VALE of GLAMORGAN
BRO MORGANNWG

Agenda Item No: 5

Meeting of:	**Cabinet**
Date of Meeting:	**Thursday, 09 July 2026**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee
Item which the Chair has decided is urgent (Part I) **(If yes, why)**	Not applicable
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (15.14 of the Constitution) **(If yes, why)**	Yes To ensure that the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26 can be referred to the Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee on 22nd July 2026 for consideration.
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Pre-Consultation Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26
Portfolio Holder:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Strategic Leadership Team:	Director of Corporate Resources
Lead Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 This report presents the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26 (**Appendix A**), providing an evidence-based evaluation of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's (the Council) performance, use of resources and governance over the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

1.2 The Annual Self-Assessment report is a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E), which requires the Council to keep its performance under review, consult on and publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment in respect of each financial year.

1.3 The Annual Self-Assessment findings draw on a comprehensive and triangulated evidence base, including Directorate Self-Assessments, performance and risk monitoring, audit and inspection findings, and engagement insight. These have been subject to thorough internal challenge and moderation to ensure conclusions are robust, balanced, and consistent.

Annual Self-Assessment Overall Conclusions

1.4 The Draft Annual Self-Assessment demonstrates that the Council is performing well overall, with strong progress against Vale 2030 commitments, effective use of resources, and sound governance arrangements. Moderation concluded the Council is 'Good' overall, in those areas assessed with a clear trajectory of improvement, although outcomes are not yet consistently achieved across all services.

1.5 The 2025/26 Annual Self-Assessment demonstrates that the Council is:

- Delivering positive outcomes and strong progress against Vale 2030 commitments
- Continuing to strengthen performance, insight and organisational capability
- Maintaining effective governance and financial management

1.6 However, it also highlights that:

- Performance and outcomes remain inconsistent across services
- Demand, financial and workforce pressures continue to affect delivery
- Further work is required to embed transformation and demonstrate sustained, measurable impact.

2.0 <u>What are the Recommendations?</u>

	Recommendations – What and How?	**Reason for Recommendation – Why?**
2.1	That Cabinet review and endorse the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2025/26 as the basis for consultation. (**Appendix A**).	To ensure that consultation is undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
2.2	That Cabinet consider the end of year performance as detailed in the Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26.	To ensure performance against the Year 1 Vale 2030 commitments as detailed in the five Directorate Plans for 2025/26 is considered.
2.3	That Cabinet refers the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2025/26 to the Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee (22nd July 2026) and Governance and Audit Committee (21st September 2026) for their consideration as part of the consultation programme, with any views and recommendations referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to consideration of the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report on 5th November 2026.	To ensure all Scrutiny Committee Members and the Governance and Audit Committee (as per section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021) have oversight of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2025/26 and their views inform the Council's approach to meeting the performance requirements.
2.4	That the use of the urgent decision procedure as set out in Section 15.14 of the	To ensure that the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
	Council's Constitution be authorised to enable the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26 to be referred to the Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee on 22nd July 2026 for consideration, with any recommendations reported back for Cabinet's consideration on 10th September 2026, ahead of consideration of the Final Draft Annual Self-Assessment on 5th November 2026.	2025/26 can be presented to Cabinet in November 2026 for consideration and approval.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 The Annual Self-assessment forms a core part of Council's statutory performance, audit and improvement framework under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E).

3.2 It provides a structured approach for the Council to:

- Evaluate its effectiveness in delivering priorities
- Identify areas for improvement
- Demonstrate accountability and transparency

3.3 The 2025/26 self-assessment is underpinned by a robust and systematic process, combining:

- Directorate self-evaluation (DSAs)
- Internal challenge and validation (Peer and Staff Challenge Panels)
- Corporate-level moderation and assurance

3.4 This approach ensures that the Council's conclusions are:

- Evidence-based
- Consistent across services
- Subject to appropriate scrutiny and challenge

3.5 The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment (**Appendix A**) presents a balanced assessment of the Council's performance over the past reporting year, setting out achievements, challenges and areas for improvement.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 This Annual Self-Assessment report requires Cabinet to consider the Council's overall effectiveness in three key areas:

- Performance: How well the Council is delivering its priorities and achieving outcomes.
- Use of Resources: How effectively financial, workforce and asset resources are managed

- Governance: How well systems of control, accountability and decision making are operating.

4.2 The evidence demonstrates positive improvement, with strong delivery in many areas, but highlights ongoing inconsistency and significant pressures that continue to affect outcomes.

4.3 The ASA judgements set out in the report (**Appendix A**) are based on a comprehensive and triangulated evidence base, including performance data, audit findings, risk monitoring, external regulation and stakeholder insight.

4.4 The Draft Annual Self-Assessment report is structured around the following main sections:

- Introduction and overview of the reporting year from the Leader;
- How the Self-Assessment process fits within the overall corporate performance framework and how it is constructed;
- A summary of progress against last year's areas of focus;
- The Annual Self-Assessment judgements including Chief Executive and Director statements providing an overview of the year's performance, responses to our critical challenges and wider contextual and demographic trends within the Vale of Glamorgan;
- Our self-assessment areas for future focus.
- Reviewing our Annual Self-Assessment approach.

Overall Judgements

How well is the Council performing?

4.5 Overall, the Council has made good progress in delivering Year 1 of Vale 2030, with high levels of delivery against planned actions (91%) and demonstrable progress in priority areas:

- Increased delivery of affordable housing and sustained homelessness prevention outcomes.
- Improved primary school attendance and earlier intervention for learners needing support.
- Expanded preventative and reablement services, supporting independence.
- Continued strong environmental performance, including recycling and biodiversity initiatives.
- Strengthened performance management and reporting arrangements.

4.6 However, performance is not yet consistent across all services. In particular:

- Some outcomes remain partially evidenced or are not yet fully demonstrable.
- A significant proportion of measures cannot be RAG-rated, reflecting a performance framework still bedding in, however, this limits our ability to fully assess impact.
- Ongoing demand, financial pressures and workforce capacity continue to affect pace and consistency of improvement across services.

4.7 Moderation concluded that the Council's performance is 'Good', reflecting strong delivery and positive outcomes overall, but not yet the consistent, sustained and fully evidenced impact required for a higher rating.

How well is the Council using its resources?

4.8 The Council demonstrates effective and increasingly integrated use of resources, supporting delivery of its priorities and improving organisational resilience. This is evidenced by:

- Delivery of a balanced budget and strengthened Medium-Term Financial Planning.
- Progress through the Reshaping Programme, driving efficiency and service redesign.
- Improved workforce stability, reducing reliance on agency staff.
- Strengthened asset management arrangements through the Corporate Landlord model and investment in digital systems.
- Greater integration of performance, finance, and information in decision-making.
- These improvements are enabling a more strategic and coordinated approach to resource management, with partnership working continuing to deliver added value across key service areas.

