community, 21<sup>st</sup> Century school Investment Programme, social services, the Community Investment Programme and regeneration, rights of way and country parks projects to name a few. Looking ahead, we recognise that there is a lot of positive work happening across our services that need to be brought together in a coherent volunteering strategy for the Council and we are progressing this.

We want residents to benefit from sustainable and inclusive economic growth. This means promoting environmental, economic and social sustainability as part of a long-term commitment to tackling climate change, delivering good growth and building resilient communities. We are ambitious in planning how the Vale of Glamorgan's infrastructure needs to develop accordingly and work collaboratively to ensure that it benefits everyone. Our draft **Green Infrastructure Strategy has been developed** with this approach firmly in mind. We have a **strong track record of delivering successful regeneration projects** in the Vale of Glamorgan and have continued to work in partnership locally and regionally via the **Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal** to develop transport, infrastructure, business support, regeneration, planning and housing interventions. Beyond delivering a funding programme, developments such as Britain's exit from the European Union (EU), loss of EU funding and more recently the global COVID-19 pandemic have meant the City Deal will be especially important in facilitating regional recovery and sustainable and resilient local economies over the coming years. Of particular relevance to the Vale under the City Deal, is the need to **promote the Airport and St. Athan as centres for economic growth and job creation, improving strategic access to the Vale and the ongoing regeneration of Barry**. As well as having a high rate of out-commuting due to the lack of higher skilled employment opportunities, Barry also has four lower super output areas which fall within the top 10% of most deprived areas in Wales particularly in relation to income, health, education, housing and employment. Through the ongoing investment in our business infrastructure, Council housing building programme, 21<sup>st</sup> Century education facilities and curriculum and workforce skills (alongside existing strong links to commercially focused academics), we are taking a whole area approach to maximising the regenerative impact of these incentives for residents, communities and businesses for the long-term. Looking ahead, we recognise that there are further opportunities for closer integration through procurement to further maximise local supply chain development and associated targeted training and recruitment clauses favouring local residents. In the medium to long term, these improvements will help narrow the gap of aspiration and achievement not just in Barry but across the Vale of Glamorgan as a whole.

During the year, key infrastructure developments such as the Airport Business Park have continued to progress with the production of an Airport Masterplan and development of supplementary planning guidance around the developments of the Airport and associated business park. The Council also approved planning permission for a number of industrial/commercial buildings at St. Athan (a 2,500 sqm GIA rub hanger and up to 37,500 sqm GIA air-side operational employment facilities). Planning permission is also currently being considered for a 44.79ha Business Park and an industrial/commercial building (up to 3,000 sqm) at St Athan. Advanced land disposal negotiations are also ongoing with Cardiff and Vale College regarding the proposed transfer of land for a major new state of the art educational campus near the airport.



Alongside these developments, we have **proactively supported local businesses through the COVID-19 crisis by promoting, signposting and assisting them to access grants and other support available to them.** As part of various Welsh Government and Westminster fiscal stimulus packages to support businesses through the pandemic, we have administered over £45million COVID grant support to local businesses. We also enabled access to rate relief, business interruption loans and wage support mechanisms to the tune of £2billion across Wales. **Adapting our business support offer online in tandem with providing advice on safe working practices has enabled us to engage with more businesses across a range of sectors successfully and this is something we plan to build on as we focus on recovery that is sustainable for the long-term.** With an uncertain economic outlook predicted in the coming years, the immediate priority for the Vale is to continue to work collaboratively to support the recovery of our businesses focusing on helping them to adapt to the evolving landscape and build resilience in their operations.

In line with the commitments in **Project Zero**, our decarbonisation plan, we are also building upon opportunities presented within the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) framework to deliver sustainable transport improvements across the Vale of Glamorgan. The focus is on improving public transport options in order to achieve a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport with an increase in walking, cycling and less polluting transport. During the year, we have **completed WelTAG studies on schemes which will deliver transport improvements across** the Vale of Glamorgan including Penarth through to Cardiff Bay, the M4 Junction 34 to A48, the Dinas Powys bypass and a transport interchange at Barry Docks. In addition, the Council **committed £3.44million of S106 monies to sustainable transport schemes during the year**, that is, walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure, with schemes being successfully delivered in a number of areas including Dinas Powys, Wick and Rhoose. We have collaborated on producing up to date integrated network maps and are maximising the use of Welsh Government grants to improve active travel opportunities and the transport infrastructure in the Vale. Active travel schemes have been delivered in Cowbridge, Llantwit Major, Penarth Heights, Lavernock Road/Cosmeston, Sully Road/St Joseph's School and South Road/Hays Road/Sully Moors Road.

Building on the success of the award-winning Barry Pump House developments, we have continued to work with developers to deliver successful regeneration of the 19-acres of land alongside Barry Dock into an exciting mixed-use urban quarter, as part of the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme. Despite the pandemic, new developments have continued throughout the year at the Innovation Quarter. The **Goods Shed development**, which opened in the summer of 2020, has turned a former railway Goods Shed building into an exciting mix of commercial, business and residential units along with a ship container village for commercial, business and leisure uses. In addition, a block of 42 affordable and private market apartments has been constructed as part of the scheme for Newydd Housing Association. Alongside creating jobs, homes, business opportunities and building workforce skills, carbon neutrality is a key philosophy in the new development which can be seen in the restoration of the engine shed and use of shipping containers as the framework for the new building. This is in line with the Council's approach which promotes the importance of green infrastructure in boosting sustainable green economic recovery. The development has already **gained national recognition in winning the 2020 Ystadau Cymru, 'Creating Economic Growth' award and also the overall 'winner of winners', awarded to the best project across all categories.** The project clearly demonstrated the five ways of working through the adoption of a place making approach, in particular strong community involvement; genuine collaboration; integration through a wide range of mixed uses and its long-term regeneration approach.



**Section 106 agreements** continue to play an important role in regulating development and improving community infrastructure to meet the needs of Vale citizens, including notably affordable housing. During the

year, the Council received financial contributions to the value of £2,193,701.13 to provide community infrastructure and affordable housing. Between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, a total of 20 legal agreements have been signed associated with planning permissions. The value of the financial contributions in these legal agreements totals £310,404.80. **£5,427,020.94 was spent on schemes during 2020/21**, with Section 106 contributions fully (or partially) **supporting enhancements to public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public art and open space enhancements**. Schemes have included a new interactive unit in Central Park, Barry; a new Multi Use Games Area in Wick and King George V Playing Fields; a new traffic light controlled crossing in Wick; active travel enhancements in St. Athan and new crossings and footpath improvements in Dinas Powys, to name but a few. S106 monies have been spent on several 21st Century Schools Band B Projects, including works starting on site to reconfigure primary education in the Western Vale; the proposal to expand and re-build St David's Church in Wales Primary School and expansion of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg. In addition to financial contributions, the Council has also worked with developers to deliver 'in kind' obligations on development sites. For example, 113 affordable housing units were completed during this financial year. A further example is public art, whereby developers have completed works on site, such as the trail which has been completed at the development on land north-west of the railway line, in Rhoose, by Taylor Wimpey.

Pre-pandemic our focus as a Council had been on moving to a more agile model of delivery that supports our citizens and communities to achieve positive change for themselves, contributing to more resilient and sustainable communities. We have worked with communities to maximise opportunities to access grant funding to support community improvements. Opportunities through the **Creative Rural Communities initiative, our Strong Communities Grant Fund, the Welsh Government Targeted Regional Investment Fund and our Community Investment Strategy** for example, have enabled us to engage and work collaboratively with our communities to co-design and deliver community improvements across the Vale of Glamorgan. This approach has been further accelerated by the positive work undertaken with our communities during the pandemic. Looking ahead, we will build on this way of working by focusing on building capacity, encouraging social enterprise and empowering our communities to focus on inclusive, resilient and sustainable economic growth as we recover and transform in the wake of COVID-19.

The **recovery of our high streets from the pandemic will have a vital role to play in our economic recovery**. During the year, a range of COVID-19 specific investments have been made in town centres across the Vale, with a focus not only on helping businesses to trade, but also to encourage the public to return to our town centres. An improved station gateway at Llantwit Major and Parklets in Penarth are just some of the projects that were funded. Work was commissioned to look at each town which identified potential future investment should funding become available. Marketing campaigns have taken place to promote each town to people in the region and further afield. Improvements implemented during 2020 include the light tunnel connecting Broad Street and the Good Sheds development. Feasibility work has also been undertaken on a marina for Barry. The Council continues to make preparations for UK Government funding programmes in 2021/2022. Creative Rural Communities continues to work on pilot projects including a coworking festival, and food Vale initiatives. Looking ahead, we recognise that as more people are staying local, there is an opportunity to invest in other elements that make high streets special. Consequently, re-establishing the role of our high streets as hubs for social connection and reinforcing and celebrating their roots and unique characters could go a long way to encourage people to stay local and spend their money where they live. This will also promote more local journeys, enabling people to leave the car at home and encouraging walking or cycling, which will also impact positively on reducing carbon emissions.

Increased growth in tourism supports economic growth and employment opportunities. In the Vale of Glamorgan, tourism is a major contributor to jobs and our local economy, employing nearly 3,000 people. Our **tourism businesses have been one of the hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting locally not only on the direct businesses associated with tourism, but also the wider community that rely on the industry through work and supply of goods by local providers**. Due to enforced lockdowns, social distancing restrictions and

closure of non-essential businesses, many businesses have suffered losses to custom and anticipated income and despite Welsh Government and UK Government financial interventions, many people employed within the sector were either furloughed or lost their jobs during 2020. With the easing of restrictions there has been significant increase in demand for long UK 'staycations' and businesses are now faced with the issue of recruiting into vacancies to meet the increased demand. The Tourism Barometer (Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact survey produced by Welsh Government in July 2021 showed that around a quarter (22%) of tourism businesses cannot get staff and just over half (51%) are experiencing considerable difficulty in doing so. More positively, there is a reasonable level of confidence about running a tourism business profitably for the remainder of the year with 27% of operators being very confident and a further 42%, being reasonably confident. However, some sectors still face reopening challenges because of continued loss of their key market e.g. schools' trips or complications with distancing restrictions. Looking ahead, the Tourism Business Barometer showed that of those businesses currently taking forward bookings for 2021, 67% report having fewer bookings than they would normally have at this time of year, with the majority stating that people remain cautious about booking. We recognise that the key to returning to a thriving tourism sector will be to have a strong destination management approach, which serves and communicates well with both businesses and local communities. Working with our partners and key stakeholders, we are taking a twin track approach with planning focusing on immediate actions to reset and drive recovery, through practical, coordinated steps to ensure our tourism businesses are ready and able to welcome visitors back safely. This is coupled with work on a revised strategic framework to support the longer term development of our tourism offer post COVID-19, through our **Destination Management Plan**.

Looking ahead to 2021/22 and beyond, a major challenge for the Council and its partners is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our local economy, so that businesses can once again thrive and provide employment opportunities and bring vibrancy to local our communities. The Vale of Glamorgan is in a fortunate position as regards its highly skilled workforce. However, in developing our plans for recovery, we also recognise that inequalities exist in areas across the Vale and there is urgent need to upskill our existing and future workforce if we are to capitalise on our opportunities for a green recovery. We are working collaboratively at a local, regional and national level to address our challenges and deliver positive, focused interventions which will support the creation of sustainable and resilient Communities within the Vale of Glamorgan, in line with our vision.

## 4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 2: Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

To ensure we continue to meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners, a **Specialist Resource Base at Whitmore High School** is scheduled to open in September 2021. Work is also progressing on the **expansion of Ysgol Y Deri and a new facility, the Centre for Learning and Well-being**, which will further increase capacity to support our most vulnerable learners.

Identified leads in all our primary and secondary schools have **championed the needs of nearly 100 young carers** and proactively engaged with specialist services to review and improve provision. All our secondary schools are working towards implementing the **Young Carers in Schools Programme** and this has improved school-based support available for young carers resulting in improved attainment levels.



Collaboration with contractors, third and public sector projects across the Vale under the **21st Century Schools initiative** has helped **deliver significant community benefits including over 10,000 weeks of new jobs and 5,300 weeks of training opportunities**. Contributed to the economy by utilising local contractors (90%) and labour (56%).

Contractors have also **delivered 44 community initiatives**, including **supporting 3 community gardens** with improvement works and donating to local charities. These **achievements have been recognised in the Council winning 'Best Procurement delivery' at the GO Wales 2021 awards**.



Construction of **Llancarfan Primary School, the first net zero carbon primary school in Wales is underway**. We have also supported existing schools to decarbonise by developing and distributing energy behaviour change resources. This work ties in with the Council's wider climate change initiative,



Project Zero.

As part of developing green spaces to support pupils' learning, we have **produced and distributed resources for schools to help them enhance and utilise their outdoor spaces for nature, learning and play**. Wick and Marcross primary school have established outdoor learning areas including a habitat garden project with Year 3 pupils, a nursery outdoor play project and Forest School. This work supports the Council's Project Zero initiative.



Continued to maximise our investment in ICT in schools via the Welsh Government's Schools ICT Change Programme via the HWB Programme. Increased investment in the network infrastructure across all schools at the start of the pandemic to support blended learning strategies and **provided 6,500 pupil and teacher devices to support learning**.



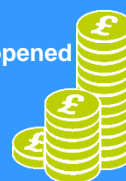
## 4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 2 : Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

In line with our commitment to promote and protect the physical, emotional and social health and well-being of our children and young people, all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan, including Headlands Action for Children School and Westbourne Private School (60/60 settings), have continued to participate in the **Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Schools Scheme**. To date, nearly all have achieved phases 1-5 and the majority are working towards the National Quality Mark (NQA), which is awarded to schools that have achieved the highest standards in all seven healthy school aspects of health and well-being for a minimum of 9 years. **Four schools in the Vale have achieved this prestigious award, Barry Island Primary, Gladstone School, Cadoxton Primary schools and Llantwit Major School.**



As part of the School Reorganisation and Investment Programme and the 21st Century Schools Programme, we have continued to improve the learning environment for pupils in schools across the Vale which supports the successful implementation of strategies for school improvement and better educational outcomes. We remain **on track to complete the Barry Secondary Learning Communities project by July 2022, investing £88.6m in three secondary schools to create modern learning centres** to meet future demand and enable our children and young people to fulfil their full potential. The new facilities will also provide improved local facilities for the wider community. **Whitmore Secondary opened four months ahead of schedule.**



**100% of the schools** we cater for (46 primary, 1 special and 5 secondary schools) remain **compliant with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Regulations**. In addition, **100% of the secondary schools** we cater for remain compliant with the food-based standards contained within the **Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Regulations**.



We are working with our schools to develop trauma informed approaches to preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), a key priority for the Council. During the year, we **implemented a comprehensive trauma and mental health informed training programme and resources to support schools in meeting the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people. Gladstone Primary School is the first Vale school to achieve the Trauma Informed School Award in recognition of its nurture programme** aimed at supporting pupils to build their resilience and help them to achieve their full potential.



In line with our commitment to deliver quality catering services, all existing and new school catering staff have been trained to **Level 2 Food Hygiene Standard**.

In addition, all environmental health inspections undertaken in schools during the year have achieved a Level 4 or Level 5 standard

We are **planting over 1,200 trees from the Woodland Trust** as part of our 21st Century School projects which will help create wildlife areas and also contribute to improved air quality around schools.



Developed a **trauma informed Engagement Service and provision for Foundation Phase children with social, emotional and mental health needs, a first in Wales.**

**Significantly reduced carbon footprint with 99% of construction waste from 21st Century Schools Programme recycled, or energy recovered to reduce emissions from raw material extraction and to avoid landfill use.** The Council has been awarded an additional circa £1m from Welsh Government to support decarbonisation measures as part of the Programme.



## 4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 2 : Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

Collaborated to support young people to secure employment, work placements and training to facilitate employment. 100 achieved qualifications, 101 secured employment and 26 went on to further education or training through the **Inspire to Work** scheme. A further 140 went on to further education or training and 136 achieved qualifications through the **Inspire to Achieve** programme.



Work has continued in improving the employment prospects of young people, despite the challenging economy. **30 Kickstart job placement opportunities were created for 18-24 yearolds** with a further 30 opportunities advertised to date. **20 apprenticeship roles within the council roles** were also created.

**350** tenants who received money advice during the year were still settled? six months later indicating that Money Advice is an extremely effective **intervention to sustain tenancies**.



Year 11 leavers who were NEET, reduced from **1.40% in 2019 to 1.00%** in 2020. In addition, the young people who left year 12 and were categorised as NEET also reduced from **0.80% in 2019 to 0.62%**. This performance is very positive when considered within the context of the global pandemic and its associated impact. The sustained reduction in NEET levels can be attributed to effective partnership working with a focus on prevention and early intervention alongside a comprehensive alternative education offer.



#### Developed and published a directory of alternative education provision for statutory school age pupils.

This useful resource is enabling schools to access alternative education provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who may benefit from more bespoke learning pathways. Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT), the largest engaging provider in the Vale, worked with over 187 pupils with 132 attaining qualifications to date, the remaining are scheduled to complete their qualifications during 2021/22. Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) 14-16 pathways also saw 84 pupils access their programme, an increase of 9% from previous year. 22 young people completed their Junior Apprenticeship programme, compared to eight in the previous year.



Via the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit, we have continued to support victims of loan sharks and have **established a pilot initiative with Credit Unions** to support individuals to borrow via this route. Through digital means, we have successfully delivered training and awareness raising sessions for partner agencies with high take up.



The newly established **Vulnerable Children Tactical Group**, which supported vulnerable children and young people in accessing school hubs, school holiday play provision and assisted their return to schools has continued to work to ensure a cohesive approach in supporting our vulnerable children. The group has also **supported schools to provide holiday provision at 4 schools across Barry and 1 in Llantwit Major**, assisted by Welsh Government funding.



Our **autism resource base** will be welcoming pupils in **September** in new and improved premises at **Whitmore High School**.



## 4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 2 : Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

Supported nearly **2,100 businesses** across trade sectors in complying with the **Coronavirus Restrictions** Regulations and in so doing protecting their employees, customers and clients.



Progressed studies which will deliver **transport improvements** for the Vale including Penarth to Cardiff Bay and WelTAG Studies for Stage Two Plus for M4 J34 to A48 and the Dinas Powys Bypass.

Secured funding from Welsh Government for town **centre improvements in Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth town centres**. Average vacancy rate in our Town and District Retail Centres was 9.61% at end of year, compared to a Welsh average of 15.9%.



The much anticipated **Goodsheds development** was completed on time with support of the Council and the Targeted Regional Investment strategy. The development is **one of the first sustainable urban high street in the UK** where people can work, eat, live and play and boasts a mixture of independent food and drink, boutique retail and lifestyle and spaces to do business. The project won the '**creating economic growth award**' as well overall '**winner of winners**' at the 2020 Ystadau Cymru awards.



**2,500** businesses were advised on funding and business support through the discretionary grant process and via evolutive. **328** business start-ups received support from the council and **29** community led organisations were financially supported.



Since its launch in April 2020, the Vale '**one stop shop**' for housing support has advised nearly **1,000 individuals**. **76%** of people who accessed the service have never had support previously.

To date we have: supported and delivered successful outcomes on 160 homelessness cases; successfully met the tenancy support related needs of 956 out of 976 people accessing the service; 302 people were signposted to mental health support with successful outcomes; 260 people successfully accessed employment support including employability training; 445 out of 450 people successfully accessed budgeting, benefits, grants advice and support; partnered with the Vale foodbank to coordinate and deliver food parcels to those in need.



Worked with the third sector to develop, support and promote volunteer opportunities in the community e.g. **Age Connect's community shopping for elderly and vulnerable citizens** in the Vale, helping to reduce loneliness, isolation and improve mental health.



Promoted opportunities for people with a learning disability to take up **community volunteering opportunities** with further interest in upcoming opportunities with the Housing Trust, Good Sheds and local charities.

## 4.3 CHALLENGES

### Objective 2 : Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

Concerns about the deterioration in the **social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) of children and young people** pre-dated the pandemic, but a recent survey undertaken by the Children's Commissioner (January 2021) has shown further deterioration. The key emerging challenge for schools is the increasing number of children and young people displaying very complex SEMH difficulties which in turn have a significant impact on their ability to learn and to interact positively with adults and peers. As a consequence, there has been an increasing number of children and young people who were difficult to include in mainstream settings. This is exemplified by the increasing numbers of referrals from schools to the Social Emotional Mental Health Panel SEMHP where specialist provisions are considered as well as placements in primary and secondary settings which are highly skilled in supporting pupils with significant SEMH needs. This has resulted in **increasing levels of exclusion, increasing requests for specialist services and specialist placements, increasing numbers of children and young people being educated other than at school (EOTAS), more pupils accessing out of school provision (OOST), and higher number of parents choosing to educate their children at home (EHE)**. It was also evident that children were displaying these difficulties at a much younger age which was placing **increased pressure on early years and primary school settings**. We recognise that there is an urgent need for all our schools, to work within an evidence based, psychologically informed framework that incorporates an understanding of Developmental Trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences, Attachment and the neuroscience of mental health and ill health. We have already made significant progress in this area, for example we have established a trauma informed Engagement Service and our provision for foundation phase children with SEMH is a first in Wales. We will continue to work with Schools and our partners to **expand the trauma informed approach across the Vale of Glamorgan and support our most vulnerable learners**.

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The Vale remains one of the lowest funded authorities per pupil in Wales. Whilst the low level of funding received but high levels of outcomes of attainment, demonstrates that good value for money is being achieved in providing our services, **the need to continue to raise attainment levels against a backdrop of an ongoing national reduction in education funding and an increase in pupils attending Vale schools presents significant challenges** for the future. The ongoing low levels of funding are not sustainable in the long term, especially given the unfolding impact of COVID-19, and could threaten key services going forward. Looking ahead a public sector pay freeze and more austerity have already been indicated by Westminster to meet the cost of the coronavirus pandemic. That means even less money will come to Wales for education and other spending.

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As a result of Wales being the only UK nation not running GCE A levels in 2021, it is unclear whether the assessments replacing them and GCSEs as part of the new curriculum will be respected and valued by Higher Education here as they are elsewhere. There is need to ensure that this does not put our young people at a **disadvantage when competing for higher education places with peers who sat recognised exams**.

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There is a **need to ensure that all children and young people re-engage and catch-up on learning lost** during the lockdowns and self-isolation to ensure they are not further disadvantaged. Whilst some funds have been allocated by Welsh Government to support learning recovery, the sheer scale of what needs to be achieved in the short to medium term will **require significant and sustained investment over a number of years**. School budgets were already under significant pressure and the impact of **COVID-19 has further exacerbated the situation**. **Progressing with radical curriculum reforms against this backdrop will be challenging for all involved and may put its success at risk**.