4.9 However, the ASA highlights that:

- Financial sustainability remains dependent on the delivery of future transformation and savings.
- Demand pressures in social care, housing and schools continue to increase.
- Workforce capacity challenges persist in key areas.
- Benefits from transformation activity are at an early stage and not yet fully realised.
- Communication and engagement with residents and communities needs to be strengthened.

4.10 Moderation concluded that the Council's use of resources is 'Good', reflecting strong financial management and improving integrated corporate planning arrangements, but with ongoing risks to long-term sustainability and consistency of impact.

How effective is the Council's governance?

4.11 The Council has sound and effective governance arrangements, providing a strong framework for accountability, decision-making, and risk management.

4.12 This is supported by:

- A 'Reasonable Assurance' internal audit opinion confirming effective governance, risk and control frameworks.
- An unqualified external audit opinion and positive regulatory feedback throughout the year.
- Strong progress in implementing external regulatory recommendations (86% Green at year end).
- Well-established risk management arrangements, with no unmanaged escalation, including a Substantial Assurance audit opinion.

- Strengthened scrutiny and oversight arrangements, improving transparency, accountability and challenge.

4.13 These arrangements provide a solid foundation for maintaining effective governance and supporting continuous improvement.

4.14 However, further work is required to:

- Strengthen the systematic use of data and insight in decision-making
- Improve organisational learning from complaints handling
- Address capacity and resource pressures affecting pace of improvement.

4.15 Moderation concluded that the Council's Governance is 'Good' (Reasonable Assurance), reflecting robust frameworks and positive assurance, but further development is required to demonstrate greater maturity and consistent impact.

Key issues and Challenges

4.16 The ASA identifies a number of cross-cutting challenges that have directly influenced performance in 2025/6 and will continue to shape delivery moving forward:

- Increasing demand and complexity of need across services
- Sustained financial pressures and funding uncertainty
- Workforce capacity, recruitment and retention challenges
- Inconsistent outcomes across service areas
- Asset condition and infrastructure pressures
- Need to further strengthen the use of data, insight and engagement in decision-making

These challenges are recognised and reflected in improvement plans for 2026/27.

Areas for Improvement

4.17 The Annual Self-Assessment identifies key areas for improvement focused on strengthening long-term sustainability and impact:

- Building workforce capacity and resilience, particularly in high demand areas
- Improving the delivery and impact of transformation programmes to support financial sustainability.
- Addressing asset condition and long-term investment requirements
- Strengthening outcome-focused performance reporting and measurement
- Enhancing integration of risk management and decision-making
- Improving the systematic use of engagement and insight to inform service design

4.18 These areas for improvement have informed Directorate Plans for 2026/27.

5.0 <u>How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?</u>

5.1 The findings in this report are informed by a comprehensive and triangulated evidence base, including Directorate Self-Assessments, performance data, audit findings and

engagement insight, which have been subject to internal challenge and moderation to ensure conclusions are robust, balanced and evidence based.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

6.1 Following approval, the pre-consultation draft Annual Self-Assessment will form the basis of a formal consultation programme with statutory stakeholders as part of a 6–7 week consultation programme.

6.2 The additional insight provided through feedback will be used to strengthen the final ASA report and inform future priorities and improvement actions.

6.3 The final report will be considered by Cabinet and Full Council prior to publication.

6.4 This process ensures that the final self-assessment reflects a transparent, evidence-based and externally informed view of the Council's performance.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 The Annual Self-Assessment is a central component of the Council's governance and integrated performance and governance framework, which underpins delivery of the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan and its Well-being Objectives. The Annual Self-Assessment provides an evidence-based evaluation of progress against Year 1 Vale 2030 commitments, demonstrating how effectively the Council is delivering its priorities and using its resources.

7.2 The report also supports the Reshaping Programme by identifying where transformation activity has improved efficiency, strengthened service delivery and supported financial sustainability, while highlighting areas where further change is required. The findings and areas for improvement identified through the self-assessment will inform future planning, ensuring that resources continue to be aligned to Vale 2030 priorities and that the Council's transformation programme is focused on delivering sustainable outcomes for residents.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 The Council's performance framework and self-assessment approach are aligned to the WBFG Act's sustainable development principle, ensuring that decisions reflect the long-term, preventative and collaborative requirements of the WBFG Act.

8.2 The five ways of working are a key consideration in our corporate Performance Management Framework ensuring that we continue to focus on working differently and in an inclusive way to challenge why, what and how we respond to our key performance challenges. The five ways of working are a consideration within the Directorate Self-Assessments which form part of the evidence base for the production of the Council's Draft Annual Self-Assessment report.

9.0 Resources

Finance

9.1 Our priorities as outlined in Vale 2030 have resources committed to their achievement (via the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the annual budget review and setting process) or the likely prospect of resources being made available in the period of the plan.

9.2 Corporate Health aspects of annual Council plans (how we are using our resources to achieve our well-being objectives), quarterly performance monitoring and annual reviews of performance and governance arrangements provide Members with an overview of the way in which Council resources (people, finance, assets, engagement and insight) are used to support delivery of our well-being objectives. These considerations have also been extensively examined as part of the Directorate Self-Assessment process.

10. Workforce

10.1 There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report although the self-assessment findings identify key employment challenges, risks and opportunities for future years both within the Council and externally across the Vale of Glamorgan. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in annual Council plans for the coming year.

11 Legal and Equalities

Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? If not, why?

11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed because there are no equality related implications associated directly with this report. Equality Impact Assessments continue to be considered by Directorates as part of service delivery considerations in line with corporate guidance.

11.2 The self-assessment findings identify the key challenges, risks and opportunities for future years and many of these will have equality implications. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in the Council's annual plans for the coming year. These actions will have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics, in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Also, under this Act (section 1), due consideration will be given to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

12.0 Key Contacts

12.1 Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?

Lead Officer: Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources, TBowring@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Democratic Services Officer: Gareth Davies, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Appendix

Appendix A - Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment Report 2025/26

Background Document

Cabinet Report: Statutory Guidance: Part 6, Chapter 1, Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Appendix A

VALE of GLAMORGAN
BRO MORGANNWG

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Draft Annual Self-Assessment

2025-2026

Introduction from the Leader of the Council

Over the past year, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has continued to make strong progress in delivering our vision of strong communities with a bright future, as set out in Vale 2030. This Self-Assessment reflects on a year of positive achievements marking the first year of Vale 2030 and should be considered in the context of the complex challenges we continue to face. Many of these challenges are not unique to the Council but are challenges being experienced locally and nationally both at an organisation and at a community level.

Overall, the Council has made good progress in delivering the commitments in its Annual Statement. We have continued to provide essential services, support our most vulnerable residents, and invest in our communities despite a challenging financial and operational environment. Alongside delivering services, we have also strengthened our core foundations and integrated planning, including how we manage our workforce, finances, assets and performance, and improved how we use information and resident feedback to shape what we do.

Our governance, performance management and scrutiny arrangements have been strengthened, supporting greater transparency, accountability and more informed decision-making.

The conclusions set out in the 2025/26 Annual self-assessment, are reflected in overall judgements of 'Good' for the Council's performance, use of resources and governance against the Vale 2030 commitments.

Important achievements during 2025/26, include:

- **Supporting residents and communities** by delivering strong homelessness prevention outcomes and increasing affordable housing, helping more people to remain in their homes and communities.
- **Improving our towns and infrastructure** through programmes such as Levelling Up and the Shared Prosperity Fund. We have secured investment and progressed regeneration projects across the Vale, improving town centres and local facilities, and developing four Placemaking Plans for our key towns.
- **Strengthening services and independence** with more people in contact with social care being supported to remain independent at home or in their communities through preventative and reablement services from the Vale Community Resource Service, an integrated health, social care and third sector collaboration.
- **Supporting children and young people** through early intervention and improved use of data which has supported better school attendance, particularly in primary schools and more targeted support for vulnerable learners. We also expanded the Flying start childcare offer to support over 280 families in need and provided more accommodation options to enable children in contact with social services to live locally and attend local schools. The new Vale Family Compass service has provided families with a single point to access information and support, has simplified referral pathways, strengthened coordination, and enabled more timely and appropriate intervention.
- **Investing in our workforce and services** has improved workforce stability, reduced reliance on agency staff in key service areas, and strengthened skills and leadership development for the future.
- **Reducing our impact on the environment** by increasing efforts to decarbonise our buildings, generating over 1.2million kWh of energy in the process and introduced new recycling services which has helped further reduce waste sent to landfill. We also strengthened biodiversity and climate resilience by expanding wildflower areas (up 21%) and planting 17,556 trees across the Vale.

These achievements show the positive impact of the work delivered through our Annual Statement of Vale 2030 and demonstrate our commitment to improving outcomes for residents. Importantly, they

also reflect the commitment of our workforce and the strength of our partnerships which continue to be central to how we deliver services and improve outcomes for residents.

However, we recognise that significant challenges remain. Demand for services continues to grow, particularly in social care, education and housing. Financial pressures and workforce capacity also affect how quickly and consistently we can deliver services. As a result, while progress is positive overall, outcomes are not yet consistent across all services.

Looking ahead, our focus is on building on progress to date and delivering more consistent results. This includes strengthening prevention, making better use of data and feedback, and ensuring our resources are focused on what matters most to our communities.

This report shows that we are a Council that is making real progress and delivering meaningful outcomes, but also that we must continue to adapt, improve and focus on what matters most.

I am proud of what has been achieved this year and confident that, by working together with our communities, partners and staff, we will continue to make progress in delivering our vision of strong communities with a bright future.

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The content of our annual self-assessment document is as follows:

1. Our Self-Assessment and ASA judgements
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1.2 How we come to our ASA judgements

2. Our progress against last year's areas of focus
2.1 Annual Self-Assessment
2.2 Panel Performance Assessment

3. How well are we performing against our Vale 2030 priorities and Wellbeing Objectives?
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5. Areas for Improvement

6. Reviewing Our Self-Assessment Approach

1. Our Self-Assessment and ASA Judgements

1.1 Purpose of the Annual Self-Assessment (ASA)

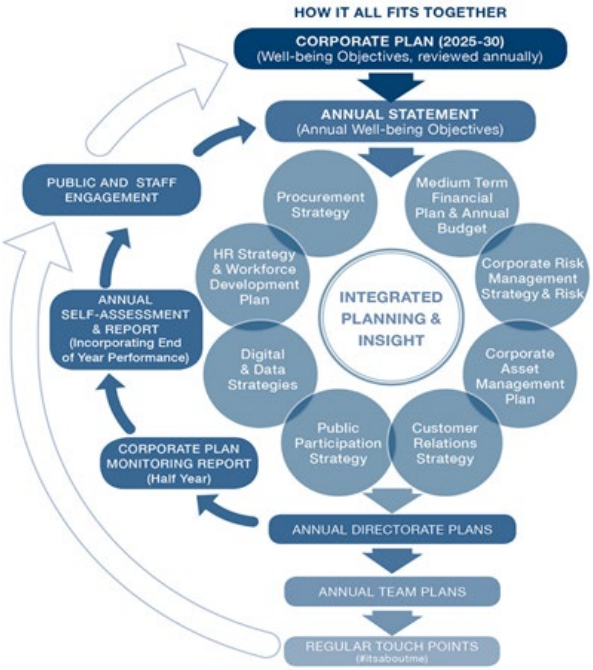
Each year, the Vale of Glamorgan Council carries out an Annual Self- Assessment. This is a legal requirement and helps the Council understand what is working well, where improvement is needed, and what it should focus on next.

The Annual Self-Assessment is the Council's formal, evidence-based review of:

- how well it has performed over the year,
- how effectively it has used its resources, and
- how robust its governance arrangements are.

Its purpose is to:

- provide assurance to Members, residents, regulators and partners that the Council is meeting its statutory performance requirements and delivering its priorities effectively.
- assess overall performance against Vale 2030, the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030, including delivery of annual commitments, performance measures and outcomes linked to the Council's Wellbeing Objectives.
- judge how well resources are being used, including people, finance, assets, performance information, risk and engagement insight.
- evaluate the effectiveness of governance arrangements, drawing on internal audit and external regulatory opinions, the Annual Governance Statement and risk management arrangements.
- support transparency and accountability by clearly setting out judgements, the evidence behind them, and how challenge and moderation have been applied.
- identify areas for improvement and future focus ensuring that challenges, risks and learning are reflected in future plans and priorities.



How it all fits together

Vale 2030 sets out the outcomes the Council wants to achieve over the medium term. It reflects political priorities, shared aspirations and commitments with public service partners (such as the Public Services Board's Wellbeing Plan and the Cardiff & Vale Area Plan) and Vale citizens.

The Council's Wellbeing Objectives for 2025/26 were:

- Creating Great Places to Live, Work and Visit work
- Respecting and Celebrating the Environment
- Giving Everyone a Good start in Life
- Supporting and Protecting Those who Need Us
- Being the Best Council We Can Be

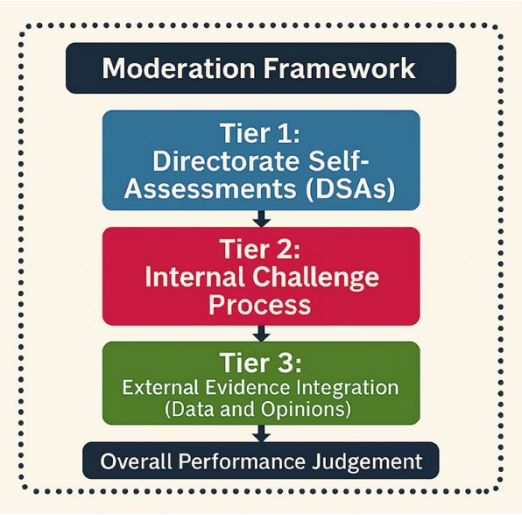
Directorate Plans published each Spring, set out the in-year actions to deliver on our commitments and Wellbeing Objectives, and achieve our vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future. These actions are embedded through Team Plans and staff appraisals (#itsaboutme)[1] and form the basis of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Progress against our annual Vale 2030 commitments and our Wellbeing objectives is monitored throughout the year through performance reports, which are subject to challenge quarterly via the Strategic Leadership Team and twice yearly by elected members through a Joint Scrutiny for Performance and Cabinet. Monitoring of progress against our annual commitments helps identify what is on track and where further work is needed.