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Pre-pandemic, standards of achievement across the Vale were an improving picture, however the **impact of the pandemic on pupil progress has been significant, especially vulnerable groups**, and there is need to ensure effective input from the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service in schools to **support the recovery of learning lost and deliver the required impact and improvements in terms of continuing to raise attainment**

**levels across the Vale of Glamorgan, including improved Estyn inspection outcomes.** Under the new inspection framework, which was introduced in September 2017, only 2 schools have been judged as excellent for the inspection areas of standards and teaching and learning experiences. In addition, there is a need to ensure schools are supported and remain focussed in working towards a system of self-improvement.

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We are seeing **increasing demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision and increasing customer expectations which continue to place additional pressure on both central education resources and on individual schools' budgets.** The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act places increased duties on the local authority which impacts on the teams to deliver services in line with these expectations. **COVID-19 has impacted adversely on implementation of the ALN Act** and this work is now being phased in order to provide more time to prepare for the full impact of the Act. This is a particularly complex area of change and the phased approach in the implementation of the Act will be needed.

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The **demand for specialist places for children and young people is increasing, further exacerbated by the pandemic, and meeting this demand is extremely challenging.** The need for out of county placements (for pupils with needs that cannot be met within the Vale) also continues to place pressure on the Learning & Skills Directorate's budget. This budget is volatile and can be significantly affected by changes to a small number of placements of pupils. Work is ongoing to consider wherever possible, appropriate alternatives within county to meet the educational needs of children whilst minimising costs.

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**Pupil attendance remains an area of focus. The pandemic has impacted on our ability to reduce further the number of pupils with low attendance.** Pre-pandemic, pupil attendance had declined slightly at both primary and secondary schools. This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has identified a need for a variety of learning approaches to ensure all children and young people, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are engaged in learning. Working in partnership with schools, the Attainment, Well-being and Engagement Service are engaging and supporting children, young people and their families to improve attendance.

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There is clear evidence that **COVID-19 has impacted on young people in terms of positive education destinations** especially, Year 13 (18-year-olds). The number of NEET young people for the 2019/20 academic year doubled compared to the previous year from 1.5% to 3%. This is an area where we are increasing support. We are also focusing our efforts on identifying those pupils listed as 'unknown' in terms of positive destination outcomes and are working collaboratively to reduce these numbers.

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Britain exiting the European Union in January 2020, continues to present **challenges in funding for a number of initiatives such as Families First, Inspire to Achieve and Inspire to Work** which have traditionally been funded through ESF grant funding. Not knowing where funding will come from, the level of funding and the duration of the funding, if any, creates instability and uncertainty in terms of planning future work which may in turn impact on sustaining the high levels of performance achieved to date in delivering these initiatives. There is a need to ensure that appropriate exit strategies are in place for ESF all funded projects.

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Whilst our schools have risen to the COVID-19 challenge by quickly adopting alternative learning pathways to ensure pupils continue to be supported to learn, it is unlikely that these will replace the learning lost from school and there is a real danger that this may have long-term consequences for the affected cohorts and is likely to **increase education inequalities and potentially trigger disengagement amongst children and young people.**

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A key challenge over the coming year will be to ensure that the **mental health and well-being of children and young people remain supported, particularly in the context of the new school attendance arrangements and ongoing pressure on social care and health services.**

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In accommodating the shift in strategy for blended learning as we move forward, there will be a **need for continuous upskilling of staff in order to build the specialist skills and expertise** required to develop tools and strategies within school settings, the local authority and the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.

We continue to offer an increasing number and range of learning opportunities for adults through community learning and take up rates are high, as are our success rates. However, there is a real danger that these **opportunities may not be sustainable for the long term given ongoing reduced funding**. This threatens the future prospects of many Vale citizens, many of whom may need to retrain to work beyond retirement age as well as unemployed people who need support to train for a new role. Increasing opportunities for people to achieve their full potential remains a key priority for the Council and we continue to work in partnership to ensure people who want to use adult education as a springboard for improving their skills continue to have access to those opportunities.

Whilst overall, we have successfully responded to the COVID-19 challenge by moving learning from classrooms to homes at the scale required over a short period of time, **maintaining and improving distance/remote learning for all pupils over the coming year presents enormous challenges** both human and technical, especially given the overwhelming demands on existing education portals.

Challenges in **meeting the needs of our digitally excluded pupils remain** as we progress with the new school attendance arrangements. We loaned out equipment when schools closed, however, those devices have had to be returned to as they were also needed in the classroom to enable us to deliver our blended learning strategy. We have also provided Wi-Fi for some families up to August 2021, however, the needs of these pupils beyond that will have financial and operational challenges. There is also an issue with the supply chain for digital devices and the lead time (currently 4-6 months) given the global demand.

**Reducing budgets will impact on our ability to effectively plan into the medium to longer term** which could potentially jeopardise the viability and potential success of any future community schemes particularly in areas of regeneration with high unemployment. The uncertainty and inability to manage this change could have a **detrimental impact on establishing more sustainable employment opportunities** into the longer term and ultimately limit our ability to reduce poverty and inequalities.

## 4.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: INSPIRE TO WORK (I2W)

It has long been recognised that improving skills is essential to building sustainable growth and resilient communities. We also know that making education accessible to all is fundamental to a fair society (Equal Wales), ensuring no one is left behind. Our ambition is that the Vale of Glamorgan has a well-educated and skilled population with everyone having an opportunity to learn, develop their skills, access employment and participate in their communities. For economic and social reasons, it is therefore essential that those without employment are helped to gain the right skills to find sustainable work with prospects to progress, and that employers have access to the skilled labour they need to help their businesses succeed.

Young people have suffered disproportionately from unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Spending time not in employment, education or training (NEET) has been shown to have a detrimental impact on physical and mental well-being. This impact is greater when time spent NEET is at a younger age or lasts for longer. There is a link between time spent NEET and poor health, partly due to an increased likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low-quality work later on in life. Being NEET can also have an impact on unhealthy behaviours and involvement in crime. Because the chances of becoming NEET follow a social gradient, reducing the proportion of people NEET could help to reduce health inequalities. The Vale of Glamorgan has some areas which are the most deprived in Wales and we therefore need to ensure that we provide the support and encouragement needed to enable disadvantaged children and young people to improve their skills to enable them to achieve their potential so they can actively participate in society. Data from 2020 (2019/20 academic



year), shows that whilst we continued to sustain the reduction in NEETs for Year 11 (1.4% to 1%) and Year 12 (0.80% to 0.62%), the figure doubled for Year 13 (1.55% to 3.10%).

We have built a **collaborative** approach **involving** schools, further education providers, local employers, the Job Centre and vocational and other alternative learning providers in developing our strategy to reduce the proportion of young people that are NEET. We are working via the Cardiff City Region Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that we focus our work on addressing identified skills gaps to meet the needs of the local and national economy for the **long term**. Our focus on **early intervention and prevention**, that is, tackling the barriers that young people face when attempting to move into education or employment, delivering a comprehensive alternative education offer and tracking of progress is ensuring positive destination outcomes overall. However, we recognise that more needs to be done, especially in light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the prospects for our young people. The example below shows how a **collaborative** and **person-centred approach** taken for young people at risk can prevent them becoming NEET and contribute to positive destination outcomes and improved life chances.

#### **CLIENT JOURNEY: I2W**

Kelly was referred to the I2W project through Penarth Job Centre in April 2018. Kelly was referred for support with employability skills and training due to having a young child. It was decided between the Work Coach and Kelly that the I2W project would be better suited due to the training and one to one support that the I2W project can offer, as opposed to other similar projects that specifically offer childcare as part of their provision. This was identified so as to provide support for Kelly to re-enter the job market once her child began nursery in September 2019. Kelly lacked self-confidence and self-worth due to her being out of employment for many years, as well as from her past personal experiences with family and relationships. Kelly has just turned 23 and lives in a self-contained flat with her three year old child. Kelly was unsure of her options of careers due to her child and minimal family support in relation to childcare. From her engagement in the project, along with exploration of various options, Kelly expressed an interest in working with children through teaching.

Kelly has been supported through the I2W project for a year. During this time, Kelly's support entailed one-to-one meetings as well as her attending a number of training courses that have developed her as an individual by building her confidence as well as giving her an insight into the education profession. The total amount of time supporting Kelly currently comes to over 140 hours to-date, which includes the training that she has attended.

From the start of the project's engagement with Kelly, she has fully embraced the support offered to her and has attended every appointment and training that was arranged for her. Even though she started with very low confidence, this has 100% improved and she has spoken at the I2W regional practitioner event to highlight the positive impact the project has had on her life. Kelly has really focussed on attending training courses that would make an impact in her career choices, which helps to ensure they are as relevant as possible and shows her focus on the career she wants to go into. Some of the courses she has attended require long-term commitment and she has fully embraced these opportunities to educate herself and put her in the best position possible to gain employment within the education profession.

Within her action plan that was developed over a period of time due her uncertainty, Kelly agreed that she would attend suitable training that related to her career choice. Courses she has attended and completed include: Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) level two, accredited; Safeguarding Awareness Raising Internal, non-accredited; Food and Catering level two, accredited; Manual Handling level two, accredited; Emergency First Aid at Work, level three, accredited; Adult Education Training (AET, previously PTLLS) level three, accredited; Food and Nutrition level two, accredited. Kelly will be completing her Learning Support Assistant (LSA), level two, qualification this summer, along with Child Psychology, level one, which are accredited through Highfields and will be particularly relevant to her career choice.

Kelly's commitment to her development is evident by her on-going attendance and drive to complete these courses. The Nutrition course she completed was 10 weeks, with two-hour sessions and the AET course being eight full days, including written assignments and delivery of micro-teach activities. These courses have really helped to develop her confidence and have heavily supported her through the I2W project.

The financial support received has been through paying for the cost of the AET and Nutrition courses, along with providing transport, both to training and for her child to access childcare support from a family member. Kelly did not have access to a laptop or computer in order to complete her assignments for the AET course. For the first couple of weeks, she was handwriting her assignments and was also using community provision within her local library. To help make this process simpler for her, we provided a laptop for her to use on a temporary basis for the duration of the AET course. This will also be used for her LSA and Child Psychology courses through the summer.

The support the I2W project provides in terms of transport to access childcare has allowed Kelly to overcome severe barriers, which were hampering and preventing her pursuing her chosen career as she previously had no relevant experience or qualifications to be considered for employment.

Kelly continues to be in regular contact with the project and has clearly come a long way with her confidence, self-esteem and having a clear insight into her career progression and the steps involved in her achieving this. Support from the project will continue with Kelly for her to complete the final qualifications. The support will also help with job applications that would be suitable for a start in September.

#### **UPDATE: November 2020**

Kelly continued to engage in training courses, however in May 2019 was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, meaning that she would need to go through several months of chemotherapy and an operation. Her treatment continued and she had an all-clear scan followed by an operation to remove the mass later in 2019.

During this time, the support for Kelly went from being employment focussed to a health and well-being focus. The support was fully directed by Kelly through this time and meant that she could remain in contact with her Learning Coach, without the pressure of engaging fully as she had done before.

From November 2019 onwards, Kelly was able to begin attending courses again, with the support of the I2W project. This included paying for additional transport for her due to her medical needs and ensuring the continued support for her child as well. Kelly successfully completed the level two LSA training, Introduction to Child Psychology and Youth Mental Health First Aid training. As a result of this, Kelly's focus had changed, and she decided she wanted to go back into full-time education and applied for a place on the Foundation Degree in Psychology based in Cardiff and Vale College. I2W assisted her with this, supporting her initial transport costs until her grants were received and sourcing funding to cover the cost of a laptop to support her learning.

Kelly has now completed her first year and has thoroughly enjoyed this experience. She has also spoken to assessors as part of the Youth Service's Bronze Quality Mark assessment about her experience and the support she has received from the service and the project.



The **Inspire to Work (I2W)** project has been supporting young people in the Vale of Glamorgan, aged 16 to 24, since April 2017. The project is part funded by the European Social Fund. The project aims to support young people who are currently not in education, employment or training, into education,

employment or training. This is done through various methods, including targeted one to one support, group sessions, training courses, work experience, apprenticeships to name a few.

Many of the young people supported have barriers to engagement, some of which include poor experiences of education, poor support structures within their life, involvement with the justice system, substance use, lack of stable homelife and poor mental health. I2W take referrals from professionals, both internal and external of the Council. These referrals provide an element of insight into the needs of the young person, but it is not until the Learning Coach meets and begins to develop a rapport with the young person that the understanding of their needs become clearer. Each member of staff is a qualified youth worker and they utilise this skill-base to build a meaningful relationship with the individual. Some of the team have also attended additional training in counselling skills in order to provide another skill-base to support the young people. The project is based on voluntary engagement and does not force an individual to engage, meaning that any support provided is done at the pace the young person sets.

Each young person has an action plan developed, which is then monitored and reviewed as the support goes on. Even though some elements will crossover with other young people, each plan is set with the young person's individual needs at the forefront. As part of this, barriers to engagement or things that may negatively impact their well-being are identified with plans put in place to help address these.

The support each young person receives can vary massively, however this is adjusted based on the needs of the individual. It has been found that in situations where there is either poor, or non-existent, family support, or where there has been bereavement of any immediate support structure, that the staff team have to build in an element of nurture to their engagement as this has been potentially missing from their lives for many years. In relation to well-being, addressing this basic need is fundamental as without this, it will make sustaining any progression to education, employment or training unrealistic. Each young person has a different starting point in their journey, meaning that some young people may not be ready to engage in support of varying levels immediately; it can sometimes take weeks or months of one to one contact before a young person is ready to engage in a training course or group session.

As a rapport is built with the young person, it may become evident that the individual has some wider barriers that could be impacting their well-being. Examples of this include financial issues, housing situation, substance use and mental health issues. The I2W project acknowledge that they are not always best suited to support in these more specialist areas but have a good knowledge of partners and other agencies who the young person can be signposted to for support. The team support young people to attend meetings with new agencies or when starting work experience placements, so as to have a familiar face in order to alleviate any anxiety around meeting new professionals. Depending on the additional support required and being offered, it may be appropriate for the I2W staff to withdraw support at that time however, in the majority of cases, the team continue to support in partnership with other agencies to ensure the best package and consistency is in place for the individual.

Part of the provision on offer is to attend training courses, which help to increase knowledge in areas of work they are interested in exploring, gaining work relevant qualifications and certification as well as building their confidence in both a group scenario and also with their own ability. This is particularly relevant to those who are long-term unemployed as they may not have been able to do this since leaving compulsory education. Within the training courses, the project supports the transport of young people to be able to attend and provides lunch and refreshments for all in attendance. By doing this, young people who cannot afford to pay for their own lunch are not singled out within the group, resulting in a much more positive environment and again, removing any anxieties these young people may feel. It also means that the young people have sufficient energy levels to actively take part in the learning on offer. The same principle is applied to supporting young people to attend work experience, college courses and employment. The project can assist with covering certain costs for these situations, where young people are financially unable to support themselves.

Young people's lives can be highly erratic, with changes happening with little to no notice. This can be from them presenting as being homeless, becoming involved with the criminal justice system, physical health issues

as well as financial concerns. With the support of the project, the team are able to flexibly adapt and support young people as these changes occur, adjusting priorities to focus on those that are most relevant to the young people at that time. Where needed, the team also seek support and additional funding from other sources, including local charities and teams within the Council, to help cover the cost of certain items. Examples that the project has purchased for young people include bikes for young people to access employment and training opportunities; white good products to support young people moving to non-equipped buildings or when their own items break and; laptops to be able to access online courses and training, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn supports the young people to become less isolated.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, support has continued to be given to the young people and this has been done through email, phone calls, online sessions through Microsoft Teams and also doorstep visits being undertaken for those who are especially vulnerable. During parts of the pandemic, food parcels and hygiene packs were delivered to support some of these young people who were particularly struggling, as well as meeting young people who were particularly isolated within their local communities.

In terms of impact, since the I2W programme commenced, 240 young people have enrolled, 25 have entered further education/ training, 102 have gained a recognised qualification and 106 have entered full-time employment.

## 5.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT PEOPLE AT HOME AND IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Our overall performance status for this Well-being Objective is **AMBER**

### 5.1 POSITION STATEMENT

We could not write a review reflecting back on 2020/21 without mentioning the impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on delivering the annual commitments aligned to our well-being objective 'to support people at home and in their community'. Although **the pandemic has impacted significantly on the levels of demand for our services and challenged how we deliver those services**, it has not changed the essence of what we do, which is supporting people at home and in their community. Without a doubt this year, more than ever, we have made a difference in the lives of many Vale citizens for whom the services we provide have been a lifeline.

The Council's vision of working together for a brighter future has underpinned all our in-year activities under this well-being objective. The experiences of the pandemic, and the way in which partners across the Vale of Glamorgan, regionally and nationally were able to work together to respond, has been a beacon of hope during challenging times. The way services across all sectors were able to pull together and use their collective skills and resources in new and creative ways is a success story that will be built upon. We **distributed over 21 million items of personal protection equipment (PPE) and 106,000 test kits, supported nearly 160 hospital discharges, 50 residential and nursing homes, 42 domiciliary care providers, over 200 people in receipt of direct payments, 148 unpaid workers and 19 third sector providers** to list a few. The identification of vulnerable people in our communities, **the joint response from partners and the benefits of working more closely with local communities is an approach that we will continue to develop further in 2021/22 and beyond** as we recover from the pandemic.



Despite the significant challenges of the year, we have determined that on balance, we have made positive progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments that contribute to Well-being Objective 3 for the period 2020/21. This has contributed to an overall **Amber** status for the objective at end of year. 57% (36 out of 63) of planned activities have been successfully delivered. Across the objective, actions were assigned a Red status to reflect slippage, and this accounted for just under 43% (27) of all planned activities for 2020/21. Of the 27 actions contributing to the Well-being Objective, which have been attributed a Red performance status, 26 (96%) were as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Work in relation to these areas remain priorities and have been carried forward within respective Service Plans for 2021/22.

67% (12/18) of performance indicators aligned to Objective 3 were attributed a Green status, 11% (2) were attributed an Amber status and 22% (4) a Red status. In relation to the 4 measures attributed a Red status, 3 performance was affected by the impact of COVID-19 and has contributed to missing agreed targets.

Whilst COVID-19 has dominated our work since February 2020 and rightly features widely in our account of the year, we also want to **recognise the incredible work that has taken place in extraordinary circumstances**. As reiterated earlier, we have not done this alone, our partners have been very much on board, helping us to continue to provide essential and much valued services to Vale citizens to enable them to make choices that help fulfil their potential and support their health and well-being. Our **inclusive and**



**collaborative approach involving key stakeholders, including service users and their families and our communities has enabled us to strengthen existing services whilst developing new and innovative opportunities to further enhance and improve outcomes for our citizens.** This approach will become ever more important in the coming year and beyond as we work to mitigate the unprecedented impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Our aim is to enable Vale citizens to make informed and healthy choices for themselves, contributing to a reduction in health inequalities and an improved healthy life expectancy. Effectively supporting people at home and in their communities plays a key role in contributing to this aim. During the year, our **services have continued to work in partnership to support the well-being of Vale citizens through more integrated prevention and early intervention initiatives and through influencing the wider determinants of health and well-being such as the environment, housing, employment and education with a long-term focus in mind.** This approach is in line with the WBFG Act which requires us to integrate our work so that no single action creates only one impact. This holistic approach to delivering our Well-being Objectives means that the many of the achievements reported under this well-being outcome will also contribute to our other three Well-being Objectives. Throughout this annual review we have provided examples of this approach in practice and describe how through building strong partnerships and using our assets innovatively, we are supporting the well-being and resilience of our citizens and equipping them with the right skills and opportunities to help them fulfil their potential in a changing world.

We know that healthy eating and being more active are important determinants of health and well-being, especially in preventing long-term harms. Through the **Move More Eat Well Plan** and the **Vale of Glamorgan Sport and Physical Activity Plan** (which sets out a framework for local action), we are taking a co-ordinated approach with our partners to promote and support healthy life choices for citizens of all ages, focusing on increasing participation rates through a variety of opportunities including environment, active travel, play, people and families, workplace and workforce and active communities. Despite the challenges of the past year, our collaborative approach has enabled us to adapt various projects aligned to our annual



commitments into different formats including virtual formats. We have developed and distributed a breadth of resources which have been shared widely to promote the physical and mental benefits from participating in leisure, sports and physical activity. This approach has given citizens of all ages and abilities greater access to opportunities as many were low or no cost to participants thus taking away the barrier of cost which some residents face. It has also targeted key areas such as schools, clubs, vulnerable children and young people and older people, through virtual multi-sport challenges, competitions, festivals and coach training. It is also important to acknowledge that not all residents have access to technology, and many did not have the experience or knowledge of how to access via this means. In response, projects have included upskilling of residents in the

use of technology as part of their delivery, for example the 60 Plus Leisure Scheme, creating confident coaches and the National Exercise Referral Scheme initiatives. Whilst the re-introduction of face to face activity is welcomed, it is recognised that online opportunities will continue to play an important part in moving forward, helping to overcome barriers faced by some residents such as the inability to travel to activities, a lack of time to travel to activities and a lack of confidence to participate in front of others.

Based on most recent published data (2020), 80.1% of Vale children aged 4 to 5 years are a healthy weight compared to the Wales average of 72.4%. 36% of Vale adults are a healthy weight (38% Wales average) with 26% stating that they eat five a day fruit and vegetables (24% Wales average). 55% are active for at least 150 minutes a week (53% Wales average). Whilst some of these figures are encouraging, we also recognise that there is a long way to go in creating environments that remove barriers to healthy eating and moving more which will have a significant, positive impact on the well-being of Vale citizens and help to reduce inequalities. We are committed to working with our partners to achieve this.

The need for social distancing and restrictions on movement to contain **COVID-19** have significantly impacted on leisure provision with sustained lost income and high maintenance costs associated with running these facilities. These facilities are not only important in maintaining the mental and physical well-being and social connectedness of our communities, they play a key role in economic regeneration and growth, through jobs and services and making local areas attractive places to live and work, all which will also help stimulate local economic recovery. We also recognise the importance and long-term benefits of a strong leisure infrastructure on citizen well-being and in progressing that agenda. Consequently, we have supported our provider, Legacy Leisure through the past year and are taking a partnership-focused approach in working to identify what will work best for them and, in the long-term, our communities to progress our priorities.

In recognition of the health and well-being benefits of good quality, accessible green space and infrastructure, we have developed a **Green Infrastructure Strategy**. The strategy also supports our commitments to maintain existing and develop new green spaces sustainably, increase opportunities and accessibility to enable citizens to participate in leisure and physical activity, improve social inclusion and community cohesion, invest in economic regeneration and promote economic growth and tackle climate change. Delivery of our Green Infrastructure strategy is a long-term project and will rely on strong partnerships across all sectors and with our communities to succeed. The Council in approving this strategy has signed up to champion green infrastructure and will need to ensure that this is at the heart of its decision making by taking an integrated approach to its management, enhancement, extension and promotion. Ultimately this will help to reduce health inequalities and improve the well-being of all citizens at home and in their communities.