The Annual Self-Assessment then brings this information together to provide an end of year judgement on overall performance, use of resources and governance.

1.2 How we come to our ASA judgement

A Three-Tiered approach to Self-Assessment



To ensure judgments are fair, balanced and evidence based, the Council has this year adopted a three-tiered approach. This is in response to previous feedback and a desire to continually improve the robustness of the self-assessment process. Including more views, evidence and data is intended to further strengthen the process.

Tier 1: Directorate Self-Assessments (DSAs)
Each directorate reviews its own performance, including service delivery, use of resources, risk management and how residents' views are considered. Directorates assess themselves consistently across the themes of People, Finance, Assets, Performance, Risk, and Engagement Insight, using data, evidence and professional judgement.

These assessments identify strengths and areas for improvement and provide the evidence base for further challenge.

Tier 2: Internal Challenge & Review Process
DSAs are challenged by senior officers, councillors, scrutiny chairs and staff from across the organisation. This helps ensure conclusions are realistic, consistent, and balanced, and that cross-cutting issues are properly recognised.

Feedback from this tier is used to refine and improve proposed judgements.

Tier 3: Independent & External Evidence
Finally, the Council considers independent evidence, such as audit reports, inspections, benchmarking data and feedback from residents and service users. This helps confirm whether the Council's own assessments are sound.

Moderation

[1] Formal #itsbaoutme appraisals were paused in 2025/26 while the new Thinkii appraisal system was being introduced for 2026/27. In the meantime, informal arrangements ensured staff still received support and development discussions.

Before the Draft Annual Self-Assessment is published for consultation, a final moderation is carried out. This brings together all evidence, including the DSAs, internal challenge feedback, performance data, and independent reports such as audits and inspections, to ensure that:

- conclusions are evidence-based
- strengths and areas for improvement are described honestly
- judgements are consistent across the Council; and
- wider cross-cutting issues are properly recognised

Where needed, wording or ratings are adjusted to reflect the full picture. This process helps ensure the Annual Self-Assessment is accurate, balanced and credible.

Criteria for Judgements

How well is the Council performing?

The performance judgement considers whether the Council has delivered its annual commitments as aligned to our Vale 2030 commitments and whether it made a difference. Key questions include:

- Did we deliver what we said we would in 2025/26 as detailed in Directorate Plans and the Annual Statement for the reporting period 2025/26?
- Did we meet our performance targets?
- Are results improving, staying the same or getting worse?
- How do we compare with others where data is available?
- Where performance has fallen short, is this recognised?

Performance is judged using a clear scale (from Excellent to Poor) based on delivery of actions and targets:

- Excellent: 100% delivery of planned actions and targets contributing to Vale 2030.
- Good: More than 85% delivery; most commitments and targets achieved.
- Fair: 50% to 84.5% delivery; positive progress made but with notable exceptions.
- Poor: Less than 50% delivery; unsatisfactory progress with significant underperformance.

So, for example, if most of our annual commitments and targets are met and outcomes for residents broadly positive, performance is judged **Good**.

How well is the Council using its resources?
This judgment assesses how effectively the Council uses money, staff, buildings, data and performance, risk and engagement insight to deliver services and plan for the future. It considers:

- Whether finances are being managed responsibly in a difficult climate
- Whether staff are supported, skilled and deployed appropriately
- How well council buildings, land and digital systems are managed
- Whether risks are understood and being managed
- Whether we are learning from engagement with residents and partners

The following resource scale is applied:
- Excellent: Resources are managed very effectively and fairly, with strong evidence, clear self-awareness, and a solid plan to sustain improvement.

- Good: Resources are well managed with good systems and evidence in place, and clear plans to improve further.
- Fair: Basic systems exist and improvement needs are recognised, but progress is inconsistent and not yet fully acted on.
- Poor: Resources are not managed effectively, with little evidence, weak systems, and no clear plan for improvement.

We also consider whether the Council understands its areas of underperformance and has plans to improve. For example, if arrangements are strong but under pressure, and improvement plans are in place, the judgement is **Good**.

How effective is the Council's governance?

Governance is assessed mainly using independent evidence, including:

- Internal audit opinions and Head of Internal Audit annual opinion
- External audit and regulator findings
- The Annual Governance Statement
- How well audit and inspection recommendations are being addressed.
- How effective scrutiny, decision making and public participation arrangements are.

Governance judgments align with recognised audit assurance levels:
- Substantial Assurance: Strong systems with effective controls consistently applied.
- Reasonable Assurance: Sound systems with some areas for improvement.
- Limited Assurance: Significant weaknesses requiring improvement.
- No Assurance: Fundamental weaknesses requiring urgent action.

If audits give reasonable or substantial assurance, and no major failings are identified overall, governance is judged **Good**, even where there are areas that still need strengthening.

Moderation
We undertake moderation of the three ASA judgements to make sure the final judgements are fair, consistent and credible, and that residents and Members can have confidence in them. As part of this process, we check that:

- The evidence really supports the judgement
- The same standards are applied across all directorates, themes and in the council-wide judgements
- Strengths and challenges are clearly recognised
- An integrated approach is being taken, that is, not considering the self-assessment themes in isolation
- Future risks and pressures are acknowledged
- Areas for improvement are identified

Through this approach, the Annual Self-Assessment provides a clear, transparent and well evidenced picture of how the Council has performed, how it uses its resources and how well it is governed. It supports learning, accountability and continuous improvement, in line with the Council's statutory duties under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2. Our progress against last year's areas of focus

In this section we reflect on progress against areas of improvement identified in the Annual Self-Assessment 2024/25 and the Panel Performance Assessment undertaken in November 2024.

2.1 Annual Self-Assessment (ASA) 2024/25

In our 2024/25 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that we wished to focus on in 2025/26. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken, outcomes achieved and any ongoing challenges where further work is required.

The areas for further focus align to the five corporate health themes, with key priorities focused on strengthening workforce capacity (People), ensuring long-term financial sustainability (Finance including procurement and commissioning), improving the effectiveness of physical and digital assets (Assets), enhancing performance management and managing demand pressures (Performance & Risk), and improving engagement, communication and use of this insight (Engagement Insight).

Overall, the Council has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in last year's Annual Self-Assessment, with strengthened corporate frameworks and evidence of improved outcomes across workforce, finance, assets, performance and engagement.

However, while these improvements provide a stronger foundation, outcomes remain inconsistent, with ongoing demand pressures, financial constraints and capacity challenges continuing to have an impact. Looking ahead, our focus remains on embedding these improvements and securing sustainable, consistent outcomes across all services.

People (Workforce capacity and resilience)
Last year we identified these areas of focus: • Workforce planning and sustainable staffing structures • Recruitment and retention challenges (especially hard-to-fill roles) • Reducing reliance on agency staff • Staff wellbeing, appraisal and engagement • Building workforce capability • Developing leadership and succession planning
End of Year Progress Summary
A refreshed People Strategy and strengthened workforce planning have supported improved workforce stability, reduced reliance on agency workers in key services, and increased investment in training, apprenticeships and leadership development. There has also been some improvement in sickness absence and staff engagement as a result of the continued focus on wellbeing and retention. These improvements are consistent with the findings of the Audit Wales report, Recruitment and retention challenges – the right people at the right time? (April 2026), which concluded that the Council has a good understanding of its recruitment and retention challenges and has implemented a range of appropriate responses, with some success.
Outcomes
• Improved workforce stability and reduced reliance on agency staff in priority services. • Increased internal capacity and capability through training and development. • More consistent leadership and management practice across services. • Evidence of improved workforce wellbeing and engagement.
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)

- Continued recruitment challenges in specialist roles especially in Social Services, Environment & Housing.
- Ageing workforce and ongoing succession planning risks in some service areas.
- Continued reliance on agency staffing in some service areas.
- Embedding workforce planning and succession more consistently across the organisation.

Finance (financial sustainability and resource management)

Last year we identified these areas of focus:

- Delivering balanced revenue and capital budgets
- Developing longer-term (5-year) financial strategy
- Developing multi-year funding plans (e.g. Shared Regulatory Services)
- Maximising external funding opportunities
- Progressing cost recovery models (e.g. libraries, learning, cultural services, neighbourhood services)
- Increasing fees and income generation where appropriate.

End of Year Progress Summary

The Council has strengthened financial management through delivery of a balanced budget, implementation of savings programmes and closer alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Plan. There has been significant progress is embedding the Reshaping Programme as a core mechanism for medium-term sustainability. Progress has also been made in income generation, cost recovery and development of longer-term funding approaches, including collaborative arrangements such as the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS).

Outcomes

- Budgets broadly managed, with mitigation in place where required.
- Improved financial governance and more informed decision-making.
- Increased external funding and income generation supporting service delivery e.g. libraries and community learning, and neighbourhood services.
- Greater alignment between service models and financial sustainability.
- Maintained service continuity, including support for vulnerable residents.
  A more strategic approach to funding shared regulatory services, supporting continuity of key services.

Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)

- Ongoing demand-led pressures, particularly in Social Services and Education.
- Continued reliance in some areas on short-term mitigations rather than fundamental change.
- External dependencies and funding uncertainty affecting long-term planning.
- Constraints on cost recovery in some services due to statutory duties and affordability.
- Continuing financial pressures across all councils limiting the level and certainty of funding for SRS over the medium term.

Assets (Digital & Physical)

Last year we identified these areas of focus:

- Developing sustainable service models through asset use
- Delivering the Local Development Plan
- Progressing a 10-year Land Management Strategy and public space improvements
- Bringing empty properties back into use
- Improving pace of physical and digital asset delivery
- Increasing use of digital technology to improve efficiency and access

End of Year Progress Summary

A more strategic approach to asset management has been established through strengthened governance, development of a Corporate Landlord model and alignment with the Local Development Plan and Land Management Strategy. Investment in housing, regeneration and digital systems has improved co-ordination and service delivery, alongside an increased focus on reuse of assets and place-based investment.

Outcomes

- Improved service delivery and availability of housing, social care and community facilities.
- Improved alignment between empty property activity and wider corporate objectives, including placemaking and supply of housing.
- More effective use of assets, including reuse of vacant properties.
- Stronger alignment between land use, regeneration and corporate priorities.
- Increased digital access and improved service efficiency.
- Enhanced public realm and community environments in key locations.

Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)

- Asset condition, maintenance backlog and long-term sustainability risks.
- Funding constraints limiting pace and scale of improvement.
- Delivery dependencies (planning, viability, ownership and market conditions).
- Inconsistent digital maturity across services.

Performance and Risk

Last year we identified these areas of focus:

- Strengthening performance management and scrutiny
- Embedding Vale 2030 and demonstrating outcomes
- Managing demand pressures (social care services, education, housing and homelessness)
- Strengthening school attendance and exclusion interventions
- Delivering major programmes (e.g. Levelling Up, Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)), Reshaping Programme and earlier decision-making
- Procurement and contract management improvements.

End of Year Progress Summary

Performance and risk frameworks have been strengthened, with clearer alignment to Vale 2030, improved reporting and enhanced scrutiny and governance. There has been a shift towards earlier intervention and demand management across Social Services, Learning & Skills (education) and Housing, supported by improved use of data, strengthened partnership working and targeted service redesign. Key programmes (e.g. SPF, Levelling Up and Reshaping) have progressed with strengthened governance and co-ordination, alongside improvements in procurement and contract management.

Outcomes

- Successful delivery of major programmes, securing investment and supporting regeneration outcomes.
- Increased financial resilience and development of more efficient service models.
- Improved commissioning outcomes, including social value and environmental benefits through strengthened contract management.

Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)

- Inconsistency in performance outcomes across services.

- Continued demand pressures (social care, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Social, Emotional, Mental Health Needs (SEMH), housing and homelessness).
- Attendance at secondary school.
- Increasing complexity of need (e.g. SEMH, neurodiversity, Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)).
- Financial pressures limiting flexibility, particularly in schools.
- Maintaining momentum and funding certainty for major programmes.
- Need to embed consistent, outcome-focused contract management.
- Capacity and pace of delivery across multiple transformation programmes.
- Challenges around responding to the climate change emergency.

Engagement Insight (Communication, using feedback and strengthening partnerships)

Last year we identified these areas of focus:

- Improving communication with communities and partners
- Raising awareness of service challenges
- Strengthening co-production approaches
- Ensuring inclusive engagement (including seldom-heard groups)
- Improving use of complaints, feedback and data to inform decisions
- Strengthening partnerships
- Enhancing preventative and integrated support through partnership working

End of Year Progress Summary

A more co-ordinated approach to engagement and use of insight has been established, supported by resident surveys, increased place-based engagement and strengthened partnership arrangements through the Public Services Board and wider networks. There is growing use of data, complaints and community feedback across services to inform service design and delivery.

In-year examples include:

- Partnership arrangements through the Public Services Board (PSB), have delivered joint initiatives such as 'Your Place' bringing together partners and community representatives to identify targeted interventions based on need. This has supported more co-ordinated responses to complex issues such as health inequalities.
- Reablement and early help models in Social Services have supported more people to remain independent and reduced escalation of need.
- In Learning & Skills, improved use of data and earlier identification of risk (e.g. attendance and ALN needs) has enabled more timely intervention and reduced escalation in some cases.
- The new Vale Family Compass service has improved access to advice and support through a single-entry point, simplifying pathways and improving co-ordination.
- Work to establish multi-agency advice services with Citizens Advice is improving referral pathways and exploring more joined-up delivery models for financial and housing support.
- Stronger relationships with the third sector e.g. GVS, Food Vale, community groups have supported delivery of integrated support such as warm spaces, food provision and grant schemes aligned to local need.
- Partnership working has also strengthened delivery of environmental, housing and community initiatives, including neighbourhood improvement, housing delivery and local community safety outcomes.