We recognise our key role in helping to create sustainable communities that people want to live in. Through targeted investment we are helping to improve the prospects and opportunities for residents and inspire them to fulfil their potential. We successfully concluded our existing **Community Investment Strategy** and developed a new draft strategy for the future with a continued focus on supporting community investment activities that contribute to social progress and create opportunities that can help empower and improve the lives of local people, to help build strong resilient communities. Our priorities to help residents increase their skills and employment prospects, improve health and well-being, strengthen communities and promote financial and digital inclusion within communities continue to remain relevant going forward especially in light of the unfolding impact of the pandemic. In terms of outcomes to date, nearly 1,000 residents have gained vocational qualifications, 117 have secured employment and 7 gained apprenticeships. Residents have also participated in a variety of initiatives to improve their health and well-being including timebanking (527 volunteers), sport and physical activities (700). As part of strengthening communities nearly 5,000 people were involved in community-based projects such as the Gibby green fingers allotment project, Llantwit Major garden project, the kicks football project, community litter picks and skip amnesties. 630 residents participated in digital inclusion training sessions, 3,870 took up financial and money advice support and tenants were supported to claim nearly £1.2 million in welfare benefits.

It is widely acknowledged that the provision of **active travel** plays an important role in encouraging people to become more active. Furthermore, evidence suggests that increasing physical activity has the added benefit of significantly easing the burden of chronic and long-term disease on health and social care services and by reducing absenteeism. Consequently, our focus throughout the year has been on working collaboratively to maximise opportunities to improve cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure throughout the Vale and proactively promoting these through our schools and in the wider community. 2020/21 has seen key improvement schemes in Penarth, Llantwit Major, St Brides Major, Ogmore by Sea, St. Athan, Sully and Dinas Powys which have further enhanced our active travel networks. Work has also progressed on the Barry Dock and Cogan Interchanges as part of regional work on sustainable transport options. This work forms part of the Green Infrastructure strategy which supports our aspirations to encourage people out of their cars.



We acknowledge that how we design our neighbourhoods and towns is key to promoting healthy travel habits and are therefore working towards **developing more active environments which make active travel an easier and safer choice for all citizens**. The work being undertaken at both the local and regional level (via the Cardiff Capital Region and with developers) is informing how we design, build and connect our neighbourhoods and towns and the transport systems which support these in order to encourage, increase and sustain citizen participation in active travel for the future. For example, we are promoting and delivering more mixed-use developments, where local facilities such as shops, GP practices, schools and other services are located, as these are important in providing short trip distances amenable to routine walking and cycling. We continue to engage with our communities to ensure that interventions that promote and support active travel and public transport are equitable and do not increase health inequalities. Delivering on our commitment to increase opportunities for active travel over the long term will enable residents to enjoy the widely recognised benefits to society associated with increased walking and cycling such as reduced traffic congestion, improved local air quality, reduced carbon emissions, reduced road casualties, improved social cohesion and improved public realm, all which contribute to improved quality of life overall. Alongside supporting people at home and in their community, the impact of this work also contributes to the other three Council Well-being Objectives.

Our Arts and Culture Strategy, **‘An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale’** recognises the important role that the arts play in improving the health and well-being of residents and its contribution to the local economy. Throughout 2020/21, our lives and society as a whole have been threatened by a pandemic of unprecedented scale. The resilience and adaptability that Vale citizens have shown is a clear demonstration of how an ability to think creatively is present in each of us. An understanding of the role of creativity in all our lives and everyone’s right to access this is at the heart of our Strategy. Of course, we now face a very different world, but the goals and principles of our Strategy remain at the forefront of any decisions and planned activities as we seek to support our local arts organisations through this crisis and beyond. We want



to ensure that all Vale residents continue to have opportunities to be creative and that art and our cultural and historical heritage continue to be enjoyed and conserved for the future. To this end we have engaged with all key stakeholders in reviewing the strategy and this is informing the development of a new operating model for arts and culture services which is sustainable and cost neutral to the Council. Due to COVID-19 measures in force throughout last year, our work has focused on supporting 17 public arts projects which involved engaging with communities virtually to inform commissions with artists for example, the Paget Road seating areas, Arcot Triangle art works, Dingle Park, Penarth Cliff top shelter, Dinas Powys basketball park. These projects will continue to invigorate our civic

spaces and introduce uniqueness to our communities. We collaborated with artists on a major online exhibition, ‘Arts in Isolation’ streamed through YouTube and have supported local arts by distributing Creative Freelancer Grants from the Wales Cultural Recovery Fund and the Arts Council for Wales ‘Connect and Flourish’ Grant. Over the coming year we will work collaboratively with local artists and arts organisations to further align activities to enable us to maximise the funding opportunities emerging from the Cultural Recovery fund.

We want Vale citizens to be enabled to take control of their health and well-being throughout their lives and to be as independent as possible. To do this, they need the right support in the right place at the right time. Although most can fulfil their potential by themselves, others need help, sometimes throughout their lives. In order to **transform and integrate health and social care** we have continued to work in partnership across the Vale of Glamorgan with a focus on creating a strong, sustainable, person-centred and integrated health and social care system which improves outcomes for our citizens. Our model of care is designed to deliver more care outside hospital wherever possible, provide integrated and holistic services and work in partnership to maintain health, well-being and independence for as long as possible. We are making a difference by committing to joint plans, delivering change using blended teams across organisations, and pooling resources across Health and local authority partners including the third sector wherever possible.

This approach is ensuring that we are increasingly providing care and support in a more consistent way, modernising how care is delivered, providing care which is easier to access and navigate, and moving more integrated care into community settings.

In the last year, more has been achieved in integrating health and social care due the impact of the pandemic which focused our purpose. On reflection, we know that **sharing data and intelligence** across the sector into a single view of our communities allowed us to supplement and enhance the offer we provided to a much larger part of our communities, well beyond the Welsh Government's shielding list. The challenge is how we pivot the sector to work in ways driven by data and intelligence to deliver new more integrated services across communities.

Alongside this, work has continued to enhance **person-centred approaches** that ensure services are fully integrated as part of an end-to-end approach to delivering care. This is in line with our commitment to ensure that wherever possible, we support citizens to live independently at home and for as long as possible. During the year, we have commissioned and provided a wide range of services to support people to maintain their independence, enable them to be part of society, protect them and meet a variety of care needs. We have enabled choice and control through promoting direct payments which has encouraged service users to take an active role in their assessment and support planning and take up rates continue to increase. Improving the information available to citizens through a variety of mechanisms including digital platforms has provided the choice and information needed to encourage more people to self-serve. This work has taken place in parallel with our ongoing pandemic response and managing the capacity challenge of delivering business as usual.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, some work has progressed in **laying the foundations for a new operating model for delivering integrated adult health and social care services** with funding secured to further develop this way of working '**Alliance Model**' in the coming year. We are taking an **outcomes-based approach to the commissioning and contracting of services** with projects such as '**Your Choice**' critical in helping us transform how we design, develop and deliver services for people who need help to remain healthy, safe and independent in their own homes. Although work in this area has focused on service continuity during the past year, we have successfully supported vulnerable individuals to stay at home which has been a priority for many during the pandemic. This has been achieved by delivering packages of outcome-focused care that meets the assessed needs of service users which has given them greater choice and control over their services wherever possible. Looking forward into 2021/22, we have successfully identified new providers for inclusion in the service which will enable us to expand delivery of this outcome-based care model.

We are committed to providing in-house foster carers to support our children to thrive and fulfil their potential. Research shows that this approach not only improves outcomes for children but provides greater stability in a child's education and connections to friends and birth families. Working across a regional footprint has enabled us to further enhance and strengthen our recruitment and retention of foster carers. During the year, we supported the **development of a regional core offer for foster carers** which focuses on attracting new carers and retaining existing ones. We also developed and **enhanced our local branding as part of the Foster Wales brand**. We have increased our pool of foster carers which has enabled greater choice and matching for children in care (the number of new foster carers increased by 10 in 2020/21



compared to 6 in the previous year). Significant work has gone into strengthening placement stability through additional and wrap-around support to carers (fewer looked after children (7.8%) experienced three or more placements as a result of our focus on strengthening placement stability. This remains an area of focus, especially given the increased demand for placements recently.

Our unpaid carers (approximately 150 of whom are registered with the Council) are invaluable, and this past year has really highlighted the need to continue to develop the ways we support them. In line with our **regional Carer's strategy**, we have proactively promoted and supported the work of the **Carers Gateway** (community-based outreach service for carers providing information and advice delivered by the Carers Trust South East Wales). This service has been invaluable during the pandemic in supporting carers through the crisis when they often found themselves isolated in their caring role. Work has also continued with regional partners, to ensure unpaid carers of all ages are identified early, feel valued, respected and supported. A Young Carer's Identity card is currently being developed as part of this work.

We recognise that **technology-based care co-ordination has the potential to transform how social care services are delivered** to our citizens and are developing our use to both optimize service efficiency and enhance service user experience and outcomes. During the past year, technology has played a significant role in supporting the work of social care services, in collaboration with service users, local partners and communities. It has enabled us to maintain service continuity by helping our vulnerable citizens to maintain daily activities which are important to them as well as providing care delivery. This was essential to balance the need to protect and support whilst avoiding causing harm by the spread of infection. We have also effectively used technology preventatively in the context of early intervention, individual resilience and taking a person-centred approach, resulting in positive outcomes for service users. Projects such as the '**See Me' project**, (which supports service users to create profiles about themselves that communicate information about who they are, what their likes and dislikes are, and what's important to them through a video about themselves) **development of a SMART transition house** (using technology solutions to support independent living), **the Insight App** (digital skills upskilling for people with learning disabilities), arrangement with Boots for a **digital medication administration system** in our care homes, undertaking **remote case assessments and reviews** and **telecare provision** have not only enhanced the digital skills of social care workers and service users, they have been instrumental in promoting a person centred approach to care and support which has enabled us to work more effectively in partnership to co-produce better outcomes. Going forward, we will consolidate the current enthusiasm and culture change that has enabled the rapid digital transformation during the pandemic by working in partnership to further develop and co-produce our approach.

We remain committed to **providing care and support to children and families in need** which reflects their individual strengths and circumstances. Our approach aims to put individuals, families and communities at the heart of care and well-being, and in doing so strengthen relationships between members of that community, build social capital and recognise the assets that people can bring to the assessment process. This '**strengths-based' approach** has been so important within the context of COVID-19 as communities came together to support each other over the past year. Our primary focus this year has been on our emergency response to the pandemic and ensuring continuity of care and support to vulnerable children and young people and their families. Despite these challenges, we have made positive progress in implementing a consistent practice framework which will underpin our work and help inform interventions. Our agreed practice framework includes the practice tools, techniques and approaches to support practitioners in the practical application of strengths-based approaches for example, 'Kit Bags' to reinforce the importance of communication and emotional literacy. We have also secured the services of experts in relationship-based work with children and families and practice supervisor development to support implementation of our framework. We recognise that this is a journey and embedding this practice will take time and will require the co-ordinated effort of our social care practitioners, professionals that work with children and young people and their families, and children and young people and their families.



We acknowledge the impact that social isolation can have on health and well-being along with the benefits derived by people being connected and feeling more included and involved in their local communities. These connections and relationships can support people to remain safe and well, they also provide informal support and monitoring that helps to mitigate the risks of illness and mental or physical health problems. The considerable burden of mental illness means that strengthening individual resilience and helping people with mental illness to recover remain key priorities for us, especially given the unfolding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise the **key role that our schools, workplaces and community settings have in proactively supporting mental health alongside our health and social care systems** and are taking a whole-system approach to promoting good mental health and preventing poor mental health. As part of our



preventative approach, we have further enhanced the **resources and information available on Dewis Cymru** (personalised well-being information and advice service) to help signpost people to the most appropriate support for them in a clear and effective way. We have taken a collaborative approach with partners in proactively

promoting these resources through a number of mechanisms including the **Council's Contact Centre (C1V)**, our **housing and advice one stop** shop and our services generally as well as through number of digital platforms. Our one stop shop for housing and advice which was launched in April 2020, signposted 302 people to mental health support with successful outcomes. 76% of people who accessed the service have never had support previously. So far, 28 teachers and professionals have been trained as **Youth Mental Health First Aiders** to help spot the early signs and encourage young people to seek help within a supportive environment. We are also working across Health and the Voluntary sector to meet our statutory responsibilities for adult and children's mental health needs and helping citizens to stay connected within their communities.

As a well evidenced preventative measure, we are also **building on our leisure offer in recognition of the mental health benefits that participating in leisure, sport and physical activity has on individuals** and are proactively promoting opportunities, for example, through ensuring safe access to our parks and open green spaces, youth services, expanding our libraries online offer and encouraging all physical activity. There was a noticeable increase in people accessing our green and public spaces for exercise and sport during the pandemic and we are also working collaboratively to build on this enthusiasm to encourage our citizens to become 'hooked on sport' which will have long lasting benefits on their health and well-being in the long term.

At the heart of being trauma-informed is a focus on health and well-being and relationships, and a drive to support the growth and development of children and young people, many of whom come from areas of disadvantage and require additional targeted support to help them fulfil their potential. Consequently, ensuring our schools continue to **work towards becoming trauma-informed and mentally healthy places for all pupils** remains a priority. We recognise that by taking a preventative approach in supporting mental well-being in our schools and learning establishments earlier on, this will help improve the emotional intelligence of our children and young people, helping them develop the tools they need to help them become more resilient adults. In response to increased need, we have **strengthened capacity within our trauma informed Engagement Service** to work with schools to meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people. **Additional provision for school-based counselling** has also been commissioned (via Barnardo's Cymru) to increase capacity. The development of a trauma informed Engagement Service and provision for foundation phase children with social, emotional and mental health is a first in Wales. Alongside these improvements, we have delivered a **comprehensive programme of training and support for schools to develop trauma informed approaches**, launched 'Motional' an **online toolkit for schools for identifying, assessing, and improving the emotional health and well-being** of children and young people, a comprehensive library of resources to support trauma informed approaches through the **resilience project**, and **established a formal multi-agency panel to triage referrals and share best practice and expertise** on addressing the social, emotional and mental health needs of young people to improve their

well-being. **Psychology-led interventions for children and families most in need** who do not meet criteria for support from specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is also provided through the resilience project. We have also established a partnership working arrangement with the NHS in terms of the Resilience Project which looks to support pupils with complex SEMH needs in the secondary education sector. In recognition of the intensity of this work and the impact of this on well-being, we have **increased provision of clinical supervision for education staff working as trauma informed practitioners**. A centre for **Learning and Well-being** is also due to open later in September 2021 which will further enhance provision in this area.

**Employee well-being and resilience** continues to remain a key Council priority and this message has been reinforced with various initiatives, support and guidance for managers and employees throughout the past year. This has included **advice on health and well-being, introduction of well-being initiatives, remote line management guidance, encouraging the use of technology to stay in touch with colleagues, peer-led initiatives through the council's 40 well-being champions, a health screening service through the Occupational Health service and a confidential counselling service to employees** on a 24 hour, 365 days a year basis. A weekly message from the Managing Director which recognises and thanks teams whilst continuing to



provide corporate and official updates has been very well received. Whilst sickness absence has improved during the year to 8.59 days per FTE compared to 10.51 days in the previous year, we acknowledge that there is a potential that more non-productive days are being lost due to presenteeism (where a member of staff is unwell but attending work, rather than taking a type of leave or sickness absence) and a number of initiatives have been introduced to manage the key drivers in tackling presenteeism, such as improving digital applications/access, lifestyle and well-being programmes and managing the use of annual leave.

Our response to COVID-19 has been a catalyst for change in terms of our workforce and has allowed us to reimagine what it will look like in the coming year and beyond. This will be a workforce that is supported to excel and be well, work in a transformed way and deliver improved services. This will include plans for safe working in offices, a refreshed health and well-being offer co-produced with employees and trade unions, ways of working that will support staff to work even more flexibly across different locations and services, and guidance for employees and managers. Our plans are being informed by our recent employee survey which had circa 1,160 respondents with nearly three quarters of these working from home. Although most felt they were supported and had the right equipment to work remotely, a significant number also listed social isolation and communication with co-workers as their top two biggest challenges. Also, most would prefer a mix of working at home and in the office as a model of working going forward. Looking ahead to 2021/22, a key challenge remains in formalising the new ways of working, that is, agreeing the behaviours, practices, and systems that will support the blend of different combinations of working locations and service delivery priorities as well as the well-being of employees.

We continue to work in partnership locally and regionally to protect our vulnerable citizens from harm. Through our **Corporate Safeguarding arrangements**, we are ensuring that the **Wales Safeguarding Procedures** are consistently embedded across the Council. In light of the challenging circumstances, work has focused throughout the year in ensuring a consistent approach council-wide through operational practice, review of policies and procedures and provision of training to support practitioners including within education settings. A **Regional Exploitation Strategy** has been launched and a program of awareness-raising and training developed. We are working in partnership to review the priorities of the **Regional Safeguarding Board** to reflect the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Our **Shared Regulatory Services** have continued to play a key role in championing consumer protection, ensuring that businesses are able to trade in an environment that is fair and that consumer goods are safe. The Service has also played an enhanced and pivotal regulatory role as a result of a range of **new COVID-19**

**regulations** aimed at regulating trading premises, public outdoor spaces and events. These have included **ensuring compliant personal protective equipment, business compliance with restrictions, supporting the Test, Trace and Protect and Mass Immunisation strategies and responding to scams and financial abuse** which have increased significantly during the pandemic.



We place high priority on keeping our communities safe and are working in partnership to create sustainable solutions to **reduce crime and disorder and supporting victims of crime and disorder**. We want Vale communities to be thriving and inclusive places where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities participate and help each other, feel included, are resilient and safe and take pride in their local area. Our work through the **Safer Vale Partnership** takes an integrated approach which focuses on prevention and early intervention, joint enforcement as a standard approach and timely support for victims with a view to reducing crime and disorder in the long term. Our strong partnership approach has been key in helping to effectively navigate the community safety challenges presented over the past year. During the year, we dealt with a significant number of community safety concerns around citizen behaviour and non-compliance with COVID-19

legislation which were effectively addressed (over 1,400 anti-social behaviour incidents were reported of which nearly 1,000 related to COVID-19 breaches).

We implemented a Communications Strategy to improve **engagement with residents on community cohesion-based matters**. As part of this work, we have been proactive on social media and other digital platforms throughout the year on a variety of community safety issues. Our focused work with residents through the community cohesion officer has helped to resolve issues quickly, reducing escalation of community tension issues. Due to the pandemic, there were more (43) tension monitoring referrals received during the year which was a 72% increase from the 25 received in the same period last year, mainly relating to breaches of COVID-19 restrictions. We have increased sign-up to Vale Connect by Neighbourhood Watch members thereby improving their access to information and updates (including the Community Safety monthly highlight report), assistance where needed and training.

In line with our commitment to **improve the outcomes of individuals and families affected by violence and abuse**, we have implemented target hardening (safeguarding) measures in 97 properties (out of 431 high risk cases assessed) and clients have reported that they are happy with the service and that it has made them feel safer. Work has also continued via the Drive project to support high-harm, high risk and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to make the necessary changes required to reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents and protect victims. We also enhanced our assessment and monitoring mechanisms which has enabled more robust and earlier intervention for high-risk domestic abuse cases. 75% of cases involving individuals and families affected by violence and abuse received support much earlier ensuring a more responsive service and a less resource intensive solution for partners and support agencies.

Looking ahead to 2020/21/22, whilst concerns such as antisocial behaviour and environmental issues are still major concerns, domestic abuse, impact of loneliness and mental health and increased inequality have now been highlighted as long-term challenges. We also know that the economic and social repercussions of COVID-19 will have implications longer-term for crime and community safety. As a partnership, work is ongoing to capture the learning from our response over the past year to inform future work as part of our recovery from COVID-19.

It is well evidenced that good quality housing has a direct impact on the general health and well-being of households improving emotional well-being, decreasing the risk of long-term health conditions and improving educational attainment. Housing is also a key enabler to delivering our other well-being objectives as a secure, quality, and affordable home in the right location is essential for a good quality of life. Housing

matters, it influences people's security, resilience, health, access to education and employment and can enable the effective provision of care.

We continue to **invest in our council homes to ensure they remain complaint with the Welsh Housing Quality Standards** and are working towards environmentally sustainable council homes as part of our Project Zero plan. During the year, 96% of council tenants (921/961 respondents) were happy with programmed works to improve their homes. We **completed the Brecon Court and Holm View Phase 1 developments** as part of our new Council House Build Programme and work has also **progressed on the delivery of 55 new council homes** across three sites in Barry. A further three sites delivering an additional 77 new homes were awaiting determination at end of year and through the planning system via S106 agreements, a further 74 affordable homes have been secured at Llanmaes. These housing developments have not only increased the supply of council rented accommodation, they have been designed to be more environmentally sustainable and flexible to facilitate independent living that meets people's existing and longer term needs. Despite difficult circumstances, we have been proactive in returning some empty properties back into use in line with our **Empty Homes strategy**. 9 dwellings were created as a result of converting other empty properties into residential dwellings to bring them back into use and a further 86 empty private sector properties were brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority. However, 816 private sector properties were vacant for more than 6 months during the year largely due to impact of the pandemic. It took an average of 19.5 days (12.5 days for repairs and 7 days at offer stage) to let an empty council property against a target of 21 days, which was positive given the challenging circumstances. The pandemic has contributed to a **high demand for social housing in all areas** which has meant that applicants with high medical needs or a gold banding have been prioritised. Through our Empty Homes strategy, we are providing incentives to encourage owners to bring back properties into use (including via the Houses into Homes Loans initiative) which has recently seen enquiries increasing significantly from owner-occupiers across the county.



Looking forward there are **significant challenges ahead for the Council and its partners in meeting housing needs in the Vale of Glamorgan**. The Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA 2019) currently shows a need for at least an additional 890 units of affordable housing per annum for the next five years, comprising 799 units for social rent, 21 for low-cost home ownership and 70 units of intermediate rented accommodation. This need has been further exacerbated by the events of the past year. To address this, work has commenced with our partners in developing a new **five-year local Housing Strategy** which looks to build on the current enthusiasm to work differently and creatively to meet the challenges of delivering more affordable housing that meets local needs.

The efforts made by the government, councils and charities to protect rough sleepers during the COVID-19 crisis is largely viewed as one of the success stories of 2020. However, we also recognise that supporting people facing homelessness into safe but temporary accommodation is not ending homelessness. We are



now grappling with the **challenge of managing significant numbers of people in temporary accommodation and securing long-term accommodation for all those who are still living in temporary accommodation** such as hotels and B&Bs. This has been one of the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions, which has seen fewer long-term suitable accommodation vacancies as people are moving less. During the year we introduced a new

**Homelessness Prevention Strategy** which builds on the prevention success achieved in the previous strategy (the Vale of Glamorgan was the top performing local authority for homelessness prevention in the Welsh Government Statistical Report, August 2019). Despite recent challenges, we have further **enhanced**

**opportunities for accessing advice and support through an updated website, introduced more drop-in surgeries and a new one stop shop** (opened in April 2020) which promotes an integrated approach to preventing homelessness and involves partners from the voluntary sector, Housing, Social Services, Health, Education, and the Probation Service. Our **Housing Solutions Service** received nearly 2,300 homelessness enquiries requesting advice and support. The service has placed 269 households in bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. 83 households remain in B&B accommodation and are well supported via staff visits, drop-in surgeries and floating support services. Work has also continued to develop more housing opportunities in the private rented sector (PRS), 53 tenancies were either saved or newly secured during 2020. We continue to ensure that our front-line housing staff, as well our third sector support provider partners have the tools and knowledge to provide the required support and advice to successfully prevent homelessness. Support is provided to landlords to assist and encourage them to continue to work with the Council and to expand their housing portfolios. A high profile continues to be placed on **preventing youth homelessness including LGBTQ+ youth** through the Emphasis Project (a partnership with Llamau which has links with all secondary schools across the Vale of Glamorgan and provides structured homelessness and support awareness sessions to pupils) and the Council's LGBTQ+ champion. Through these sessions, teaching staff are also now able to recognise the signs of potential homelessness and where to signpost pupils and their families for support. 39 young people have been supported to date with positive outcomes. By increasing prevention activity with a focus on earlier intervention, we will be better placed to identify trigger points that may put someone at risk of homelessness and offer joined up support in preventing it.

We also face other risks and challenges that have impacted on our services and delivery of this Well-being Objective. The key **challenges we faced pre-COVID around health and social inequalities, increasing demand for our services and sustainable funding continue to remain** and have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Whilst we acknowledge that sustained and coherent action is needed on the prevention and management of these inequalities, we are also acutely aware of the **need for sustained investment and innovative approaches over the long term** to address these issues. There remains significant uncertainty as to the long-term impact of the ongoing pandemic on the Council's finances, the local economy, the national economy and what this will mean for future public spending generally. Looking beyond the immediate challenges of restoring services, the disruption caused by the pandemic and learning coming out of this experience, offer a unique opportunity to work collaboratively across all sectors to build on the successes achieved during our response to the pandemic. The **challenge will be to grasp this opportunity at the same time as restoring services and managing the on-going risk from COVID-19 to achieve both recovery and renewal.**



## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

Positive progress made as part of the **Move More Eat Well Plan**. Introduced the **60 Plus Leisure Scheme** targeting residents who are inactive or the least active. **Established 12 projects in education settings**, 1 school (**Oak Field Primary**) achieved a **Phase 6 Healthy Schools Award** recognising their whole school approach to Food and Fitness. Supported families to remain active throughout lockdown via **32 loan equipment packs distributed** amongst Flying Start settings and 'Healthy, Active and Outdoor' sessions enabling 64 children from a targeted area of deprivation to become more active. Over **6,000** participants engaged in a variety of challenges throughout the year through a virtual approach to annual festivals and competitions. **Partnership summer schemes engaged 60 children** in a programme of activities. **Extended the Next bike hire scheme** in other areas of the Vale. **Promoted active travel networks** schemes to support green spaces and improve opportunities for formal and informal play including **Cosmeston play area**, **skate Park at Dinas** and **Romilly park improvements**.

Enhanced and promoted our Play website which provides comprehensive resources on the benefits of play, play ideas during the pandemic, where to hire free equipment, community-based play opportunities for children and young people including those with disabilities and additional needs and events. Provided **800** copies of free physical literacy book '**Reggie to the Moon**' on request. Interacted with communities to help shape our work as well as promote the services available. The 'Physical Activity Levels and Experiences During Lockdown' survey reported that **68% of Children and young people and adults were more active or undertaking the same activity levels as before lockdown**.



Worked collaboratively to increase opportunities and promote participation in leisure and physical activity at our parks, outdoor leisure facilities, open spaces and virtually. **27 days** provision by Vale Play that is, **135 hours of activities and 540 packed lunches which supported 60 children and engaged 458 participants**, 43% with additional needs. **4,000+** school pupils participated in multi-sport school challenges. High take-up of the **workplace well-being project** including free activity sessions. Distributed **158 physical literacy equipment packs** to support Flying Start families to engage in physical activity. Created and distributed a series of storybooks to support the **development of physical literacy skills** amongst disabled children. Delivered online sessions to support **NERS clients (400+)** and provided support through ongoing contact with clients including newsletters and activity specific snapshot videos. Distributed **120+ sports bags** to increase physical activity opportunities during lockdown for young people who require additional support. **16 sports and play sessions** were delivered as part of summer play rangers at Wick & Caerleon resulted in **476** participations. **33 organisations received nearly £225k** of 'Be Active Wales' funding to support development of opportunities and school holiday provision for vulnerable children and young people.



Improvements in our country parks, open spaces and outdoor recreational areas throughout the year have encouraged more people to participate in leisure and physical activity outdoors. Completed a **new multi-use games area at King George V Playing Fields, Llandough**; upgraded the **play area at Wenvoe**; new interactive equipment installed at **Central Park, Barry**; **Romilly Park Outdoor play project**; spent circa **£250k** in upgrading the play area in **Cosmeston Country Park**.



Improving health and well-being is a key focus of our Community Investment Strategy. Since launching the Vale timebanking project in 2018, **527** volunteers have signed up, banked **5,387** hours of volunteering time, awarded **5,387** of time credits and **signed up 41 organisations** to take part in the scheme. **78%** of residents taking part reported improved health, well-being and confidence. Launched a Bike club which has engaged with **493** children and young people and provided **32 training sessions**. Partnered with Oak Field and Colcot primary schools to establish **after school nurture clubs supporting 35 children**. Provided **fitness training sessions to 120 residents** in partnership with Fitness Force. Offered 'Couch to 5K' programme to residents with **21** participating. **3,521** young people participated in **123 sessions** of football as part of diversionary opportunities in the Kicks project. **276 volunteers** participated in the 'Gibby' Green Fingers allotment project.

## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

The Greenlinks community transport service which celebrated its 10 year anniversary in June 2020 has secured funding to continue offering a demand responsive transport service to Vale residents who have no access to local public or private transport. The service provides on average **1,000** passenger journeys a month to residents. During the pandemic the service has delivered over **22, 245,236** items of PPE and made numerous passenger journeys taking residents to vaccination centres, medical appointments and shopping.



Through Active Travel funding we have: provided **48 bikes to Schools** in deprived areas enabling pupils to undertake Cycle Proficiency Training; delivered **100 balance bikes and 100 safety helmets** to every Primary school in the Vale; engaged with schools in Penarth, Barry and Llantwit Major to create active travel maps showing routes to schools with maps created and distributed to the schools; re-introduced the **Cycle2Work scheme for Council employees. Extending the Next Bike scheme** across the Vale following the successful launch in Penarth, starting with docking stations at Dinas Powys and Sully.



Successfully delivered sustainable transport schemes through the section 106 process in **Dinas Powys and Rhoose** including new crossings and pedestrian improvements, cycle ways and infrastructure.



Developed and enhanced our local branding and offer as part of the Foster Wales brand which has helped reduce our reliance on costly foster care placements. We **increased our pool of foster carers by 10**, which has enabled greater choice and matching for children in care. During the year, majority of our **107** foster carers reported that they felt informed and happy with the support they had received in their role. During what was challenging year, fewer children looked after (**7.8%**), experienced three or more placements as a result of our focus on strengthening placement stability.

Rolled out electronic direct **payments** to parents of **pupils entitled to free school** meals to support their well-being.



Strengthened support to all carers via the **Carers Gateway** which has been invaluable during the pandemic, made **financial contributions** to help carers adversely affected by the pandemic, provided respite through provision of 1-3 hours of support tailored to their needs, established a **carers expert panel** to ensure that the voices of carers are heard and shape the services they receive, and supported the development of a regional **carer's identity card** as part of a Welsh Government initiative. **97%** of carers felt involved in designing the care and support plan for the person that they care for.



Increased the number of Telecare installations by **416** to ensure that vulnerable individuals can be supported via digital means to live safely and independently. To encourage take up of Telecare services, we waived the installation fee.



Reduced our reliance on out of area placements, continuing to enable and support where possible children to remain with families. During 2020/21, **73.3%** of children were supported to remain living with family.

Worked collaboratively to deliver outcome-based home care to residents as part of the **Healthier Wales agenda**. We focused on continuity of care with projects such as '**Your Choice**', designed to give individuals greater freedom, promote their independence and increase their well-being in a way that matters to them. We have identified **new providers** to extend this model of working in the coming year.

Through flexible and outcome-focused care and support provided to service users during the year, **81.1%** of adults did not require further re-ablement care and support after 6 months. **97%** of people reported that they live in the right home for them with **100%** stating that they had received care and support through their language of choice.

## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

**Supported employee well-being** and resilience through various initiatives including advice on health and well-being, introduction of well-being initiatives, remote line management guidance, encouraging use of technology to stay in touch with colleagues, peer-led initiatives through the council's 40 well-being champions, a health screening service through the Occupational Health service and a confidential counselling service to employees on a 24 hour, 365 days a year basis.



Established a **multi-agency panel to triage referrals and share best practice and expertise on addressing the social, emotional and mental health needs of young people to improve their well-being**. Provided additional support and training for staff and pupils in all our schools to build emotional resilience and ensure our Schools are trauma informed and mentally healthy places for all.

Delivered **holiday enrichment programmes** throughout the year to support the social, emotional and mental well-being of vulnerable pupils targeting four primary schools. Over **500** children a week benefitted from a range of engaging and exciting learning opportunities, including arts and crafts, forest schools, pond dipping, physical activity sessions, science experiments and cooking.



Worked internally and with partners to embed a consistent approach to safeguarding our citizens from abuse, harm and neglect. During 2020/21, majority of **Dedicated Safeguarding Persons** in schools (DSPs) have completed annual safeguarding training (with remainder scheduled to do so). Across Council services, all staff have either completed mandatory safeguarding training or scheduled to do so. Safer recruitment compliance rate for schools was **97%** and **99%** for Corporate Services.



Based on most recent published data (2020), **80.1%** of Vale children aged 4/5 years are a healthy weight compared to the Wales average of 72.4%.

**55%** of Vale adults are active for at least 150 minutes a week (53% Wales average).

**26%** of Vale adults state that they eat five a day fruit and vegetables (24% Wales average).

Strengthening communities is a key Community Investment commitment. As part of this work, we have launched the **garden project in Llantwit Major** to enhance gardens and community connections. **11 volunteers recruited** to support the project which targeted 10 council properties. **Invested £30K** of council house building funds on 10 projects that will benefit communities. Recruited **163** residents who support community litter picks in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy. Supported cleaner local communities by offering skip amnesties with 32 residents involved. Conducted **453 housing support needs assessments** which provided **427** residents with housing related support. **3,521 young people** participated in 123 sessions of football as part of diversionary opportunities in the 'Kicks' project. Provided pre-tenancy **support** via the 'Tenancy Ready' project to new tenants signing up to properties via Newydd housing and partners. **276** volunteers participated in the 'Gibby' Green Fingers allotment project.

Worked in partnership to reduce crime and disorder in our communities. Of the 1412 anti-social behaviour incidents dealt with during the year, **977 (69%)** related to COVID-19 breaches and these were successfully addressed through joint enforcement and awareness raising measures. Introduced a new referral pathway for housing related antisocial behaviour which has helped in identifying resolutions earlier and in preventing problems escalate.



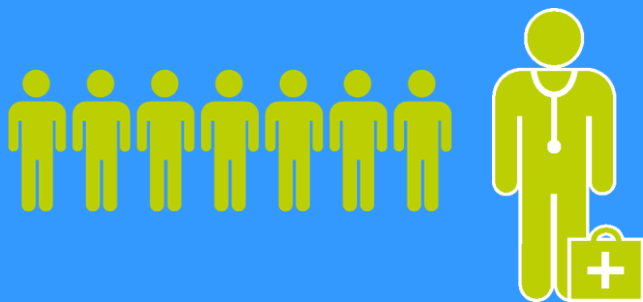
Improved our assessment and monitoring mechanisms which has enabled more robust and earlier intervention for high-risk domestic abuse cases. **75%** of victims and their families received support much earlier, ensuring a more responsive service and a less resource intensive solution for partners and support agencies. Of 431 multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) cases held during the year in relation to high risk domestic abuse, 97 properties received target hardening (appropriate safeguards) to protect victims and their families. **100%** domestic abuse victims reported that they feel safer as a result of target hardening and were happy with the service.



## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

Partnered with Cardiff & Vale HB to use Vale premises at Colcot Sports Centre as a COVID Testing Centre and Holm View LC as an Immunisation Centre which has contributed to reducing spread of the virus and a successful mass vaccination scheme. **289,170** (57.7%) first doses and **106,948** (21.3%) second doses of vaccinations have been administered to date across the region with 55,000 at Holm View.



The Shared Regulatory Services has been at the forefront of enforcing Coronavirus Regulations and carried out nearly **2,100** visits to businesses to check compliance with social distancing and business closures, and **seconded 28 officers** to support the Test, Trace and Protect initiative.



**97%** of food establishments are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards and work has continued online to support food businesses to open safely.



We have been proactive in returning empty properties back into use in line with our **Empty Homes Strategy**. Despite difficult circumstances, **9** new dwellings were created as a result of converting empty properties into residential dwellings to bring them back into use and a further **86** empty private sector properties were brought back into use during the year through direct action by the council. It took an average of **19 days** (12 days for repairs and 7 days at offer stage) to let an empty council property, which was within our target of 21 days.



Successfully secured on average, **35%** affordable housing across the Vale in all relevant planning applications for housing including a scheme for **74** affordable dwellings at Llanmaes.



We have continued to make improvements to our council housing. **96%** (921 out of 961) of council housing tenants were satisfied with programmed works on their homes.



**95%** of people who received a disabled facilities grant reported that the assistance has made them safer and more independent in their own home.



Good progress has been made on the Council House building programme with the completion of the Brecon Court and Holm View phase 1 housing developments in Barry, both of which are fully occupied. A scheme of 23 new Council homes is also currently under construction at Hayes Road, Barry. A further 2 custom built homes were also completed to meet the special needs of tenants.



## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

The Housing Solutions Service received nearly **2,300 homelessness enquiries** requesting advice and support during the year. The service has placed **269** households in bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. **83** households remain in B&B accommodation and are well supported via staff visits, drop in surgeries and floating support services.



In line with our commitment to end all youth homelessness, the Council's Housing and Building Services have appointed an **LGBTQ+ champion** to take forward the recommendations of 'Out of the Door'. In collaboration with Stonewall Cymru, training and awareness sessions have been provided to **66** front-line staff and senior management to date.

Introduced a **single point of access** for all supporting people housing related support services, with a clear referral and monitoring framework. This is helping to improve service responsiveness for users.



Introduced **dedicated support to private rented sector (PRS) landlords** in addition to the support available for PRS tenants. This initiative is helping to **increase the housing options** for households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness and supporting sustainable tenancy management.



As part of youth homelessness and early homelessness prevention and intervention services, we have established the 'Emphasis' project in partnership with Llamau, which delivers homelessness prevention advice in all Vale secondary schools.



In response to the significant accommodation pressures resulting from the pandemic, over the past year, we have procured an additional **116** units of B&B accommodation in three hotels, of which 92 units are currently occupied. We continue to work in partnership to maximise opportunities for move-on solutions across all tenures.



Since its launch in April 2020, the Vale 'one stop shop' for housing support and advice to nearly **1,000** individuals. **76%** of people who accessed the service have never had support previously.

We have supported and delivered successful outcomes on **160** homelessness cases; successfully met the tenancy support related needs of **956** out of 976 people accessing the service; **302** people were signposted to mental health support with successful outcomes; **260** people successfully accessed employment support including employability training; **445** out of 450 people successfully accessed budgeting, benefits, grants advice and support; partnered with the Vale foodbank to coordinate and deliver food parcels to those in need.





## 5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 3: To support people at home and in their community

Improved outcomes for children and young people and families in need by utilising technology creatively to enhance our engagement with service users and their families to deliver targeted early intervention, assisted by the Children & Communities Grant. **Improved flexibility around how support is provided has increased take up and quality of participation** in programs such as Flying Start and similarly, more young people have actively engaged with various online activities which have been tailored to suit their needs e.g. the Care Leavers Forum, Young Carers services, Children Looked After and young people identified as needing extra support.

In addition to tackling service delivery challenges, our creative use of technology has also enhanced service user engagement to help maintain relationships and ensure the mental health and well-being of service users, their carers and families. Our approach has not only **enabled people to feel more connected** during the pandemic, it has also **strengthened our relationships and helped promote our person centred approach to care and support**. e.g. helping relatives to stay in touch with loved ones in care homes, supporting users of our Day Services to remain connected, active and engaged, enhancing the digital skills of service users with learning disabilities through the 'See Me' project and the 'Insight App' to name a few.

**Embraced digital solutions and technology which has enabled us to improve quality and efficiency of the care and support services we provide** e.g. completion of assessments and interventions, Day Services opportunities and career services, video conferencing with CLA, Flying Start sessions, Insight App, See Me project.

Worked collaboratively to develop and introduce the '**Insight App**' to enable people with learning disabilities to develop their digital skills and proactively promoted its uptake to enable service users to access activities online. With over **90** groups and organisations using the App, it offers more than **80** live activities a week as well as pre-recorded content. Take up has been very positive and support provided to individuals has increased their confidence and skills using technology.

Proactively engaged with service users during the year to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that they wish to achieve. Nearly **91%** of people reported that they felt involved in any decisions made about their care; **98%** felt they were treated with respect and dignity; **86%** reported that they had received the right information and advice when they needed it; over **89%** felt satisfied with the care and support they had received

Successfully utilised Welsh Government Integrated Care funding to develop a SMART transition house at Castle Avenue, Penarth. This will enable residents to learn to use technology solutions to maximise their independence and control over their own lives, thus ensuring that when they move onto either independent living or supported accommodation, they will be confident in using the technology to support their independence.



Agreed a contractual arrangement with Boots to implement a digital medication administration system in our residential care homes which help streamline our workflows and processes, assist in minimising risk of medication errors, enhance care quality and staff capacity and will strengthen communication between care homes and pharmacies



## 5.3 CHALLENGES

There are a number of challenges that have presented as a direct result of the pandemic and in other instances many were pre-existing challenges that have been further exacerbated by COVID-19. Whilst the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic still exists, there have been opportunities to learn from the experience to explore and establish new ways of working that will enable us to transform our services in the future. Since we are likely to have to learn to live with COVID-19 for many years to come, the main challenge will be in ensuring that we can future proof our services from any negative impacts or disruption to service delivery. As we transition from our emergency response to recovery, it presents us with a unique opportunity to develop our understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and how as a council we plan to adapt, evolve and change our response over time.

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**Sustaining and improving participation levels in physical activity at a time of diminishing resources continues to be a challenge.** The COVID-19 pandemic has been a particularly challenging time with all direct delivery programmes ceasing and clubs/leisure centres across the county shutting. This led to the need to rethink how we deliver our services during this time, with more focus being placed on promoting family-based activities and utilising online platforms to promote these opportunities. Moving forward, for quite some time to come, sport and physical activity will look very different. We are working with our partners to plan what the future will look like and how residents can safely return to physical activity. There will be a need to focus on re-motivating people to participate and to ensure that safety is central to this thinking so that residents have the confidence to return to activities. There will be a focus on assisting community clubs and organisations to reopen and rebuild. Technology will play an important part in this, with plans in place to develop programmes informed by the evolving patterns of participation behaviours shown during and post pandemic. We will also continue work on bringing together all aspects of leisure and physical activity under the umbrella of a Leisure Strategy that will be used as a vehicle to maximise opportunities and our resources to increase physical activity and participation rates across the Vale. We are also very much aware of the emerging link between excess weight as a risk factor for COVID-19 and are working collaboratively with our partners in further strengthening our response through the Move More Eat Well Plan.

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**Ability to continue to deliver a comprehensive play programme across the Vale of Glamorgan against a backdrop of rising demand and pressure on our resources.** The annual cycle of securing external funding to deliver play in the Vale makes it difficult to strategically plan for the future. We anticipate that delivering an ambitious and comprehensive play programme that is in line with the requirements of new legislation will continue to present as a challenge when budgets continue to be squeezed. To address this, we will continue to look at new ways of engaging and working with community groups and key stakeholders to develop and deliver more sustainable play opportunities in the future. Challenges also exist around how we can effectively target 'hard to reach' groups to engage with services such as the play programme and early years support services to secure the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.

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**COVID-19 has significantly impacted on how our citizens can engage in and enjoy sport and physical activity.** The closure of our Leisure Centres and other facilities has meant our residents have not been able to undertake their usual physical activity which for many this has meant switching to alternative forms of outdoor exercise. However, for those who have chronic ill health and/or are recovering from illness or injury, the postponement of the exercise referral programme as a result of the lockdown restrictions has detrimentally impacted on this group of clients, the majority of whom are over 50, are vulnerable and with an underlying health condition. To encourage our clients to continue to undertake some form of physical activity and support some social contact (as many live alone), the Exercise Referral Team have developed an online programme. Although the feedback and participation using this way of working has been very positive, we recognise it is not a replacement for how we would normally interact and deliver a tailored programme of physical activity to our clients to support their health and well-being. As lockdown measures are gradually eased the challenge for the Exercise Referral Team will be how we effectively re-engage with our 400+ exercise referral clients to give them confidence and feel safe to return to activity again.

**COVID-19 is likely to have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future. Therefore, sustaining and improving levels of service delivery and performance whilst managing demand for our services at a time when resources are being stretched is going to be increasingly more challenging.** This is relevant in the context of the growing demand for, and complexity in, services that is being experienced across the board (and in particular within Social Services). Demographic changes are having a significant impact on our capacity to meet rising demand for our services. There are increasing numbers of children and young people and their families and adults that are presenting with more complex needs. In common with the position across Wales, linked to increasing demand, the numbers of children placed on the Child Protection Register, subject of care proceedings and looked after have all increased. This places increased pressure on our existing resources and in a placement context, the service has become reliant on externally purchased care. Our regional adoption collaborative has experienced increases in demand for post-adoption support and a national drive through the introduction of best practice guides, although positive in the context of improving standards nationally, will place considerable increased demand on our services and a resultant shortfall in current resources has been identified across the region. Similarly, there is an increasing ageing population in the Vale of Glamorgan where currently 20.9% are over the age of 65 and 2.5% are over the age of 85. It is projected that the over 65s will increase by 15% and the 85s will increase by over 40% in the next 10 years. As a result of our citizens living longer, an increasing number will continue to present with more complex needs that in turn will place further pressure on our budgets and our ability to meet their care and support needs. There is need to restart our services, as part of our recovery from the pandemic, in a sustainable way to ensure that we can continue to meet the needs of our service users effectively.