Outcomes

- Improved understanding of resident needs and service pressures.
- Better targeting of services and interventions based on insight.

• Stronger partnership working and multi-agency delivery. • Increased use of preventative and early intervention approaches. • Enhanced collaboration with voluntary and community sectors. • Improved access pathways and more integrated support models. • Direct influence over budget decisions and Reshaping Programme priorities for the coming years.
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)
• Insight not yet consistently embedded in decision-making across all services • Need to improve communication clarity, responsiveness and customer experience. • Engagement with some seldom heard groups remains inconsistent.

2.2 Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) 2024

Overall, the Council has made strong progress against the PPA recommendations, with all areas assessed as **Green** at end of year. There are sound arrangements in place, with further work ongoing to embed delivery and consistently demonstrate impact.

In-year achievements include embedding Vale 2030, delivering the Signalling Change Plan, strengthening partnership working, and implementing reshaped Scrutiny arrangements which have improved governance, challenge and transparency. While these provide a solid foundation, arrangements remain at an early stage of maturity, and work will continue to further embed practice, strengthen engagement, and evidence outcomes.

The PPA made four recommendations, and the end of year status, summary and outcomes are outlined in the following table alongside areas of continued focus for 2026/27.

Rec 1: Planning for Place (Green) The Council would benefit from developing and effectively communicating a narrative that articulates a positive vision for the future, which is relatable to multiple audiences and has a call to action. In doing so it could be a catalyst for change for the Vale of Glamorgan as a County, drawing together partners, stakeholders, the business sector, and communities.
End of Year Progress Summary
Vale 2030 is embedded across the organisation, supported by staff engagement, management development and partnership working. In-year activity has strengthened alignment of Directorate Plans and corporate priorities, alongside clearer integration of place-based working through partnership forums.
Outcomes
Improved clarity and alignment across services and partners in delivering long-term place-based outcomes.
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)
• Strengthen focus on demonstrating place-based outcomes. • Embed the use of performance and risk insight to evidence impact. • Strengthen links between long-term planning and delivery outcomes.

Rec 2: Signalling Change (Green)

The Council should consider how it signals and amplifies its changing approach both within the organisation and across the Vale.
End of Year Progress Summary
Delivery of the Signalling Change Plan progressed, including rollout of refreshed corporate branding, development of a Communications Strategy, and introduction of a new intranet and improved digital channels. In-year improvements have enhanced internal and external communication and consistency of messaging.
Outcomes
Improved visibility and consistency of organisational messaging, supporting engagement with staff and residents
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)
• Continued focus on delivering a systematic and consistent approach to engagement. • Strengthen how change is communicated in terms of impact and outcomes. • Improve reach and accessibility of communications to residents.

Rec 3: Building on existing Strong Partnerships (Green) • Recognising the democratic convening role that the Council has in leading partnerships, whilst recognising when to lead and when to support wider partnerships to take the lead in the provision of services. • Taking the opportunity to create the time and space to strategically assess and review the partnership landscape, strengthening relationships and assessing where resource and energy is best spent for the wider benefit of the place in order to make the biggest difference. • Working with stakeholders on getting the "brilliant basics" right that reflects the needs of the local community. • Leverage the collective capacity of the Vale of Glamorgan and continue to build innovative joint working arrangements with neighbouring Councils.
End of Year Progress Summary
• Partnership working has been strengthened through improved alignment across PSB, RPB and wider partnership structures, alongside collaborative work on shared priorities such as Wellbeing and Population Needs Assessments. Directorate Plans increasingly reflect partnership expectations and joint delivery. • Discussions within the PSB and the Council's Strategic Partnership Group have focused on the need for better alignment and focus across partnerships and recognise the complexity of arrangements. Discussions have also focused on the need to ensure a focus on Vale 2030 priorities and the role of partnership in delivering our commitments. • There is a continued focus on brilliant basics, and this is being explored through conversations with a range of organisations including PSB partners, Citizens Advice and tenants groups. • Arrangements with neighbouring partners continue across a number of services for example SRS and Ardal and are considered as part of the Reshaping Programme.
Outcomes
• Greater coherence across partnership working and improved use of shared insight to support outcomes for communities. • Better understanding of how current arrangements can support delivery of Vale 2030.
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)
• Strengthen how partnerships demonstrate impact on outcomes. • Broaden community and stakeholder involvement in shaping priorities • Improve clarity of how partnership working adds value to service delivery.

Rec 4: Governance & Use of Resources (Green)
• Review and revise the cycle of formal democratic meetings and formal reporting requirements, exploring ways to better engage members in more proactive and cross chamber collaboration – in both formal and informal ways including reviewing the effectiveness of online meetings. • Review the balance between the internal corporate demands placed on members and their role as representatives of their constituents to deliver the Council's vision of place. • Use the strong local politics as a force for good, whilst ensuring civility in public life is promoted and kept front and centre to encourage respectful and constructive debate including online and in-person meetings. • Enhance the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny arrangements, specifically meetings, by assessing current practices to identify opportunities for improvement to make them more effective.
End of Year Progress Summary
Implementation of Reshaping Scrutiny including new committee structures, five Task & Finish reviews delivered (including Procurement, ALN Resource Bases, Communications), introduction of joint scrutiny and enhanced Member briefings. A new recommendation tracker has improved transparency, with increased public participation and improved use of digital channels. Scrutiny is increasingly influencing decisions earlier, with greater integration of risk and performance.
Outcomes
Stronger governance through improved challenge, enhanced transparency, earlier decision-making, influence and better visibility of risks and performance.
Areas of Continued Focus (2026/27)
• Fully embed new Scrutiny arrangements and ensure consistency across Committees • Strengthen evidence of impact from Scrutiny recommendations on decisions and outcomes • Improve consistency of public and stakeholder participation. • Embed reflective practice and continuous improvement within Scrutiny.

3. How well are we performing against our Vale 2030 priorities and Wellbeing Objectives?

The Chief Executive and Service Director statements below provide an overview at Council and Directorate level of performance against the Year 1 commitments in Vale 2030 and highlights key successes, challenges and areas for future focus.

3.1 The Chief Executive's End of Year Performance Statement

Reflecting on 2025/26, the Council has continued to provide key services, improve how we work and make a difference in our communities despite a highly challenging operating environment. This has been our first full year of delivering Vale 2030, and we have made good progress in turning our long-term ambitions into tangible actions and outcomes for residents.

Overall, the Council has performed well, with the majority of planned activities delivered (91%) and positive outcomes achieved across our Wellbeing Objectives. This reflects a committed workforce, strengthened governance and performance arrangements and increasingly effective partnerships, all

of which have enabled us to respond to rising demand while continuing to invest in our communities. These conclusions set out in our 2025/26 Annual self-assessment, are reflected in overall judgements of 'Good' for the Council's performance, use of resources and governance against the Vale 2030 commitments.