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**Managing customer expectations for accessing health and social care at a time when there is an increased demand for our services** will continue to be an ongoing challenge as we manoeuvre our way through the COVID-19 crisis. There has already been a significant amount of investment and focus on improving the simplicity and choice of how our citizens access our health and social care services via our Single Point of Access within the Customer Contact Centre (C1V). Although we have further integrated health and social care services through the piloting of the GP Triage Service and the establishment of Well-being Officers, COVID-19 has delayed our progress in embedding and integrating our processes with our health partners. This more integrated approach will require us to strengthen the shared brand 'Well-being Matters' so that our citizens know and recognise it is the first port of call for information, advice and assistance.

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**Our capacity to meet the growing demand for support services for children and families will remain an ongoing challenge.** As a consequence of COVID-19 we have experienced significant increases in demand for family support and intervention, reflected both in numbers and complexity. Causes of this increase have been multiple and the impact on children and families, and therefore our services, is expected to be enduring. We are also experiencing considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers in key areas, which impact our capacity to meet higher levels of demand.

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In light of the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care, there is an increased emphasis on developing and operating arrangements to enable us to undertake regional commissioning. Despite our progressive approach to working with partners, **collaboration in relation to developing alternative models of service delivery is likely to remain an ongoing challenge especially in light of COVID-19 as partner organisations seek to put in place their recovery strategies from the Pandemic.** Linked to this is the volatility of grant funding streams which impacts on our ability to develop, commission and sustain integrated health and social care services that enhance our capacity whilst still meeting our statutory requirements to deliver core services. There are also challenges associated with establishing more streamlined approaches to developing/commissioning preventative services that are more joined up across organisational boundaries in line with requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

There is a **lack of capacity and resilience within local markets to fulfil the requirements of residential nursing and domiciliary care**. Monitoring the quality of our externally commissioned service providers is increasingly more challenging due to insufficient capacity and resources to undertake this work, which is further compounded by the volatility of external markets. As a consequence of COVID-19 and potentially Brexit, this volatility is likely to be exacerbated by any downturn in the economy putting further pressure on the viability of the domiciliary care market.

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There is pressure on our **capacity to ensure our safeguarding procedures remain robust and applied consistently**.

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**Adhering to the Deprivation of Liberty (DoLS) continues to place significant pressure on Social Services in terms of officer workload/capacity and budgets**. This has continued to be an ongoing challenge during COVID-19. There is a need to review and monitor this service in light of the new Liberty Protection safeguards (LPS).

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A part of our recovery from the pandemic, the **move to preferred operating models will see the adoption of new working practices that will be challenging**. We will need to ensure that the needs of our citizens and service user continue to be met and enhanced.

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There are challenges associated with **ensuring that the citizens we work with are supported to access services in different ways**, and to ensure that they have the right skills to use services through increased digital inclusion schemes.

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The **fragility of the Approved Mental Health service continues to be problematic**, as we seek to build resilience around our workforce. We anticipate **increased demand on our services due to the impact of COVID-19 and the effect of extended periods of isolation on people's mental and emotional well-being**.

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Delivering a targeted inspection programme as part of the Shared Regulatory Service against a backdrop of reducing resources will continue to be challenging, particularly following the COVID-19 outbreak which required the re-direction of resources in a number of ways, but particularly with our partnership work on Track, Trace and Protect along with the need to administer the business closure requirements and social distancing in those premises that remained open. As a result, this will mean we will **need to deliver more of our services using a risk-based approach to better manage and prioritise demands for our services**.

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Whilst we have responded positively to the **COVID-19 challenges, we recognise it will have a profound impact on demand for our services both now and in the future**. As a consequence of the pandemic we anticipate there will be the emergence of greater health inequalities and that there will be an increased need for crisis support for families, a greater demand for Mental Health Services as well as an increased demand for care and support for those with the most complex of needs. We anticipate that the impact of COVID-19 will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable in society for some time. By considering these factors and the increased demand for our services we can put in place effective recovery plans that can adapt to the changing needs of our citizens.

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**There is still uncertainty around the UK Government's Shared Prosperity fund, which is positioned as replacing the EU funding lost as a result of the UK's departure from the EU**. The WLGA and Welsh Government continue to lobby for more information. The Council submitted a response to a Welsh Government consultation on the future of regional investment, stressing that local determination and delivery should be an element of any overall programme. A Community Led Local Development approach has been proven to work in the rural Vale of Glamorgan and this is also considered by WG and WLGA to be an important factor of any new fund. A lack of EU Capital funding will mean that the Vale will see less investment in projects such as play areas, public realm and heritage schemes.

We continue to focus our attention on enhancing our approach to family support and preventative service provision. **The challenge becomes our capacity and capability to meet the increasing and growing demand for these services whilst ensuring any services delivered across the spectrum of our partners do not duplicate or conflict with our goals.**

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Homelessness is a growing national challenge and **a significant challenge for the Vale of Glamorgan which also has a significant amount of hidden homelessness.** However, many of these people have presented to the Service following the publication of the Welsh Government's Guidance to local authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This placed a duty on the Authority to provide everyone with temporary accommodation to avoid the spread of the virus. This has posed a major challenge over the past year as permanent homes in the social and private rented sector, already under pressure, have to be found for them. There is a need to find innovative rehousing solutions, as there are currently over 200 people in temporary accommodation waiting to be rehoused in the Vale. As at March 2021, there are nearly 5,000 housing applicants on the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Register.

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Increased rent arrears for UC applicants transferring onto this benefit in both the social and private rented sectors is expected to lead to **increased evictions and subsequently more homelessness presentations** as legal action and evictions recommence. **A severe lack of one-bedroom accommodation is a concern for the Vale** and a priority factor in long term planning.

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Data for 2020/21 shows that the number of **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and high risk domestic abuse incidents have increased considerably during the pandemic.** Although these will not have resulted in referrals, they still require significant input and resource. The rise has been attributed to the increased numbers of young people who have gathered in large numbers in hotspot areas such as Cosmeston Lake, Rhoose Point, Ogmere and the Knap. As part of the Safer Vale partnership we have worked closely with our partners (including the Police) and the local community to prevent mass gatherings and anti-social behaviour. The challenge going forward is how the **Council can put in place longer term solutions that will be an effective deterrent to anti-social behaviour** without damaging the enjoyment of our resorts by the public. We have also seen an increase in neighbours reporting their neighbours for lockdown breaches and there is a concern that this will lead to long term neighbour disputes and cohesion issues in the future. This will continue to be monitored by the Safer Vale Partnership.

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The Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral (DAARC) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) service also **experienced increases in referrals during the lockdown period and it has become apparent that more cases are affected by COVID-19 than originally identified.** The complexity of domestic abuse situations means that it is often only after having worked with victims for a period of time that the true extent to which the pandemic is affecting a situation can be understood. We are closely monitoring access of victims to services and there is a clear difficulty being experienced by victims as a result of being 'locked in' with sometimes very controlling and coercive perpetrators. We therefore anticipate another rise in the figures as lockdown continues to loosen and access to services is more easily attained.

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There is a shortage of housing in the Vale and a need for an additional 576 affordable homes per annum between the years 2017 to 2022. We are working with our partners to address this, however, **the impact of COVID-19, a possible recession and Britain exiting the European Union continues to add layers of uncertainty over the Council's house building programme** and could contribute to labour shortages as well as difficulties in material supply. The Council will continue to monitor the market and take appropriate action to mitigate the impact through engagement of local contractors and sourcing alternative materials where necessary.

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Now we have met the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard**, it is important to ensure the standard is maintained and investment is planned accordingly. The Council have been working with Welsh Government to develop the next release of WHQS which is likely to focus on reducing the number of acceptable fails and begin to



address climate change. The **level of investment required will vary year on year** and consequently detailed programmes of work will require adjustment on a yearly basis.

## 5.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES THROUGH GATEWAYS AND TRAUMA INFORMED SERVICES

It is widely recognised that a home is more than a roof over one's head and for some people to thrive in our communities, support to maintain their tenancy and settle into the community is essential. Consequently, the Council recognises the importance of providing the best possible support at the earliest possible time (**early intervention**) if people are to feel safe in their home, connected to their community and avoid becoming homeless in the future (**prevention**). During the period 1st July 2020 – 31st March 2021, 868 people living in the Vale of Glamorgan told us that they needed help to feel safe or to contribute towards their own or someone else's safety, while 401 people needed support to feel more connected to their community.

Many aspects of the work undertaken to identify sustainable housing solutions with appropriate, person centred support, focus on the **long-term** and involve **collaboration** with many statutory and non-statutory stakeholders and the **involvement** and engagement of service users, reflecting the importance and often complex nature of homelessness and its wider impact on health, well-being and prosperity. Therefore, addressing this issue in an integrated way also contributes to other the Council's other three Well-being Objectives.

We know that high quality housing related support services are key to preventing homelessness, enabling independent living across the continuum of support and care needs and helping those who are most vulnerable to find their place in our communities. This underpins the Council's vision of working together for a brighter future. However, we also recognise that budgets are finite, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable people living in our society are prioritised for support. The examples below show how effective **collaboration** with **key partners** ensure that **resources are maximised and directed** at the people who need these services the most, and at the **earliest opportunity** by the introduction of gateways to supported accommodation services and by adopting a trauma informed approach in our response to addressing their needs. By intervening early, we prevent issues from escalating leading to a lower burden on public and healthcare services overall.

### CLIENT JOURNEY 1

NL has experienced a long history of drug and alcohol abuse which led to a cycle of crime, prison and homelessness over a 25 year period. He has been in and out of various temporary and permanent accommodation since the age of 17, and has a very strained relationship with his parents, having suffered violence in the family home since a very early age. He approached the local authority for assistance with the support of his probation worker as he felt that at the age of 40 he now needed to find his place in the community; this was partly encouraged by the fact that he knew a return to prison would involve a long term sentence.

**What did we do:** NL's situation was discussed at length between Probation and the Housing Solutions and Supporting People Teams, as identifying suitable accommodation was a challenge, due to him having been evicted and banned from much of the accommodation available to the local authority, and having a history of violence against many people including staff. His case was taken to the "Substance Misuse and Criminal Justice Supporting People Gateway" and after appropriate risk assessments were in place, it was agreed that the most appropriate option would be a placement in supported housing, specialising in assisting people to become abstinent from previous substance abuse. Using a trauma informed approach to understand his issues and links to previous trauma, the provider was able to work with key partners including the Vale Alcohol and Drugs Team and Dyfodol to identify additional specialist support that will help NL's issues in a

person centred way. Through this collaborative approach we were able to put in place a plan to help to NL reduce his substance misuse, and this in turn helped him to stay away from some of his previous influences and stop getting involved in criminal activity. NL has engaged with the process and has started managing his own finances and has moved on to independent living within the community. When he first moved from the supported accommodation, the provider continued to work with him until his tenancy was set up, including helping him to access benefits and utilities to ensure that he had a good chance of sustaining his tenancy. He has been supported to develop daily living skills, access benefits and learn how to negotiate the benefits system, sustain his tenancy and has been supported to find training. He has also been supported to access a local gym, with an exercise referral from his GP in order to provide a diversionary activity to assist with remaining abstinent from substances.

**Outcomes:** NL is now successfully living independently in the community and has sustained his tenancy for over 12 months, without a return to criminal activity or substance abuse. He has engaged with his support plan which has helped him to learn the skills needed to keep a tenancy and has developed daily living skills, as well as now having the confidence to access benefits and education. He also knows how to access support in the future if he feels that he is struggling with any aspects of his tenancy or substance misuse. NL is now staying fit and is preparing his own meals and eating healthily. He has joined a local gym and exercises regularly.

## **CLIENT JOURNEY 2**

MH was experiencing homelessness due to being asked to leave by friends and family who he had sofa surfed between for many months, since being asked to leave the family home following a break down in their relationship. He had never lived independently and therefore didn't know how to go about accessing accommodation or support. He was advised by friends to approach the Housing Solutions Department who placed him in emergency temporary accommodation and referred him to the Supporting People Team for housing related support.

**What did we do:** Using a trauma informed approach to understand his issues, the provider co-produced (using a person centred approach) a support plan with MH, identifying the areas in which he would require support to live independently and become an active member of the community. MH has fully engaged with the process and has started managing his own accommodation, finances, education and volunteering. He has been supported to develop daily living skills, access benefits to help him, sustain his tenancy and has been supported to find voluntary work.

**Outcomes:** MH is now successfully living independently in the community and has sustained his tenancy for over 6 months. He has engaged with his support provider which has helped him to learn the skills needed to keep a tenancy and has developed daily living skills, how to access benefits, education and employment. MH is now volunteering in a local furniture upcycling project, is continuing to attend two college courses, is volunteering at several charity shops and has become an ambassador for the support provider. He reports that he feels like a different person now and feels much more confident about doing things independently. He is looking for permanent paid work and feels like he has found his place in the community.

## **Supporting People Gateways**

The Supporting People Programme is a Welsh Government funded project that sits under the Housing Support Grant (HSG) Programme. The HSG is an early intervention grant programme to support activity, which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. The HSG does not fund the statutory duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness, instead HSG funded services augment, complement and support the statutory service to ensure that the overall offer authorities provide helps people into the right homes with the right support to succeed. It supports vulnerable people to address the, sometimes multiple problems they face, such as debt, employment, tenancy management, substance misuse, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and mental health issues. Support is person centred, aimed at assisting

people to secure and maintain sustainable housing by addressing their needs and working with them to develop the skills needed to maintain a tenancy and improve other aspects of their well-being.

The HSG works across the traditional boundaries of the many different organisations that are responsible for services for vulnerable people. We recognise that our agenda for health, housing, social care and community safety can only be achieved effectively through modern partnerships, which share objectives, programmes and operational working methods.

There are currently over 1,000 people receiving floating support and over 50 living in Supported Housing in the Vale of Glamorgan. In addition, there are 40 people on the waiting list for floating support and 60 on the waiting list for supported housing. It is therefore vital that support is directed at the most vulnerable in order for it to have the most impact. In order to achieve this a single point of access, commonly known as a gateway, has been introduced for each client group. Each gateway is made up of professionals from the Housing Solutions Team, the Supporting People Team, the provider of the service and relevant professionals for each client group. For example, the young person's gateway includes the manager of the Fifteen Plus Team in Children's Services, and a representative from the Youth Service. Similarly, the mental health gateway includes professionals from the Community Mental Health Team in addition to the core membership described. Bringing together all the relevant agencies and professionals ensures an integrated approach is taken to support each client with focus around the individual's needs that is, 'a person centred approach' which takes into account their strengths in the building support (involvement).

The sharing of information through this gateway process has proved vital in helping to understand each person's needs in a more holistic way so that support is better targeted. This approach has also led to more appropriate referrals to other services and better outcomes for the people accessing them. Below are the outcomes for the relevant areas of support for the period July 2020 to March 2021 which show that overall, 38% of people supported to feel safe reported that they had completed this outcome within 9 months of commencement of support, and 40% felt that they were now more connected to their community within the same time frame.

173 people met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'feeling safe'** is a relevant need.

162 people met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'contributing to the safety and well-being of themselves and of others'** is a relevant need.

528 people met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'managing accommodation'** is a relevant need.

171 people met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'managing relationships'** is a relevant need.

162 people met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'feeling part of the community'** is a relevant need.

434 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'managing money'** is a relevant need.

74 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'engaging in educational learning'** is a relevant need.

96 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'engaging in employment/voluntary work'** is a relevant need.

186 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'physically healthy'** is a relevant need.

213 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'mentally healthy'** is a relevant need.

122 People met their outcome or had a positive outcome where **'leading a healthy and active lifestyle'** is a relevant need.

### ***Trauma Informed Services***

The work by Public Health Wales (PHW) on Adverse Childhood experiences (ACES) has led to a better understanding of the trauma that many people will experience in their life. The impact of trauma has long been recognised by Housing and Support Services prior to this piece of work, as evidence shows that a significant proportion of people accessing these programmes have experienced traumatic events during their

childhood. However, by formalising training and raising awareness of the issue, we are developing a workforce that is now better equipped to support our clients who have experienced trauma, leading to better outcomes such as improved well-being and life chances.

In order to upskill the workforce, training on psychologically informed environments (PIE) has become mandatory for all support workers. By becoming trauma informed, support workers are better equipped to recognise the impact of trauma and support the complex needs of people who have experienced all forms of trauma including ACES. This ensures that support offered is person centred, focuses on the strengths of the individual and builds resilience for the individual to help them develop long term coping strategies and avoid a return to homelessness. This approach is being embedded within service settings, practice and procedures with reflective learning promoted to improve work practices.

The Supporting People Team monitors compliance with training and application through the commissioning process and regular contract monitoring and relies on effective collaboration between the Council, provider organisations, Welsh Government and Cymorth Cymru, as well as other professionals and the people we support. This **joined-up, multi-agency approach** to supporting people services ensures that **trauma-informed practice is sustainably developed** and **embedded collaboratively** across systems and services and **shaped by the lived experience of the people within our communities who have been affected by trauma**.

The Supporting People Programme supports a wide variety of people living within our communities including the most vulnerable and therefore getting the right support at the right time is of utmost importance. **Trauma informed services** enable us to work with our service users to find **long term solutions** to help people feel safe and valued within their communities. **Changing our approach and developing more in-depth awareness, education and reviewing practices ensures that the risk of trauma, re-traumatisation or vicarious trauma are minimised**. Responding to trauma is, now more than ever a priority and we believe our approach will help drive forward improved outcomes for service users, their communities and the Vale of Glamorgan as part of our roadmap for COVID-19 recovery.

## 6.0 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4: TO RESPECT, ENHANCE AND ENJOY OUR ENVIRONMENT

Our overall performance status for this Well-being Objective is **AMBER**

### 6.1 POSITION STATEMENT

We could not reflect on 2020/21 without mentioning the impact that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on delivering the annual commitments aligned to our well-being objective 'to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment'. Whilst the pandemic has significantly changed the way we work and deliver our services; it has also provided us with opportunities to refresh and transform how we deliver them.

This objective cuts across all council service areas and activities. Our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the year have been shaped by our duty to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment. We recognise how a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning eco systems, supports social, economic and ecological resilience while contributing to individual, community and global well-being. The Vale of Glamorgan's natural environment is the natural resource on which much of our economy is based – hospitality, tourism, agriculture, business zones and renewable energy, included. It is a major factor that attracts people, both young and old to live, work and visit the county, bringing inward investment with them.

We recognise that health and wealth are inextricably linked with our environment, and there is a strong relationship between residents' well-being and their surrounding environment from providing recreational opportunities, to psychological positivity, health benefits and a connection to heritage and culture. It is therefore critical that we continue to set ambitious standards for ourselves, our partners and communities, working together better to ensure that we minimise our negative impact on our natural environment and change behaviours to ensure we can all be proud of the legacy we will leave behind for future generations.

Despite the significant challenges of the year, we have determined that on balance, we have made positive progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments that contribute to Well-being Objective 4 for the period 2020/21. This has contributed to an overall **AMBER** status for the objective at end of year. 66% (19 out of 29) of planned activities have been successfully delivered. Across the objective, actions were assigned a red status to reflect slippage and this accounted for 35% (10) of all planned activities for 2020/21. Of the 10 actions contributing to the Well-being Objective, which have been attributed a Red performance status, 9 (90%) were as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of performance indicators (PI's), 62% (8/13) of indicators aligned to Objective 4 were attributed a Green status with 38% (5) attributed a Red status. In relation to the 5 Performance Indicators attributed a Red status, 4 of the measures were affected by the impact of COVID-19. Work in relation to slipped actions and indicators remain priority and therefore they have been carried forward to their respective Service Plans for 2021/22.

Inevitably, the pandemic has featured heavily in our activity this year, but we also want to recognise the outstanding work that has taken place under incredible pressure and at extraordinary pace. We owe our successes to our dedicated workforce, our community, partners and volunteers who have been very much on board even before the pandemic began in March 2020. Working together we have supported each other during a time of crisis, and we have all learned a lot from our experiences.

Despite a challenging year, in which COVID-19 displaced climate change in the media, we have continued to work towards our pledge to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. At the start of the pandemic, carbon



emissions were paused across the globe with the sudden, unprecedented fall in human activity as much of the world went into lockdown; factories closed, vehicles kept their engines off and planes were grounded. As society emerges from lockdown, emissions will again begin to increase, and immediate action is vital. COVID-19 has significantly changed the way we work and accelerated our progress in areas such as our digital agenda and movement towards flexible working, resulting in a reduction in our carbon output but we recognise that the temporary halt to normal life and successive lockdowns is neither sustainable nor enough to stop climate change.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Vale of Glamorgan Council joined with Welsh Government (WG) and other Councils across the UK in **declaring a global ‘climate emergency’**. Since then we have worked determinedly to engage with our workforce and key stakeholders including the public and the businesses community to gain valuable insight to help us shape a suite of strategic documents that underpin our response to carbon reduction and climate change. Now more than ever, we recognise that in order to achieve our vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future, we need to ensure that the decisions we make meets the needs of today while protecting and enhancing our environment and well-being for the future. The conversation continues, and whilst we know that we don’t yet have all the answers, we are confident that by working collaboratively to tackle our challenges, we will find innovative solutions that not only mitigate the environmental impact of our activities but also stimulate the economy and promote health, welfare and equity.



Earlier in the year we signed up to the Vale Public Services Board (PSB) [Climate Emergency Charter](#) which sets out a shared commitment from partners working in the Vale to work together to achieve a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. The Charter details a range of commitments around the importance of leading by example, taking positive action and reducing our negative impact.

Our Corporate Plan 2020-25 ambition, “to work to reduce the organisation’s carbon emissions to net zero before 2030 and encourage others to follow our lead as part of minimising the negative impact of our activities on the environment” is supported by our Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21) which includes a number of activities that contribute towards tackling climate change across the Council. One of our ADP commitments for this year was to develop a bespoke plan that would complement the PSB Charter and further detail the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s response to climate change and carbon reduction. Significant progress has been made in line with this goal and our [Climate Change Challenge Plan 2021-2030](#) has been developed, consulted upon and approved (July 2021). Furthermore, during the developmental stages of the Plan, we identified a range of activity already being undertaken across the Council and have brought this all together under the initiative ‘**Project Zero**’ to ensure a consistent approach to tackling climate change.



**Our key achievements under the initiative of Project Zero are wide ranging and to date include:**

- Delivered **100+ energy saving projects** across council buildings including switching old, inefficient lighting to LED lighting and introduced more efficient energy controls.
- **Met our 2020 Local Development Plan (LDP) target** of granting planning permissions sufficient to meet **10.6% (56.68 GWh) of projected electricity demand** through renewable energy sources.
- Secured a **replanting ratio of 2:1 for the removal of trees** with a preservation orders (TPO) or trees in a conservation area (TCA) in accordance with the Trees, Woodlands, Hedgerows and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- **100% of electricity** now purchased by the Council is from renewable sources.
- Begun switching heating from gas to electricity by **installing a Ground Source Heat pump at Cadoxton House** in Barry and an **Air Source Heat pump** at the Engine Room in Barry.