Positive outcomes across the year include an increase in the supply of affordable housing, strengthened homelessness prevention, and continued improvements in recycling rates beyond national targets. In education, there has been progress in improving primary school attendance and strengthening school improvement arrangements. In social services, early intervention and preventative approaches have supported more residents to live independently and receive timely support. Strong partnership working, has also supported joined-up responses to poverty, health inequalities, housing need and community resilience. These outcomes demonstrate our continued focus on delivering services that make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

We have also made important progress in strengthening how we operate as an organisation. Financial management has remained robust, with a balanced budget delivered and continued progress through the Reshaping Programme to improve efficiency and sustainability. At the same time, we have invested in our workforce, are reducing reliance on agency staff in some areas and increasing training and development opportunities, helping to build capacity for the future. Governance, performance management and scrutiny arrangements have also been strengthened, improving transparency, accountability and decision-making.

However, this has been a year where the scale and complexity of the challenges we face has become increasingly evident. Demand for services continues to grow, particularly in social care, housing and education, often driven by more complex needs. Financial pressures remain significant exacerbated by a challenging school budget deficit position, rising costs and funding uncertainty reducing our flexibility and increasing reliance on transformation and savings delivery. Workforce challenges also persist, particularly in recruiting and retaining staff in specialist roles, which impacts pace and consistency of delivery.

While overall performance is positive, outcomes are not yet consistent across all services. In some areas, targets have not been met, and improvements are not yet being delivered at the scale or pace required. Similarly, although we are making better use of data and engagement, this is not yet fully embedded across the organisation, and we must do more to ensure that insight consistently drives service design and decision-making to ensure that we are delivering services and outcomes for our communities that meets their needs.

We are also operating within a wider context of growing inequalities, demographic change and economic uncertainty. There are distinct differences between communities across the Vale, and we must continue to ensure that our approach is targeted, preventative and focused on those most in need.

Looking ahead to Year 2 of Vale 2030, our focus will be on building on the progress made and addressing these challenges with greater pace and consistency. This will include strengthening our financial resilience, continuing to reshape services to manage demand more effectively, and investing in workforce capacity and leadership. We will also prioritise improving the condition and sustainability of our assets, accelerating digital transformation, and ensuring that engagement and insight are used more systematically to improve outcomes and resident experience.

A key priority for the year ahead will be moving from improvement to consistency and outcomes ensuring that the progress we have made translates into sustainable, organisation-wide change. This

will require a continued focus on prevention, partnership working and system-wide approaches to demand through reshaping.

3.2 Directorate End of Year Performance Statements

3.2.1 Corporate Resources

Reflecting on the past 12 months, the Directorate has performed well across all service areas and advisory groups. Key commitments set out in the 2025/26 Directorate Plan have been delivered, and areas for improvement identified through last year's Directorate Self-Assessment have been progressed. Significant milestones include the publication of Vale 2030 and the introduction of new performance management arrangements, the development of a new People Strategy, changes to scrutiny arrangements, delivery of the Let's Talk Residents Survey, achievement of a balanced budget for 2025/26, and improvements in digital resilience.

However, a number of significant challenges remain, and performance will need to improve in some areas. Given the nature of the services provided, these challenges have implications for residents, partners and services across the Council. This is particularly evident in the Directorate's role in supporting transformation in other areas, for example through HR, Digital Services and the Reshaping Team. Call response times within the contact centre have, at times, fallen below expected standards and this will be a key area of focus in 2026/27, including exploring new ways of working to better support residents and colleagues. Engagement, insight and complaints management also require further improvement to support delivery of the new Customer Charter and the Reshaping Programme. Notwithstanding this, positive steps have been taken, including the publication of the Brilliant Basics Charter and Tone of Voice guidance, now accessible via the relaunched StaffNet.

Of the 22 actions within the 2025/26 Directorate Plan, 17 (77%) were completed during the year. Good progress has been made against the remaining five actions, although some elements remain outstanding. Two actions are rated Amber, relating to the promotion of the Welsh Language and achievement of County of Sanctuary status. Three are rated Red and relate to Let's Talk, the Participation Strategy and the new Customer Charter. These outstanding actions are all well progressed but require further action to complete. Despite this, progress continues, and delivery of these commitments is expected in Quarter 1 of 2026/27. Performance is below target in a small number of areas; however, work continues to promote apprenticeships, increase training opportunities and improve access to services through the contact centre. Carbon emissions also remain below target (based on 2024/25 data), with ongoing work through the Carbon Management Plan and Project Zero Board to reduce emissions. Data for 2025/26 will be available in September.

The Directorate manages six of the thirteen corporate risks identified within the Corporate Risk Register and demonstrates a strong understanding of its risk profile. While risks are generally well managed, some are expected to increase in response to external pressures, particularly in relation to financial resources, digital security and climate change. This will require continued focus and proactive mitigation.

A key challenge for the Directorate is balancing the need to support transformation across the Council whilst also managing and improving its own services. This has been a continued focus for the Directorate Leadership Team, particularly in ensuring sufficient capacity to support the Reshaping Programme and other significant priorities, such as addressing the schools budget deficit and progressing asset-related projects, including the former Wilko site on Holton Road and Holm View. Maintaining pace in service transformation, particularly digital change, while building workforce capacity and capability will remain a priority in the year ahead.

The Directorate continues to demonstrate strong budget management, robust monitoring arrangements and consistent tracking of savings. Despite ongoing pressures, the Directorate has largely operated within budget, with variances linked to known issues such as delays in major programmes (e.g. Docks Office exit) and wider cost pressures. Overall, 94% of the Directorate's savings target was achieved, with the remaining savings expected to be delivered through ongoing reshaping activity.

Workforce data indicates improved stability, reduced reliance on agency staff and strong levels of staff engagement, supporting a 'Good' rating. However, underlying pressures relating to capacity, sickness levels, the use of temporary contracts and incomplete appraisal data remain and will need to be addressed to sustain performance.

External regulatory and Internal Audit feedback has provided a high level of assurance, with only limited areas for improvement indicating that internal controls are effective and operating as intended, with no significant or systemic control failures identified. Where improvements have been identified, these are being proactively addressed, reflecting a strong commitment to continuous improvement and the ongoing strengthening of internal controls.

Engagement activity during the year has been extensive, with effective use of surveys, consultation and insight to inform priorities and decision-making. While the use of insight has improved, it is not yet consistently translating into improved outcomes or user experience. Overall, this area is improving but remains 'Fair', recognising the directorate's knowledge that further work is required to widen participation, strengthen consistency and demonstrate impact.
Post moderation, the overall judgement for the Directorate remained 'Good'.

3.2.2 Learning & Skills

The Learning & Skills (L&S) Directorate has continued to perform strongly against a backdrop of increasing operational and strategic challenges. 100% of Directorate Plan actions have been successfully completed, and we have made significant progress in achieving our priorities. The Directorate Plan aligns closely with Vale 2030.