- Installed **Solar panels on 14 buildings** with a combined capacity of 480 KW and photovoltaic panels (PV) on a number of school sites to **increase use of renewable energy**.
- All our country parks and Heritage Coast only use **peat free compost** for all gardening projects. Both country parks have **created in house composting areas and produce their own compost for use on site**. We have also **reduced pesticide and herbicide use** across our land.
- Section 106 contributions have been used to **enhance public open space** with wild-flower, bulb and tree planting including £10k for a comprehensive tree planting scheme in Penarth in 2020/21.

Our Climate Change Challenge Plan 2021-2030 reflects our relevant strategic priorities set out in the Council's Coronavirus Recovery Strategy and is enabled by several key internal strategies and plans including our **Local Development Plan, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, Local Transport Plan, Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Tree Strategy, Shoreline Management Plan, Digital Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan**. We are also developing a **Green Infrastructure Strategy** which will set out how we intend to maintain green spaces and develop new green spaces sustainably. will underpin how, as a Council, we will work together in an integrated fashion to increase opportunities and accessibility to green spaces thereby increasing physical activity, improving social inclusion and community cohesion, promoting economic growth and tackling climate change.



Throughout the pandemic the Council has managed to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Comparing the financial year 2018/19 (prior to the climate emergency declaration) and the financial year 2020/21 we have recorded **a drop in emissions of 20.3% whilst emissions associated with our buildings has dropped by 21.4%**. Some of these benefits are due to the decarbonisation of the national grid whilst other initiatives, such as renewable energy installations (solar panels), office improvements, environmentally friendly fleet purchases such as hybrid and bio fuel vehicles and the conversion of street lamps to LED lanterns have also contributed. For example, the reduced consumption in our street lighting helped to offset an increase of £36,000 in the cost of electricity.

During the year (2020/21) we saw a significant drop in electricity use (23%) and a slight drop overall in gas use (7%). Part of the reduction in electricity usage can be attributed to home working, but most of our buildings have been kept operational during the year for use by key workers. In our schools, extra ventilation, and consequently heating, was required throughout the winter of 2020 but despite this, we have achieved an overall reduction in gas consumption. **Our net result in financial saving on fuel for 2020/21 is approximately £387,000**. As we continue our journey to net zero by 2030 we need to learn from the alternative approaches and new ways of working that the pandemic forced us to adopt and decide which ones can feature in future years.

The aim of our second Carbon Management Plan (2018-2021) was to reduce emissions by 12.5% from the baseline of 19,349,067 kWh (12,158 Tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e) by 2021/22. In 2020/21 we used 16,337,457 kWh (6,264 Tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e) which is a **reduction in overall kWh of 32.5% from the 2015/16 baseline and in terms of emissions this is a reduction of 48.3% which is significantly higher than the 2021/22 carbon management plan target of 12.5%**. The challenge in the immediate future is to maintain these reductions given that at least some of the savings are from school closures during the first lockdown in 2020.

In May 2021 the Welsh government published guidance on reporting emissions on the route to net zero emissions by 2030. The Council is currently collecting the data in order to report its carbon emissions in line with Welsh Government guidance in order to understand the size of its footprint and inform our next Carbon Management Plan for 2022 onwards.

In line with our commitment to reduce the organisation's carbon emissions we have also progressed a host of activities across the Council. Examples include our exploration of an environmentally sustainable fleet and cleaner public transport options. We are currently looking into how we can move our fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) over the next few years and utilising £50k Welsh Government funding to undertake an Electric Vehicle feasibility report for introducing electric car charging points in terraced streets. During the year, we have continued with the roll out of the successful Next Bike Scheme which offers energy efficient and emission-free transportation to our residents. Not only does this scheme benefit the environment by relieving the number of vehicles commuting which prevents congestion and pollution; the use of electric bikes also has physical health and well-being benefits for cyclists contributing to our objective of encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, by making it easier to commute across the Barrage to Cardiff City Centre we are delivering against our commitment to improve Active Travel and sustainable transport. In light of the recent pandemic and social distancing measures this initiative has also allowed people to socially distance while freeing up public transport. Since launching last year, Next Bike has recorded over 9,000 rentals (November 2020 to May 2021) and we will soon be expanding this scheme to install docking stations at Sully and Dinas Powys. Working together with our partners under the **Cardiff Capital Region**, we are also progressing a programme for the installation of electric charging points for taxis in Barry and are exploring sites at Court Road, Thompson Street, Kendrick Road and Wydham Street car parks, as well as Main Street, Market Street and Paget Road. As part of this initiative we will be promoting electric vehicles with 2 electric taxis available for local taxi drivers to 'try before they buy'. This work contributes towards our commitment to "work as part of the Cardiff Capital Region to progress strategic planning and transport initiatives and promote sustainable economic growth and employment".

During the year, the Council also joined its public sector partners in the Public Services Board in committing to a staff **Healthy Travel Charter**. Through 14 ambitious actions, the Charter promotes walking, cycling, public transport and ultra-low emission vehicle use amongst approximately 15,000 workers which will have a significant positive impact on the environment as well as associated health benefits.

In recognition of the inextricable link between climate change and the loss of biodiversity, the Council declared a nature emergency on the 26th July 2021, placing biodiversity alongside climate change at the heart of its decision making. This bold action to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Vale will not only deliver benefits in terms of well-being, but also in new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities. As we move forward into 2021/22, we will continue to work with partners across the county, region and nationally to develop and implement best practice methods that can protect Wales' biodiversity. This will involve work with local stakeholders including elected members, residents, young people, businesses and other relevant parties, to develop a strategy aligned with Project Zero with a target of no net loss of biodiversity. We will also explore ways to maximise the local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy.

As an Authority that maintains a housing stock, we recognise that housing decarbonisation could have an impact on our environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being and that housing investment should be treated as a priority. We have committed to improve energy efficiency and drive down carbon emissions in our homes and the ongoing **Council Housing Investment Programme** (formerly WHQS) has already contributed towards this goal which can be demonstrated by an improved SAP rating (energy performance rating) from the low 40's



to 65. Improvements have included modern windows and doors, new roofs, insulation and modern heating systems. We are now piloting an Optimised Retrofit Programme in our housing stock to expand knowledge and improve local contractor capability in green heating services. This will support our aim to decarbonise the domestic heating market and provide sustainable council homes with an EPC target rating of A.

When building new homes, the Council has adopted a ‘fabric first’ approach, meaning that the building form and structural elements of the scheme are the primary design principles by which improved energy performance will be achieved. Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and Off-Site Manufacturing construction also have an important role to play in our **Council House Build Programme** as they allow us to reduce travel to and from construction sites and limit landfill of waste products while delivering more sustainable structures. All new Council buildings are required to utilise these methods to improve the energy performance of the building fabric. We have already begun to employ these techniques in the Vale with 23 units at Hayes Road, Barry and 11 units of temporary accommodation at Court Road, Barry utilising these methods. The units at Court Road, Barry are high quality, eco-friendly bungalows equipped with outdoor space in the form of decked areas to encourage social interaction and community building. They give residents their own lounge, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom and a sense of place to call home.



During the year we have **reprofiled our entire housing development programme to ensure that we can meet the Welsh Government mandate for all new housing to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of A (SAP 92) or above.** We have also secured grant funding from Welsh Government to deliver hybrid boilers to off gas properties in the planning stage and continued to identify external wall insulation packages to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel costs for our tenants. We recognise that methods such as MMC and Off-Site manufacturing along with alternative forms of energy will have far reaching affects including the reduction of energy consumption and subsequent carbon emissions, driving down fuel costs and thereby reducing fuel poverty as well as providing a much needed boost to the economy in a post COVID-19/Brexit climate.

We are also **working towards decarbonising our new schools** which supports our goal to “invest in our schools to provide the right learning environment for the 21st century”. During the year we have made good progress on the design and construction of a low use carbon school at St David’s Church in Wales Primary School and on construction of the first net zero carbon school in Wales at Llancafarn. We are also on track to complete the Barry Secondary Learning Communities project which has seen the investment of £88.6 million in three secondary schools to create modern learning centres with a low carbon footprint. During the year we have also worked collaboratively to improve our local environment, air quality and active travel routes around schools by securing 1,200 trees from the Woodland Trust (500 already planted), adopting a school specific Biodiversity Strategy, installing scooter pods, cycle racks, cycle pods and providing 100 balance bikes to all our Primary Schools. These improvements will also contribute to our other Corporate Plan well-being objectives such as supporting learning and working with and for our communities.



The Vale of Glamorgan is afforded a wealth of green and blue spaces that provide social, economic and environmental benefits to residents, businesses and visitors. These features provide extensive recreation resources important to the health and well-being of residents, creating an attractive setting for tourism and natural habitats for biodiversity. Collectively these assets constitute the Vale of Glamorgan’s Green Infrastructure (GI) and as with other types of infrastructure, require management and investment to ensure that the benefits they offer continue and are enhanced. Accordingly, the Council is developing a **Green Infrastructure Strategy** that will provide a framework for the long-term sustainable management and maintenance of green infrastructure and inform the evidence base for the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) which is due to commence in Summer 2021.



During 2020/21 we have been using mapping software (GIS) to identify our green spaces and understand our GI picture in the Vale. This work has allowed us to identify existing functions of our green infrastructure assets, areas deficient in provision and opportunities for creating enhanced, new or connected GI and is informing our Green Infrastructure Strategy. Moving forward we will continue to engage with our key stakeholders, including landowners, third sector parties, developers and our communities to identify opportunities to develop and promote a network of multi-functional green space with recreational, visual and biodiversity value. Alongside this work we are already delivering a number of GI projects across the county such as the Barry GI Scheme where new trees are being planted along Gladstone Road and more substantial landscaping works are being carried out at Jenner Park / Court Road roundabout. We are also assessing and dealing with Ash Die Back across the Vale. Tree surveys have been commissioned and are underway to identify diseased trees that require removal and replacement tree planting and this activity will continue long term. To support this work, we have reviewed our Tree Strategy to ensure that we continue to maintain and increase the number of trees and canopy cover across the county.



We are familiar with Public Health Wales' advice which recommends all adults participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week, a message which was reinforced nationally during the lockdowns. This has encouraged people to interact with familiar surroundings in new ways, with nature being a solace and a lifeline for many, especially during the lockdowns and this has heightened appreciation of nature as a key factor in maintaining positive mental health. With this in mind, we are firmly committed to protecting and enhancing our

green and blue spaces and improving our understanding of the importance of our natural environment. Our dedication to this cause was made public during our recent declaration of a nature emergency (July 2021) in which we **committed to protect our natural environment and biodiversity and work towards a goal of 'no net biodiversity loss'**. Our Climate Change Challenge Plan and Project Zero are inextricably linked to the nature emergency and we have already declared commitments within the Climate Change Challenge Plan to increase the number of allotments across the Vale, plant more native trees and improve our green and blue spaces through Section 106 funding. The declaration of a nature emergency will generate more explicit activity in this area as we work together with our communities and partners to protect biodiversity and tackle climate change. Linked to this, our **Biodiversity Forward Plan** outlines how the Council will "seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the proper exercise of their functions and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems". The Plan details the mechanisms and actions by which our aims will be delivered to halt the decline of biodiversity, reduce the effects of climate change and promote sustainable development whilst also helping to deliver the Council's commitments under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Implementation of the Plan will ensure all elements of well-being are considered together and will facilitate collaborative working. Progress will be reviewed and reported every three years and the Plan will be reviewed and updated at the end of each 3-year reporting period to ensure it remains relevant.

As part of our commitment towards implementing our Biodiversity Forward Plan and establishing a **Local Nature Partnership** (LNP), our dedicated LNP officer has engaged with over 20 community groups across the Vale to bring together communities and take action for nature. Some of our achievements under this partnership include, the purchase of £61k worth of mowing equipment to help community groups manage nature on their doorstep and the award of biodiversity grants of up to £500 to local community groups to help improve biodiversity within their community area. The Countryside Service has also secured funding for an otter project which will help establish where otter populations are located within the Vale. Community engagement has taken place, with over 40 individuals enlisted to help undertake the survey.



Working in partnership with the LNP we have also introduced an innovative grass-cutting regime to a range of green spaces in the Vale of Glamorgan to create meadow areas of wildflowers. This scheme is a form of carbon offsetting which means it helps neutralise carbon emissions, thus contributing towards commitment to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero before 2030. In total we now have nearly 250,000 m<sup>2</sup> of wildflower areas throughout the Vale which are hugely beneficial to our local wildlife and our environment. Cutting grass less frequently also helps to boost biodiversity as it assists pollinating insects and animals. The method used to collect our grass cuttings also helps to reduce the level of nutrients in the soil, encouraging wildflowers to grow as they thrive in nutrient-poor soils. To ensure the longer grass does not affect anyone's enjoyment of our green spaces, pathways have been cut through larger areas that can be used by visitors and for informal recreation.



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Council remains committed to delivering a range of environmental projects through the **Community Investment Scheme** to enhance the local area, improve neighbourhoods and strengthen communities. Since the scheme began, we have celebrated many successes including working in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy to recruit 163 local residents to conduct community litter picks and support cleaner local communities by offering skip amnesties. This scheme is also responsible for the 'Everyone's Garden' at Margaret Avenue, Colcot, Barry which represents a significant investment in bringing a derelict site into use by the local community. Working together with Colcot Primary School, Horizon Engineering, Colcot tenants and residents, we established a community open space complete with play area and community garden. During December 2020, additional funding was secured via Natural Resources Wales to carry out further work, namely the erection of an educational centre on the site. Planning permission has been granted and on site works to deliver the educational centre will continue during 2021/22. An additional three priority environmental schemes have been identified for the forthcoming financial year, namely Fair Oaks Parking scheme, a project at Trebeferad to improve parking and the Buttrills Estate Improvement scheme.

We have also further **developed the Strong Communities Fund and invested funding and third party contributions to support community capacity building across the Vale**, this will have a key role to play in our recovery from the pandemic. During 2020/21, all funding was allocated to community projects and the Council is working with project sponsors to capture outcomes. Since inception in 2017, grants totalling £781,722 have been allocated to 56 projects across the county that are making a real difference to the quality of life and range of services available to people and communities in the Vale. The Strong Communities grants approved to date will contribute towards the delivery of projects with an overall value in excess of £2.74 million. The scheme has also proven to be an invaluable tool in the allocation of Section 106 funding, and it has been used as a match funding source for other funds from Welsh Government and Lottery funding. More than 270 enquiries have been received from groups dedicated to making positive changes in the areas where they live.

Another one of our commitments aligned to this objective, is to provide effective waste management services and minimise the impact of our waste on the environment. The Council follows the Welsh Government recommended approach to waste management and recycling by **fully adopting the Collections Blueprint and working with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)** and, despite the pandemic, we have continued to make progress towards providing an effective waste management service. Working collaboratively with our residents, partners and businesses, we have successfully reduced our waste and its impact on the environment whilst improving recycling performance year on year. As we continue to move towards a Vale wide source separated system for collecting recycling, our approach is ensuring greater traceability of recycled materials to end destinations in the UK and high-quality material for onward use. During October 2020, we successfully rolled out phase 2 of the Collections Blueprint by implementing source separated waste across Barry. We plan to extend this into Penarth next year following the introduction of a Waste Transfer Station in Barry.

**Changes to the Collections Blueprint have enabled the Council to meet national recycling targets and will help make our waste management service more financially sustainable in the long term.** The introduction of black bag restrictions in September 2018 continues to have a positive effect on waste and recycling performance, enabling us to further increase participation in recycling and reduce the growth of municipal waste. During 2020/21 these changes have contributed to the Council achieving a recycling rate of 71% (70% in 2019/20) which exceeds the statutory target of 64% and the Welsh target of 70% by 2025. In addition, we continue to work in partnership with Cardiff City Council to deliver improvements in organic waste treatment and ensure a sustainable waste management service in response to the environmental and carbon reduction challenges facing Wales. This arrangement will further contribute to improving our waste recycling and composting performance.

We are making significant changes to our waste management services and recognise the benefit from having an overall strategy to help us continue on this path whilst reflecting the wider social, economic and environmental (including carbon reduction and waste prevention) goals. With this in mind, we are developing a ten-year **Waste Management Strategy** and supporting action plan in line with Welsh Government statutory guidance and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act which states an expectation that public bodies look at least ten years ahead.



Our **commitment to minimise pollution** and recognise the detrimental impact it has on the environment and people's well-being can be evidenced in the achievement of several prestigious awards during the year. The hot weather, a pandemic and subsequent restrictions saw an influx of people enjoying our coastal and countryside resorts, but we were able to rise to the challenge and step up our cleansing and enforcement activities to ensure a safe and clean space for our visitors. For example, Barry Island, which can see 30,000 thousand visitors on a hot summer's day, was raked and litter picked every morning, with extra litter picking undertaken on weekend evenings. We installed giant bins in the main car park and numerous smaller bins around Barry Island, made regular public announcements over the tannoy to remind people to dispose of their waste and installed water fountains throughout the Island (and wider Vale) in an effort to encourage people away from single-use plastic. Working in partnership with South Wales Police, our enforcement officers were also out in force, patrolling the area, speaking with the public and issuing Public Protection Notices for

littering and parking offences as well as removing alcohol from people committing anti-social behaviour. We should also mention the invaluable contribution of the volunteers, including local residents, young people and school children seen tirelessly clearing litter on the beach throughout the summer. Council employees also received praise for their voluntary contribution and were recognised in the Managing Director's weekly email communication to all staff.

Despite the volume of people and the litter that was often left behind by a small minority of visitors, we were able to maintain our cleanliness standards and award status. In the Summer of 2020, **7 of our beaches achieved awards guaranteeing visitors a clean, safe, attractive and well managed environment.** Whitmore Bay, Southerndown and Penarth Marina were all awarded internationally recognised Blue Flags by the Foundation for Environmental Education, with the first two also achieving Seaside Awards, along with Jacksons Bay and Cold Knap. The Seaside Award is the nationwide standard for the best beaches and is a symbol of quality which ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, attractive and well managed coastal stretch. We are also working more closely with our communities to deliver environmental improvements to parks, play areas, allotments and outdoor leisure sites. As part of this work, **all 10 of our parks have retained the coveted Green Flag awarded by Keep Wales Tidy.**

During the periods of enforced lockdowns, we witnessed an unprecedented increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) across our coastal areas and beauty hot spots. At the start of the pandemic we saw incidents increase as much as 378% in May 2021 and an average increase of 187% for the year (April 2020-March 2021). The restrictions imposed during the lockdowns coupled with particularly warm summer weather resulted in several very large gatherings in which individuals perpetrated ASB in the form of alcohol misuse, graffiti, litter, noise disturbance and other anti-social behaviour. Under the **Safer Vale Partnership**, we worked closely with our partners (including the Police) and the local community to successfully mitigate and prevent mass gatherings and anti-social behaviour and protect our beauty spots. However, we recognise that there is still more to do to educate and deter perpetrators and protect our natural environment and citizens.

To further minimise the detrimental impact of pollution on our environment and on people's well-being, we have established an **integrated enforcement team** (comprising civil parking enforcement, environment enforcement, and public space protection orders) to tackle waste management offences, highways offences, byelaws and public space protection orders (PSPO's). During the year we took delivery of a new camera car which became operational in October 2020 and operated beyond expectation, tackling unsafe parking particularly around schools which are often congested and a danger to pupils and parents. In the first few weeks of operation, our camera car identified more than 200 offences. Enforcement officers have also been working with the public to raise awareness in order to improve compliance and reduce offending.



Climate change became very real for many of our citizens during the winter. The flooding incident on 23rd December 2020 caused by extreme rainfall (33mm of rain fell over an 11-hour period) resulted in flooding to residential and business properties across the Vale of Glamorgan. The most adversely affected areas were Dinas Powys, Sully and Penarth as well as other surrounding areas to less of a degree. It is estimated that in excess of 100 properties and businesses experienced internal flooding damage as a result. As part of our emergency response, our Civil Protection Unit co-ordinated a response to ensure effective liaison and co-ordination with our partner organisations including South Wales Police and South Wales Fire Service. We immediately cleared the flooded highways and provided over 1,300 sandbags and 64 skips to help residents while posting regular updates on our website and social media channels. Our officers continue to work in partnership with Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water to progress the investigation of the incident. The lessons learnt from this event will be used to inform the identification of any further actions required in future to further manage flood risks in Vale. Alongside new guidance from Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Local Government Association, the learning from recent flooding events will inform the review of our **Local Risk Management Strategy** in the coming year.

The delivery of a flood risk management scheme for the village of Llanmaes is ongoing, albeit delayed by the impact of the pandemic. **The implementation of such schemes contribute to our prevention agenda by reducing the likelihood of flooding incidents in specific locations/properties and reducing risk of harm to residents. It also balances short-term needs to provide immediate protection to life, property and the environment whilst contributing to the longer-term well-being of individuals and families within the community.** The Llanmaes scheme specifically evidences the Well-being of Future Generations Act and its five ways of working by ensuring that through good design and prioritising resources, life in the Vale is improved over the longer term for residents and visitors to the area. The preventative treatments proposed assist in reducing flooding risk and are designed not to cause detriment to others. The process of developing this scheme has involved the local community and other stakeholders such as Natural Resources Wales, delivering on the involvement agenda. Our Green Infrastructure Strategy will also offer direction in terms of maximising solutions to help mitigate flooding caused by climate change, greening the built environment and contribute towards sustainable water management.

In delivering our statutory planning function we have committed to protect, preserve and where possible enhance our natural and built environment and cultural heritage. With this in mind, we have ensured that **all planning decisions taken during the year have been made in accordance with relevant Local Development Plan Policies and Supplementary Guidance**. During the year, 1,238 planning applications have been determined.. This has included, 26 LBCs (Listed Building Consent); 165 Tree applications; 91 TCA's (Work to trees in a conservation area) and 74 TPO's (Work to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order). We also resolved 367 planning enforcement cases and inspected 100% of dangerous structures within one day of reporting with appropriate action taken.



We have continued to work with developers and others to ensure that new developments are sustainable, integrated with local communities and provide necessary infrastructure. We have **invested in a number of open spaces for sport and recreational facilities using developer contributions** including completion of a new multi-use games area at King George V Playing Fields, Llandough; upgraded play areas at Wenvoe and Belle Vue Park, Penarth; new interactive equipment installed at Central Park, Barry and a new multi-use games area for Wick. This investment will ensure that new developments deliver appropriate recreation and sports facilities for our citizens to enjoy whilst contributing positively to the physical and mental well-being of our citizens.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to many changes in how we work, how we provide services and how we live our lives. These changes will act as a catalyst to focus our efforts on tackling climate and nature emergencies as we look to achieve a sustainable climate and nature friendly recovery. We have an opportunity and are keen to build on the gains made during the pandemic whilst recognising the huge impact that nature and the environment have and will continue to play in improving our physical and mental well-being in the long-term.

As we develop our proposals for work in the coming year, we will focus our efforts on those areas where we can have the greatest positive impact. We will continue to work collaboratively in addressing the key challenges associated with ensuring that our road to recovery is green and that the changes in behaviour that we want to keep are effectively encouraged and supported. For example, retaining elements of increased home working, online services and a reduction in car journeys alongside development of alternative sustainable travel and changes to how we manage our buildings, waste and energy use. In addition, we will need to rethink how we involve people in a community conversation to ensure it is safe, meaningful and reflects changes as a result of the pandemic.



## 6.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment



In response to the Climate **Change agenda**, we have provided **scooter and storage facilities in 16 schools**, installed **cycle stands** in Penarth, engaged with residents on active travel network maps and produced and promoted active travel plans as part of encouraging sustainable changes in travel and improving our local environment.

We have applied Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) in **2 new housing development schemes 23 units at Hayes Road, Barry and 11 units at Court Road Barry** and we are investigating opportunities for an affordable carbon neutral housing development.

Constructed to BREEAM Standards (sustainable assessment method for large infrastructure projects) and **using low carbon materials**, pupils are now enjoying the new modern facilities at Whitmore High School, **completed 4 months ahead of schedule.**



During 2020/21 we worked collaboratively to improve the local environment and active travel routes around schools by **planting 500 trees (with 700 more planned)**, adopting a Biodiversity Strategy for schools, **installing scooter pods, cycle racks, cycle pods and over 100 balance bikes.**

As part of the Council House Build Programme, we have incorporated **energy efficient electric heating and hot water systems to reduce energy consumption and drive down fuel costs for our tenants.** We have also improved thermal comfort and air movement in our new homes by installing either Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) or, Direct Mechanical Extract Ventilation (DMEV) units, as required.

Worked in partnership to create **Wales' first 'Tiny Forest'** in Pencoedtre Park, Barry, to **attract wildlife, improve air quality, remove harmful greenhouse gases and help reduce localised flooding.**



7 beach awards were achieved during 2020/21 in recognition of well managed environment and facilities.

**24 parks and green spaces and 2 country parks** in the Vale have achieved the prestigious Green Flag Award and Green Flag Community Award during the year.

**Delivered 100+ energy saving projects across council buildings** including switching old, inefficient lighting to LED lighting and introduced more efficient energy controls. **68% of the Council's street lighting has been converted to LED** with plans to increase this to 92% by the summer of 2021.

Made good progress on the design and construction of a **low use carbon school at St. David's Church in Wales Primary School** and on construction of the **first net zero carbon school in Wales at Llancarfan Primary School**. The Council has also allocated an **additional £300k to support decarbonisation** of the Centre for Learning and Wellbeing and Ysgol Y Deri Expansion schemes, which is supplemented by an additional Welsh Government **grant of £900k**. The Council has been awarded an additional **£1,050,000** from Welsh Government to support decarbonisation measures as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme



## 6.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

### Objective 4: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

In partnership with Safer Vale and the Police, Community Safety Officers we launched the Garden Project in Llantwit Major to enhance gardens and community connections. **10 Council Properties were targeted and 11 volunteers** were recruited to support the project.

Established a Local Nature Partnership which has already engaged with over **20 community groups**, awarded **£500 diversity grants**, introduced an innovative grass cutting regime and promoted access to equipment to help improve biodiversity in the local environment.

Significant progress has been made in relation to agile working as a direct consequence of the pandemic with over **70% of council staff continuing to work from home**. The considerable reduction in travel, printing and usage of large buildings will have a **positive impact on reducing our carbon emissions**.

All our country parks and Heritage Coast only use **peat free compost** for all gardening projects. Both country parks have created in house composting areas and produce their own compost for use on site. We have also **reduced pesticide and herbicide use across our land**.

Refuse collections and recycling services have continued with the second phase of the Waste Collection and Treatment Blueprint successfully rolled out in Barry during October 2020.



**Contamination was reduced by 60%** in the first week and despite the pandemic, **71% of household waste was prepared for reuse and/or recycled** exceeding our statutory target of 64% and the Welsh target of 70% by 2025.

The merging of our Parks and Cleansing departments continues to bring about greater and more effective utilisation of resources which can be seen in the street cleanliness figures. The percentage of highways at an acceptable level of cleanliness also exceeded target with **100% of highways inspected being of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness**.

The completed 'Everyone's Garden' at Margaret Avenue, Colcot represents a significant investment in bringing a derelict site into use by the **local community, enhancing both the local area and surrounding neighbourhoods**.

Continued to invest in a number of open spaces for sport and recreational facilities using developer contributions including **completion of a new multi-use games area at King George V Playing Fields, Llandough; upgraded play area at Wenvoe; new interactive equipment installed at Central Park, Barry and new multi-use games area for Wick playing fields**.



Dumping foreign objects in places they don't belong can have a huge impact on the natural, social and economic environment. Therefore, we are pleased to report that during 2020/21, **381 incidents of fly tipping were removed by the Council over a period of 352 days** meaning that **the average number of days taken to clear a fly tipping incident was 0.9 days**, an improvement on performance when compared to last year (1.44 days).

## 6.3 CHALLENGES

A number of challenges have presented as a direct result of the pandemic and in other instances many were pre-existing challenges that have been further exacerbated by COVID-19. Whilst the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic still exists, there have been opportunities to learn from the experience to explore and establish new ways of working that will enable us to transform our services in the future. Since we are likely to have to learn to live with COVID-19, the main challenge will be in ensuring that we can future proof our services from any negative impacts or disruption to service delivery. As we transition from our emergency response to recovery, it presents us with a unique opportunity to develop our understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and how as a Council we plan to evolve and change our response over time.

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We recognise that the temporary halt to normal life and successive lockdowns is neither sustainable nor enough to stop climate change and **we have a lot of work to do if we are to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero before the Welsh Government's target of 2030**. We will need to make representations to the Welsh and UK Government's, to provide the necessary powers, resources, and technical support to local authorities in Wales to help us successfully meet the 2030 target. We will also need to continue to work with partners across the region to develop and implement best practice methods that can deliver carbon reductions and help limit global warming. We will continue to consult stakeholders including Councillors, residents, young people, businesses and other relevant parties to develop a strategy in line with a target of net zero emissions by 2030 and explore ways to maximise local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy.

In recognition of the **inextricable link between climate change and the loss of biodiversity**, the Council declared **a nature emergency in July 2021**, placing biodiversity alongside climate change at the heart of our decision making and recovery planning. We welcome Welsh Government's support for the Convention on Biological Diversity post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and will seek to engage with the anticipated Global Biodiversity Framework with **clear goals and targets to achieve our aim of 'no net loss of biodiversity'**. This will be a challenging time for us as we seek to make representations to the Welsh and UK Governments to provide the necessary powers, resources and technical support to local authorities across Wales and enable us to work together and achieve this aim. We will continue to work with partners to develop and implement best practice methods that can protect Wales' biodiversity. We will also work with our local stakeholders including Councillors, residents, young people, businesses and other relevant parties, to **develop a strategy aligned with Project Zero** that will also explore ways to maximise the local benefits in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy.

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**Climate change is predicted to lead to increased storminess, sea-level rises and changes in rainfall patterns.** We saw the **impact of extreme rainfall during December 2020 which caused flooding and damage to over 100 residential and business properties in Dinas Powys, Sully and Penarth** and surrounding areas. In addition, less obvious impacts may occur with, for example, changes in temperature, groundwater and vegetation coverage also potentially impacting on coastal erosion due to impacts on the weathering of cliffs or flooding as land-use and vegetation changes affect run-off responses. New guidance and climate change allowances will be incorporated into strategic and scheme level assessments to **build in resilience against future changes**. The implementation of good quality **sustainable drainage systems** on new developments will also help mitigate some of these impacts on flood risk, whilst also helping manage other impacts such as increased temperatures and urban heat island effects. In addition, continued monitoring of critical coastal frontages and watercourses will facilitate a better understanding of the actual changes occurring over time. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted on delivery of flood and coastal risk management activities delaying investigations into recent flooding incidents and affecting delivery of works. As new working practices have been implemented, these impacts have reduced and investigations, inspections and delivery of new schemes are now continuing.

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A key area that has required considerable attention during COVID-19 and the subsequent easing of lockdown restrictions has been the **management of our parks and resorts**. With the easing of lockdown restrictions, there has been an increase in visitor numbers to the Vale of Glamorgan coast and Country Parks despite social-distancing measures and the early restrictions placed on travel. There have also been instances of **anti-social behaviour** leading to the closure of the car parks at Ogmore. Going forward, we will continue to manage our public open spaces, particularly our coastal areas and parks to **ensure that our residents and visitors are safe and that our natural environment is protected**.

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COVID-19 has **highlighted the inadequate and unequal, access to high quality green spaces**. At this time of national crisis, the importance of access to green spaces and nature for physical and mental health has been starkly highlighted. The period of lockdown has been associated with physical and mental health risks to those confined to their homes and these **disproportionately affect the mental and physical health of those from more disadvantaged communities** and those who live alone, or without access to gardens, balconies, or green space. Access to high quality green space is not equally driven, with disadvantaged communities having significantly less access, not only to their own gardens or other outside space, but also to green space close to their home. These limited opportunities to access outside space particularly affect children living in disadvantaged areas who are subject to “green poverty.”

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The **inability of clubs and organisations to generate income at the present time presents a significant barrier to any potential transfer of assets**. Consequently, with no income available to these organisations, discussions regarding new transfers of assets including sports grounds, parks, open spaces, allotments, public conveniences and clubs continue to remain on hold until recovery from COVID-19 is underway.

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**Rising energy costs for unmetered electricity supplies in relation to street lighting remains a key challenge given reducing budgets and the need to deliver significant savings**, however, this should be mitigated by substantial completion of the Council’s street lighting energy reduction strategy.

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Although the Vale has **exceeded the statutory recycling target for 2020/21 of 70%** set by Welsh Government, we **need to reduce the levels of contamination in order to achieve meet the 2025 aspiration of working towards zero waste**. By 2025, we will **need to have significantly reduced our waste** and aim to manage any waste that is produced in a way that makes the most of our valuable resources. Throughout 2021/22 we will continue replacing the co-mingled recycling system with a source separated system. These changes to collection arrangements are being implemented across Wales as part of Welsh Government’s move to **reduce levels of contamination in recycling collections** and allow even more of what we discard to be sent to incineration or land fill sites. We will continue to ensure that we engage and support residents to make these changes as easily as possible.

We have **successfully continued to run and complete all our domestic waste and recycling rounds on a daily basis throughout the COVID-19 pandemic**, however, the move toward a source separated recycling system in Penarth and Dinas Powys has been delayed by the pandemic and delivery of the Waste Transfer Station.

We recognise that **we would benefit from having an overall Waste Management Strategy** to help us continue delivering our waste management services and changes. With this in mind, we are developing a ten-year Waste Management Strategy and supporting action plan in line with Welsh Government statutory guidance and the

Well-Being of Future Generations Act which states an expectation that public bodies look at least ten years ahead. This will be reported to Cabinet during 2021/22.

**Whilst Salix funding is now available to replace another 3,713 lanterns to LED on strategic routes, this work has been delayed due to the pandemic.** At present 68% of the Council's street lighting has been converted to LED, short of the 90% target. The contractor appointed for this work has programmed the work to be completed in August 2021. Completion of this scheme will contribute towards our goal of reducing the organisation's carbon emissions to net zero before 2030 and minimising the negative impact of our activities on the environment.

## 6.4 SPOTLIGHT ON: BARRY ISLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL "WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE"

Following the declaration of a **climate emergency**, the Vale of Glamorgan Council signed up to the PSB Climate Emergency Charter, developed a Climate Change Challenge Plan and created Project Zero. Project Zero brings together the wide range of work and opportunities available to **tackle the climate emergency, reduce the Council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and encourage others to make positive changes.** As part of the consultation on the Project Zero Climate Change Challenge Plan, feedback was sought through an online survey, social media campaign, Twitter polls, public Zoom sessions and specific Zoom sessions with the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum and Vale Youth Service to ensure the **involvement of our community and enable a voice of all generations to be heard.** The conversation remains ongoing with feedback and ideas welcomed through the projects email address [projectzero@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:projectzero@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk).

Our Climate Change Challenge Plan details eighteen challenges framed around the need **to demonstrate strong leadership, fulfil our responsibility to current and future generations and to make a difference now and into the long-term.** In meeting these challenges, we have also pledged to encourage behaviour change and listen to the concerns of our children and young people. With this in mind, the Managing Director wrote to all Head teachers with an open invitation to contact the Council to discuss how we could all **work together for a brighter future in the context of climate change and the interlinked nature emergency declared in July 2021.** This invitation has led to us to hear what our children and young people think about climate change and their hopes for the future. It has also allowed us **to work in an integrated way**, coming together as experts to share our knowledge and strengthen our working relationships.

During the Spring/Summer of 2021, Barry Island Primary School accepted the Managing Director's invitation and officers from across the Council including those in corporate services, waste management, catering, property, transport and countryside services began working with the school to **incorporate Project Zero into a whole school curriculum.** Inspired by David Attenborough's Witness Statement, the school was keen to deliver an authentic learning experience for the children that brought the global dimension to a local community context. This innovative learning experience also fits well with the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** which requires public bodies in Wales to **work better with others (including each other) and take a more joined up, long-term, preventative approach so that their decisions have a positive impact on people living in the future as well as those living today.**

Initially, Council officers met with teaching staff during an INSET day and then participated in an Enrichment Week in which the whole school were involved in activities to learn more about **climate change, nature, biodiversity, transport, clean energy, food and the environment.**





During the week, pupils at Barry Island Primary School shared their innovative in-class activities via Twitter and considered changes they could make toward **becoming a more carbon neutral school**. Pupils also took part in activities such as mapping their own active travel routes at Jacksons Bay inspired by our transport officers; learning about food miles and the sugar content of food with our catering officers; testing renewable energy products and learning about clean energy with our Estates Manager; outdoor learning about biodiversity and countryside with our Countryside Ranger; and heard about the importance of waste management and the impact of pollution from our Waste Project officer.

This hands on, **immersive experience really brought the learning to life** for the children and staff. The school put together a fantastic [You Tube video](#) – “Barry Island Primary working in collaboration with Vale of Glamorgan Council - Project Zero” to showcase their learning journey.

We know that this hands-on learning experience is beneficial for our children and young people and that instilling an ethos that teaches us the importance of our locality can also **influence behaviour**. This authentic and sensory learning experience, where children are outdoors, **immersed in nature and our local green and blue spaces will also contribute towards our active and healthy lifestyle goals whilst having positive effects on the mental health and well-being of our children and young people**.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme

Building upon this success, our 21st Century Schools team recently visited and produced a report on outdoor learning for Wick and Marcross Primary School exploring ideas for future development on school grounds. As part of the report, the team identified the positive steps that had already been undertaken in the school to develop their green spaces and support pupils’ learning. So far, Wick and Marcross have set up many outdoor learning spaces, including a habitat garden project, a Nursery outdoor play project and Forest School area. Between them, these projects have seen the installation of raised beds that include a mix of pollinator-friendly species, a bug hotel, hedgehog house and a small pond. All habitats are rife with wildlife and plant species, including wild cherry, horse chestnut, elder and pollinator friendly herbaceous plants. More wildflower seeds have been planted that will develop over the coming year.

During the year our 21st Century Schools team have also **collaborated with schools** to help connect them with projects like National Resources Wales’ fruit trees scheme. 24 schools signed up to receive 5 fruit trees each, and Fonmon Castle’s wildflower project (with Wild Wales Seeds) saw 44 schools sign up to receive packs of wildflowers (each covering up to 850m<sup>2</sup>).

These initiatives illustrate our holistic approach to delivering our Corporate Plan goals. The activities highlighted show a **direct contribution towards achieving our cross-cutting well-being objectives and many of our commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan** including improving air quality, off-setting our carbon emissions, greening our estates, enhancing well-being, investment in our schools to provide the right learning environment, encouraging physical activity and active travel and protecting our biodiversity. They have also **contributed towards the enhancement of the softer skills of our workforce**. For example, our officers have had to adapt at pace this year and come up with innovative ways to transfer their expertise and engage a young audience. Officers have embraced technology by “dialling in” to the classroom, they have learned how to present and communicate their ideas in a meaningful way, they have built rapport and relationships with colleagues they may never have worked with before. In a year that was dominated by a global pandemic, our workforce have risen to the challenge, and have led the way for change, influencing behaviours to ensure that we can proudly leave behind a legacy for future generations.



## 7.0 WHAT OUR AUDITORS SAID ABOUT US

In line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Auditor General for Wales is required to produce an annual report on Welsh councils and other public bodies entitled, the 'Annual Improvement Report (AIR)' which summaries the audit work undertaken during the period 2019 to 2020. The report brings together the key findings from all audit work undertaken in the Council during 2019-20 including those of other inspection and regulatory bodies such as Estyn (Her Majesty's inspectorate for schools in Wales) and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

The Council's Annual Audit Summary (previously known as the Annual Improvement Report) was issued later than usual, in February 2021, and covered the period 2019 through to the autumn of 2020. This approach was consistent with the flexibilities afforded through emergency governance arrangements by the Welsh Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This allowed statutory deadlines to be relaxed in certain areas to enable severely stretched public service resources to be diverted to priority areas at a time of national emergency. In recognition of the strain on public services, Audit Wales have responded by reshaping their regulatory work programme and working flexibly to reduce its impact on public bodies response to COVID-19. Consequently, work undertaken has focused on supporting recovery planning, financial sustainability and COVID-19 learning, which has provided the Council with real-time feedback on key issues in a range of formats.

Whilst our regulators have not undertaken all on-site audit work, we have continued to work remotely with our Audit Wales colleagues to conclude a number of pieces of work from the Council's 2019/2020 audit work programme. In addition, work has continued in reshaping or deferring previously planned audit work for 2020/21 as new priorities emerge due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, the focus of Audit Wales has been on supporting public bodies to improve their evolving responses to COVID-19 by gathering novel and other practice as it emerges, analysing it rapidly to draw out relevant points of learning and sharing the resulting insights quickly with colleagues in the Welsh public sector.

In the interim, we have continued to make progress on existing Proposals for Improvement that were made in previous years' reports. The Council's Insight tracker incorporates all our regulatory proposals for improvement as well as areas for further development identified by the Council and this monitored monthly by the Insight Board and half yearly by the Audit Committee and the Cabinet.

## 7.1 ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY (2019 - AUTUMN 2020)

The contents of the Annual Audit Summary 2020 were generally positive and concluded that overall, the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement.

Whilst no formal recommendations were made by the Auditor General in his Annual Audit Summary 2020 for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, 11 proposals for improvement (PFI) were made in relation to specific local reviews on the Council's outsourced leisure services (2 PFI), the Reshaping Services Programme (5 PFI) and Waste management arrangements (4 PFI). Recent progress against these proposals is reflected in the latest [Insight Tracker](#).

As well as specific local reviews, each year, Audit Wales also carry out studies across the local government sector to make recommendations for improving value for money. Between 2019 and the autumn of 2020, 6 such reports were published in relation to: 'Front Door' Social Care; Review of Public Services Boards; Implementing the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence Act; Rough Sleeping in Wales 'Everyone's Problem; No One's Responsibility'; Better Law Making and Commercialisation in Local Government.

In line with corporate performance management arrangements, consideration is given by relevant council services to the findings contained within both local and national reports as they are published, and actions have

been incorporated within the Council's Insight Tracker throughout the year as appropriate. These actions will be monitored by the Insight Board and reported to Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee as work to address them progresses. Progress against our regulatory actions will also be monitored by Audit Wales colleagues throughout the year as part of the Annual Regulatory Plan 2021/22.

Despite the significant challenges of the past year, positive progress has been made in responding to our regulatory improvement areas with 10 of the 38 actions on the tracker completed as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. 25 actions on the tracker relate to local regulatory proposals of which 5 have been completed and work is progressing in the remaining 20 actions. The completed actions relate to the follow up review of our corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Of the 13 actions relating to national regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals, 5 have been completed with work progressing on the remaining actions. The completed actions relate to the review of how local government manages homelessness demand and the effectiveness of local planning authorities Wales.

The [full Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary Report 2020 can be viewed here.](#)

## 7.2 INSIGHT TRACKER

Progress in relation to all our improvement areas is monitored via the Insight Board monthly and reported to Corporate Management Team. The Insight Board Action Tracker incorporates all our regulatory proposals for improvement as well as areas for further development identified by the Council. Progress against our regulatory proposals are reported twice a year to Audit Committee and Cabinet.

Due to the timing of publishing this report, a more recent progress update against our regulatory improvement areas has been provided at the link below. As at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, overall progress remains positive. Of the 34 actions relating to local regulatory proposals 9 have been completed and 25 are being progressed.

A further 13 actions relate to national regulatory proposals for improvement identified by our regulators and in relation to these, 5 have been completed. Progress against our Insight tracker (regulatory proposals) as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 can be viewed [here](#).

## 7.3 HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION ON COUNCIL: GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL 2020/2021

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Head of Internal Audit to provide an internal audit opinion to support the Annual Governance Statement. The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control. The [report](#):

- Includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control;
- Presents a summary of the audit work undertaken;
- Draws attention to any issues that may impact on the level of assurance provided;
- Provides a summary of the performance for the service;
- Comments on conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

During the year, a total of 30 reviews were completed with an audit opinion and a total of 80 medium and high recommendations made. Of these reviews, 17% (5) were given an audit opinion of substantial assurance, 70% (21) reasonable assurance and 13% (4) limited assurance. The implementation of all audit recommendations is being monitored regularly to ensure that required improvements are made.

Taking into account the results of the internal audit reviews completed during 2020/21, the recommendations made and considering other sources of assurance the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control for 2020/21 is of **reasonable assurance**. No significant crosscutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment and the weaknesses identified are service specific.

The majority of planned audit reviews have been undertaken during 2020/21 despite the pandemic and the impact that has had on service demands as well as the impact of adapting to remote working (73% of planned audits were completed with 80% completed in planned time, and both performances were above the Welsh Chief Auditors Group averages). Although the pandemic did have some impact on the delivery of the internal audit plan for 2020/21, the level of Internal Audit coverage was sufficient for the Head of Audit to be able to give an opinion. Where planned work has not been undertaken, assurance has been gained where possible from other sources such as previous work and coverage in other audits. Some planned reviews were not undertaken during the year following requests from services that were under intense pressure; these will be considered in the 2021/22 plan. In addition, two audits which commenced in 2020/21 will be completed during 2021/22.

In providing this annual audit opinion, it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that internal audit can provide is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance and control processes. The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work in the financial year 2020/21 and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

The Internal Audit Service received an external assessment in accordance with the Standards in 2017 and another will be due in 2022. No areas of non-compliance that would affect the overall scope or operation of the Internal Audit activity were identified and the assessment noted that there were no significant deviations from the Standards. No significant changes have occurred in respect of the working practices since the Regional Internal Audit Service was set up in April 2019. As a result, the Service continues to conform to the Standards during 2020/21.

## 7.4 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/2021

The Council, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, is required to undertake an annual review of internal control and governance and the resulting Annual Governance Statement (AGS) must be included within the Statement of Accounts. The AGS therefore provides an assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identifies where improvements need to be made. The [report](#) describes how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance as aligned to the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework- Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 with a focus on the following principles:

- A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

The AGS concludes that from the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken that **reasonable assurance can be given that the governance arrangements for the Vale of Glamorgan Council continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.**

One of the main issues raised and highlighted over the last few years has been the ability of the Council to carry on meeting its service objectives and delivering positive outcomes for its customers and clients in the light of continued reductions in Welsh Government Funding. In the past year, external funding to support additional financial pressures resulting from COVID-19 have been claimed where possible from Welsh Government via the Hardship Fund. This will continue in 2021/22. Assumptions for future years' budgets will continue to be reviewed and amended to reflect the changing circumstances.

The AGS will be reviewed as part of the external audit on the Statement of Accounts and should reflect any governance issues right up to the date that the Auditor General for Wales signs off the Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021. The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has been considered and is reflected within the AGS.

## 7.5 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER: END OF YEAR POSITION SUMMARY 2020/2021

### Overview:

At year end, there were 16 corporate risks on the Register which includes the addition of CR16: COVID-19 that was added to the Register during the first quarter of the 2020/21 year.

### Risk Statuses:

5 risks scored medium/high, 10 risks scored medium, and 1 risk scored medium/low. The COVID-19 risk has a medium/high (8) risk status on the Register. This risk status reflects the significant impact the pandemic has had on everybody's lives and the pressure it has placed on our capacity and resources as an organisation to ensure continuity of service delivery. See below **Corporate Risk Summary Table**.

### Risk Management Plans:

Overall, good progress was made by the end of Quarter 4 in relation to the actions associated with the Risk Management Plans across all aspects of the Register.

- In total there are 136 mitigating actions currently being monitored via the Register, the majority of which are also aligned to a Corporate Plan activity.
- During quarter 4, we have been able to assign a RAG status to 135 of these mitigating actions. Where it has not been possible to note a RAG status for an action, this is noted as N/A (not applicable) against the action and an explanation provided in the relevant Risk Management Plan.
- A total of 64% actions (87) were completed and 36% (48) actions were allocated a red status for slippage. For many of the actions allocated a red status, COVID-19 was identified as a contributory reason for any slippage.

### Direction of Travel:

Throughout the year, the majority of risks on the Register have remained static with the exception of Integrated Health and Social Care, the Welfare Reform and Information Security risks that have all seen a change in their risk scoring and/or associated risk statuses during the year.

### Integrated Health and Social Care

- During quarter 1, this risk increased its risk position from a score of 4 to 6 on the Register. Although this did not change its overall medium status. The risk score was amended to reflect the impact COVID-19 was having on our ability to progress the integrated health and social care agenda, particularly in the context of the emerging political/legislative and resource aspects of the risk.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted on resources, as it has necessitated some of our staff and our health colleagues to be redeployed to support business-critical functions. As a consequence, this has diverted resources away from progressing some aspects of our transformation projects and service development plans which also impacted on project timescales. A risk score of 6 was deemed accurate, as despite the impact of COVID-19, the risk continues to be controlled well through existing mitigations.
- At the end of year, this risk maintained its medium (6) status to reflect the ongoing concerns associated with COVID-19 and our focus on COVID-specific recovery. During the last quarter, Adult Services have drawn on their experience and learning from the pandemic and used it to inform their planning for the implementation of the next phase of integration project work over the next 12 months. Towards year end, the Council received confirmation of transformation funding continuing into 2021-22, and as a consequence we are more confident that we will have the financial resources available to continue our implementation of this project work into 2021/22. Although, COVID has significantly impacted on our workforce capacity to progress our integration work, we remain optimistic that this will lessen over time. We anticipate that the forecast direction of travel will decrease over time once there is full easing of



restrictions and the return of repurposed staff to their substantive roles. This will give us the capacity to resume our project work and fully progress the integration agenda once again.

### **Information Security**

- During quarter 2, the Information Security risk decreased from a score a medium/high (9) position on the Register to a medium (6).
- Despite the ongoing threats associated with information security, the risk score was initially amended to reflect that additional mitigations had been put in place to address the increased threat from cyber-attacks. During this period, Advanced Threat Protection software (Microsoft Defender) was purchased and rolled out in the form of additional modules specifically for Microsoft 365.
- Although the Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) software (also known as Microsoft Defender), has been effective at reducing some of the risks associated with information security, over the past year there has been an increase in the numbers of ransomware attacks experienced by local authorities. Globally ransomware attacks are on the rise, and more recently the UK has experienced a dramatic increase in these types of threats. Ransomware attacks are a very specific type of threat for which the existing ATP control alone cannot provide sufficient protection.
- As a consequence, it is forecast that this risk score will remain static at a score of 6 (Medium) in the current threat landscape, and it has the potential to increase further if this unique type of threat is not addressed going forward. In response to this emerging aspect of the risk, a business case was developed for consideration by the Information Governance Board to enable us to enhance our ransomware protection. The service is confident that through adopting this additional control it will further strengthen and reinforce effective mitigation against cyber-attacks.

### **Welfare Reform**

- During quarter 3, the Welfare Reform risk increased its risk position from a score of 4 to a 6 on the Register, although this did not change its overall medium status of the risk. This risk score has been amended to reflect the impact COVID-19 is having on the service delivery, well-being and resources aspects of the risk.
- The downturn in the economy has resulted in an increase in unemployment and a growth in the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit and Council Tax relief. There is the concern that a rise in those claiming Universal Credit and other forms of relief are likely to exacerbate issues around debt and poverty potentially leaving people in a position that they are unable to pay their mortgages/sustain tenancies, cover bills and afford food. This in turn puts pressure on housing and homelessness services to source solutions that will enable people to continue to live in their homes and prevent homelessness.
- From a resource's perspective, the rise in Universal Credit and Council Tax relief claimants, also challenges our workforce capacity in responding to the increased demand for financial support and could have income implications in relation to collection of council tax.
- At the end of year, this risk continued to maintain its risk score of 6 (medium status) to reflect the ongoing pressures as outlined above associated with the pandemic.

### **Forecast Direction of Travel:**

At year end, the forecast direction of travel for risks on the Register have predominately remained the same, with the exception of environmental sustainability and welfare reform risks that have both been forecast to continue to escalate over time.

### **Environmental sustainability**

This risk has maintained its upward trajectory to reflect that the pressures associated with climate change will continue to escalate over time. This upward trajectory also reflects the effects of the flooding issues that were experienced in some parts of the Vale during quarter 3. It is anticipated that the welfare reform risk will escalate over time as a result of the risks associated with financial and social impact of the changes.

The other main shift changes in forecast direction of travel over the last quarter of the year have been in relation to Brexit, COVID and Reshaping that are forecast to move from their upward trajectory to a more static position. This reflects more recent developments in the risk and policy landscape in relation to these risks and the mitigations we have progressed and put in place to manage the risks.

### **COVID-19**

It is forecast that this risk is likely to maintain a heightened static position, that takes into account the exceptional progress that continues to be made with the vaccination programme. By the end of the quarter 4 period (March 2021), although a number of restrictions remained in place, the successful roll out of the vaccination programme began to show an impact on COVID-19 infection rates.

It is unlikely that we will see any significant change in this risk until summer 2021 (Quarter 2) at the earliest, when it is hoped further progress will have been made in vaccinating the rest of the population with a first dose and a significant proportion of second doses have been administered to most of the JCVI priority groups. It is anticipated that over the course of future quarters the improved public health position will continue to be sustained which in turn will enable a return of normality for society. However, learning from the lessons of the past year, we still closely monitor COVID developments, as it continues to pose a significant threat to the Council due to its unpredictable nature.

### **Brexit**

Quarter 4 marked the start of a very different trading relationship between the UK and EU. Although the UK left the European Union on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, there was a transition year that allowed for negotiations on a new trading agreement. The new trade agreement defines how we live, work and trade with the EU and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. It is forecast that this risk will maintain a heightened static position over the next few months now that the transition period has come to an end to reflect the changes in relation to our immigration policy and citizen rights, funding arrangements associated with the Shared Prosperity Fund and potential supply chain issues and in particular cost pressures associated with some raw materials.

### **Reshaping**

We anticipate that this risk is likely to maintain a static position at a medium/high risk status over the forthcoming year, as a result of the impact the pandemic has had on our communities and increased demand it has placed on our services. As a result, this continues to present as a risk to the delivery of the Reshaping Services programme. The Reshaping Programme has now taken on a more holistic approach that incorporates three key aspects of transformation in relation to our communities, our work and our resources which includes the key elements of our Recovery Strategy and its priorities. Our Reshaping Programme is also integral to our Corporate Plan delivery. By synthesizing this together with the Reshaping Programme, it puts us in a much stronger position to be able to effectively deliver transformation in line with our commitments of the Corporate Plan and in response to our learning from the Pandemic. Other corporate risks also have an interrelationship with Reshaping Services risk, thus effective risk control of these other corporate risks could potentially help to control and have diminishing effect on the Reshaping risk.

Both Safeguarding and WCCIS are anticipated to move from their forecast static position towards an upward trajectory, whilst the Information Security risk is forecast to move from its previous downward position to a static position. It is anticipated that the Information Security risk over the next 6 months will reduce as we look to strengthen our controls and reinforce policy with staff backed up by further technical controls and not just paper-based policy.

### **Safeguarding**

The nature of this risk has changed as the pandemic has impacted on children and young people and adults at risk of abuse and or sexual exploitation. Children and young people have been at high risk during the pandemic, as traditional face to face contacts with statutory services such as teachers, health care professionals, which help mitigate and respond to any emerging risks have been reduced. Adults with care and support needs who may have been shielding have typically felt more isolated as they were not able to

access face to face services in the usual way, and as a consequence are at a greater risk of abuse or neglect. Although, services have adapted their processes to operate digitally, it does not replace the benefit of regular face to face contact when it comes to safeguarding matters. The pandemic has heightened our awareness of the 'Duty to Report' and we have undertaken a Facebook campaign to enhance the public's awareness of Social Services and the '101 telephone number' to report any concerns about the safety/welfare of children, young people and adults. We have forecast that this risk is likely to increase over time, as there is the concern that the impact of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions will contribute to a surge in demand for both children and young people and adult services. It is anticipated that the rise in demand coupled with pressure on our existing workforce capacity to recruit and retain staff (particularly within Children and Young People Services) is likely to drive the change in this risk status. Our observations indicate that we are seeing a greater severity of cases, some of which are domestic violence related. In addition, there is the emergence of a greater complexity of cases which are presenting as multi-layered issues often linked to relationships, finance, and housing issues. The monitoring of this risk will be kept under ongoing review to enable us to reflect any subsequent changes to the risk in the Register.

### **WCCIS**

It is forecast that this risk has the potential to rise in relation to the resource, service delivery and well-being aspects of the risk. This is due to the emergence of some performance issues nationally that have been identified with the system. To ensure that an accurate position regarding the performance of the system is maintained, we continue to report in any issues we identify locally so that they can be investigated and escalated by the WCCIS Senior Management Board that made up of representatives from the Welsh Government and other authorities using the system. The identified performance issues are currently being taken forward by the WCCIS Senior Management Board in discussion with the provider Advance. We will continue to maintain a watching brief on the developmental issues associated with WCCIS.

## CORPORATE RISK SUMMARY

The table below provides a summary of the Corporate Risks broken down by their risk status in terms of their inherent (pre-control) risk score, the control risk score (how effectively the controls are managing the risk) and the residual risk score (post-control score). The table also gives an outline of each risk's direction travel, in terms of whether the risk is escalating or reducing as well as forecasting its future direction of travel.

Risk Ref	Risk	Inherent Risk Score	Effectiveness of Controls score	Residual Risk Score			Direction of Travel <sup>1</sup>	Forecast Direction of Travel <sup>2</sup>
				Likelihood	Impact	Total		
1	Reshaping Services	9 (M/H)	4 (M)	2	2	4 (M)	↔	↔
2	Legislative Change and Local Government Reform	12 (H)	2 (M/L)	2	3	6 (M)	↔	↔
3	School Reorganisation & Investment	12 (H)	4 (M)	2	2	4 (M)	↔	↔
4	Waste	12 (H)	2 (M/L)	4	2	8 (M/H)	↔	↓
5	Workforce Needs	9 (M/H)	4 (M)	2	2	4 (M)	↔	↔
6	Information Security	12 (H)	2 (M/L)	2	3	6 (M)	↔	↔
7	Environmental Sustainability	12 (H)	4 (M)	2	3	6 (M)	↔	↑
8	Welfare Reform	12 (H)	4 (M)	2	3	6 (M)	↔	↑
9	Public Buildings Compliance	9 (M/H)	4 (M)	2	2	4 (M)	↔	↔
10	Safeguarding	9 (M/H)	6 (M)	1	3	3 (M/L)	↔	↑
11	Integrated Health and Social Care	9 (M/H)	4 (M)	3	2	6 (M)	↔	↓
12	Unauthorised Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards	12 (H)	2 (M/L)	4	2	8 (M/H)	↔	↔
13	Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)	16 (VH)	2 (M/L)	2	3	6 (M)	↔	↑
14	Brexit	12 (H)	2 (M/L)	3	3	9 (M/H)	↔	↔
15	Additional Learning Needs	9 (M/H)	2 (M/L)	3	3	9 (M/H)	↔	↔
16	COVID-19	16 (VH)	2 (M/L)	2	4	8 (M/H)	↔	↔

<sup>1</sup> **Direction of travel** compares residual risk score for the current quarter with the previous quarter to indicate whether the risk is increasing/decreasing or staying static.

<sup>2</sup> **Forecast direction of travel** anticipates the future direction of the risk by taking into account factors that are likely to impact on it

↑ Risk increasing, ↓ Risk is decreasing, ↔ Risk remaining static

## 8.0 OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This report has been written at a time of challenge for the Council as it continues to respond and plans its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have assessed progress in relation to our Annual Delivery Plan activities for the period and have used local performance data where these have been available. At the time of writing this report, certain aspects of performance, most notably end of year national performance indicator information and benchmarking data has not been available to enable us to compare our performance as our statutory statistical obligations from Welsh Government and Local Government's Public Accountability Measures remain suspended. We have recently submitted data for the Public Accountability Measures for the period 2019/20 and 2020/21 and our performance in relation to the rest of Wales will be reported once the datasets are published. Information about our performance throughout the year has been reported to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Cabinets every quarter, including an [end of year \(Quarter 4\) report in July 2021](#).

Below is a selection of performance indicators across our four well-being objectives for the period 2020/21 for which data is available and compares our current performance with that of last year's (2019/20). It must be noted that performance in some areas has been negatively affected by the ongoing pandemic, especially where there has been a need to reprioritise resources in response to COVID-19 challenges.

### WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1: To work with and for our communities

from 62,723  
**79,683** Subscribers to  
'Vale Connect'

**78%** Employee appraisals  
from 95%

from 1.4%  
**1%** 16 year old  
school leavers  
known not to  
be in education,  
training or employment (NEET)

**3.10%** 18 year old school  
leavers known not to be in  
education, training or  
employment (NEET)  
from 1.55%

from 0.80%  
**0.62%**  
17 year old young  
people known not  
to be in education,  
training or employment (NEET)

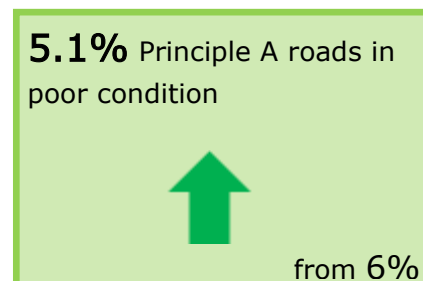
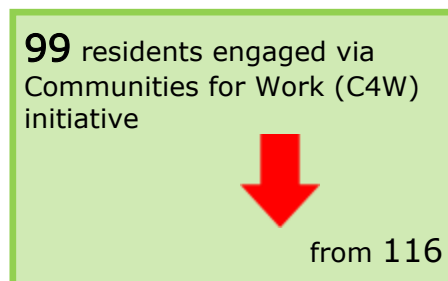
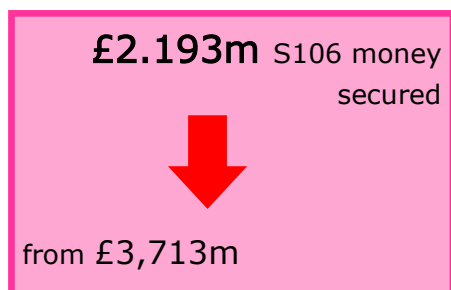
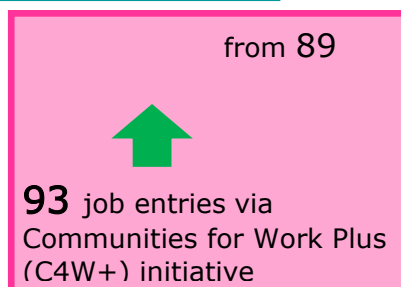
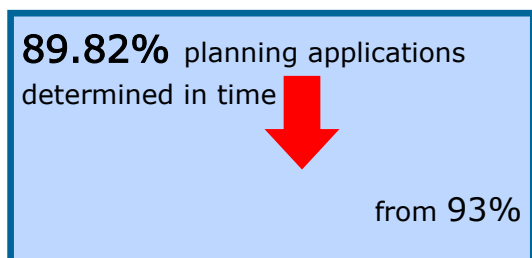
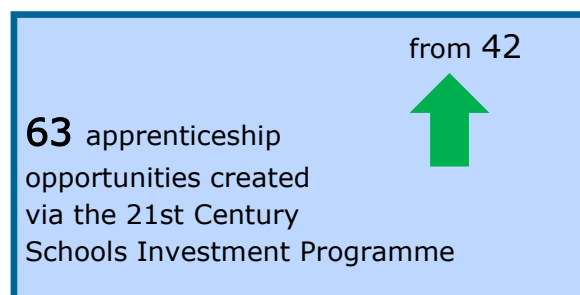
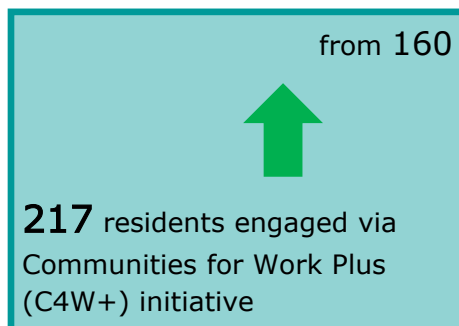
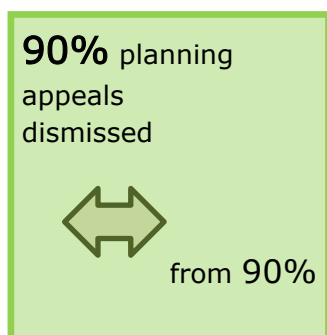
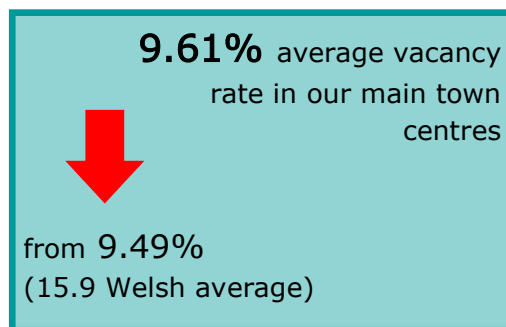
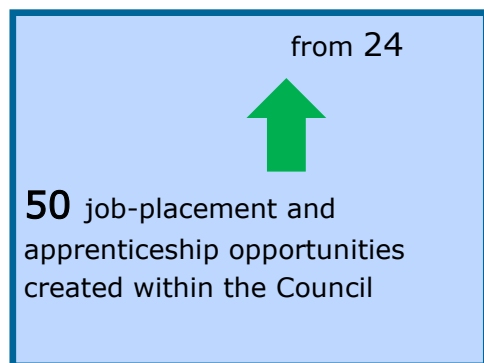
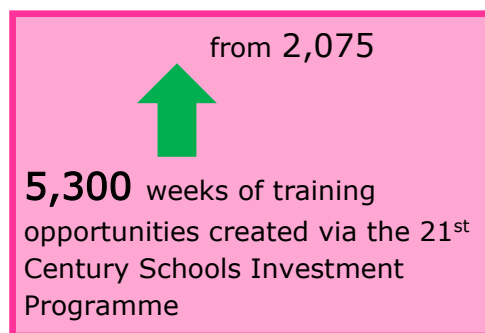
from 10.5 days  
**8.6 days**  
working days  
lost due to  
sickness absence  
per employee

from 8.4%  
**5.4%**  
voluntary  
employee turnover

**63.8%** complaints dealt with  
within timescales  
from 69.3%



**WELL-BEING  
OBJECTIVE 2: TO  
support learning,  
employment and  
sustainable  
economic growth**



**WELL-BEING  
OBJECTIVE 3: To  
support people at  
home and in  
their community**

**100%** council catered  
schools offered healthy food  
options



from 100%

**332 days** taken to deliver a  
Disabled Facilities Grant



from 183 days

from 20.8 days



**19 days** taken to let an  
empty property

**57.9%** child  
assessments  
completed in time



from 65.7%

from 9.67 days



**4.4 days** taken on average to  
complete all council house repairs

from 97.37%



**97.53%** food establishments  
'broadly compliant' with food  
hygiene standards

**253,938** visits to our  
sports and leisure facilities



from 1.544m

**100%** homes that meet  
the Welsh Housing  
Quality Standards



from 100%

from 98.2%



**96%** tenants satisfied with  
programmed improvement works  
to their home

**229** affordable housing  
units delivered



from 285

from 11.5%



**7.75%** children in care moved 3  
or more times

**10.5%** empty private properties  
brought back into use



from 13.9%



from 97.3%

**97.5%** domestic abuse victims felt safer as a result of  
target hardening (safety measures taken)

**0.88%** rent lost due to  
properties being empty



from 0.76%

from 75.2%



**76.90%** households  
successfully prevented from  
becoming homeless

**10.5%** empty private  
properties brought back in  
use



from 13.9%

WELL-BEING  
OBJECTIVE 4: To  
respect, enhance  
and enjoy our  
environment

from 216,905m2



**245,697m2** of parks, open  
spaces and highways land sown  
with wildflowers or maintained as a  
naturalised area

from 70.37%



**70.8%** household waste  
collected was either prepared  
for reuse and/ or recycled

from 1.44 days



**0.92 days** taken to clear fly-  
tipping incidents

**7** Beach awards  
achieved



from 7

**10** Green Flag  
Parks achieved



from 10

from 98.87%



**100%** highways were of a  
high or acceptable  
standard of cleanliness

from 67%



**68.2%** council streetlights  
converted to LED

from 128.88kg



**128.22kg** residual waste  
generated per person