Key Achievements

The School Improvement Partnership Programme was successfully launched in September. This is a new national approach to school improvement with a focus on collaboration leading to measurable collective improvements. The model promotes school-led, school-to-school working in both vertical and horizontal collaborations on agreed LA-wide improvement priorities. Effective use of data and information has identified the need to place further emphasis on improving the consistency of teaching and learning, with reading as a priority focus and specifically for learners who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM). A Collaborative Partnership Board has been established to oversee and monitor the effectiveness of vertical and horizontal collaborations in affecting improvements in learner outcomes.

A strategic approach has been developed to address ALN disputes at the earliest opportunity to reduce the escalation of cases seeking legal redress. Enhancements to the panel system have improved communication with parents, learners, and schools, enabling earlier identification of barriers to engagement. A new tracking system for disputes and outcomes has been development to support continuous improvement so that trends are identified quickly allowing for swifter course-correction where necessary.

The ALN panel process has been reviewed and successfully implemented. This work has and will continue to inform the remodelling of specialist provision to ensure a more sustainable response to increasing demand and evolving learner needs. This work complements that of the Scrutiny Task and Finish group that analysed specialist ALN provision and the effective and efficient use of resources. A review has been carried out regarding a re-shape of the complex needs team with a consequent plan of action in place to restructure accordingly. The new structure takes into account the roles and responsibilities required in response to address the increasing demands in the different areas of ALN. A review has also been carried regarding the outreach and specialist teacher teams to start to develop a more consistent structure which will be operational from April 2027

The Directorate has a highly skilled and specialist workforce that has remained relatively stable. The Directorate remains committed to supporting staff professional development.

The Directorate has met £512K (100%) savings target for the year. However, it is still recognised that there is a significant deficit position due to school balances, and the directorate is leading the response to this situation as articulated in the corporate risk

The Directorate has a comprehensive capital investment and asset renewal programme in place to support a strategic approach to asset management. Regular reviews are undertaken to maximise the effective use of both physical and digital assets. In response to increasing demand for ALN services, long-term planning has been aligned to this growth, ensuring investment decisions reflect future needs. This includes the expansion of Ysgol y Deri through the development of a new site, Llyn Derw, and the enhancement of Welsh-medium secondary provision to increase capacity and meet demand for ALN placements.

Performance against planned actions and measures continues to be well managed, reflecting effective oversight and a sustained focus on addressing identified challenges, which are actively monitored and progressed for improvement.

ALN continues to be recognised as a corporate risk retaining its Very High score (16) which is forecast to remain static. Despite positive work ongoing to reduce the risk, complex statutory duties and resource constraints persist in relation to Additional Learning Needs. Directorate level risks continue to form part of conversations aligned with the Directorate's service transformation programme.

Service improvements continue to be shaped by our learning from complaints and other engagement insights. Consequently, complaint handling remains an area of focus for the Directorate with new tracking and monitoring systems introduced as well as increased administration capacity to provide swifter responses and increased communication to avoid the need for further escalation.

Engagement and partnership working are well established within the Directorate. The use of the Youth Council continues to be promoted across all directorates, with growing levels of involvement.

Ongoing Challenges
The Directorate remains acutely aware of the challenges facing its services, resources, and risk environment. Key issues include:

- Attendance: Attendance rates continue to improve but still remain below pre-Covid levels. However, persistent non-attendance is increasing, particularly for disadvantaged learners.
- Exclusion rates are continuing to rise across both primary and secondary sectors and is of major concern.
- Complex ALN Growth: The increasing number of learners presenting with complex ALN continues to place pressure on staff capacity and specialist provision, with demand for specialist provision exceeding capacity.
- Significant budgetary pressures persist and the financial resilience of schools has been elevated as a Corporate Risk and is of significant concern. The variability between school budget positions continues to increase and two thirds of our schools have reported a deficit at year end.
- Three out of our eight secondary schools are in an Estyn follow-up category all of which require comprehensive improvements.

Despite these challenges, the Directorate has a proven track record of adapting to a continuously evolving landscape. Through its Reshaping work, it has identified a clear and purposeful set of priorities to drive improvement and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality services.

Post moderation, the Directorate's judgement for Assets was adjusted from 'Fair' to 'Good', acknowledging good progress during the year and the appropriateness of a rating that reflects both current delivery and forward planning activity e.g. school buildings condition surveys and capital budgets. This adjustment did not affect the Directorate's overall rating of 'Fair'.

3.2.3 Environment & Housing

At the end of 2025/26, the Environment & Housing Directorate delivered a resilient and largely strong performance against its Vale 2030 commitments, maintaining service continuity and achieving positive outcomes for residents despite sustained financial, demand and workforce pressures.

Overall delivery of priorities was positive, with the majority of actions completed (20 out of 22 or 91%) with a further two actions (9%), within 10% of completion. Performance against measures was more mixed (78% Green), with a small proportion falling short (Red 13%) and a high proportion of N/As), with the majority of reported indicators meeting or exceeding target or within 10% of target, and trend data indicating positive progress in key service areas. Where targets were not met, trend data and mitigating actions provide assurance that performance remains under review. The Directorate has continued to prioritise statutory responsibilities, safeguard vulnerable residents and maintain essential operational services while progressing longer term transformation and improvement activity.

Key achievements this year include the delivery of new and affordable housing through the Council's housebuilding programme; sustained success in homelessness prevention with no routine use of hotel accommodation for families; and continued improvement in waste and recycling performance, exceeding national statutory targets and avoiding financial penalties. Neighbourhood services have improved through effective partnership working and the development of a new Street Scene service, supporting cleaner public spaces. Increased participation has been achieved across Leisure services, reflecting sustained investment. Shared Regulatory Services performance has returned to strong pre-pandemic levels, with external recognition from the Food Standards Agency (hygiene interventions) and RSPCA (Platinum award for stray dog provision, animal related licensing and kennelling).

The Directorate has demonstrated effective partnership working at local and regional levels, supporting improved outcomes in housing delivery, community safety, transport, waste management, coastal monitoring and regulatory services. This remains an area of focus going forward given an ongoing challenging financial outlook.

Financial pressures remain a significant challenge, with in year pressures and unmet savings impacting the revenue position. However, these have been actively managed through mitigations, reserves and service transformation activity. Capital investment, including significant Local Government Borrowing Initiative funding for highways, has supported asset improvement, although long term infrastructure and asset maintenance remains underfunded and continues to present a risk.

The Directorate made positive progress in strengthening both its physical and digital assets. The capital programme progressed well overall, with most slippage reflecting scheme lead-in times rather than delivery failure, and the Directorate's asset base remains a strength, with over 81% of assets assessed as excellent or satisfactory. Alongside this, targeted investment in digital services improved customer access, efficiency and insight, including expanded online booking, digitised highways and waste processes, and enhanced housing systems. While challenges remain around long-term asset sustainability and variable digital maturity, the overall direction of travel is positive, with priorities for 2026/27 focused on embedding end to end digital journeys and longer-term asset planning.

Strong progress has been in managing sickness absence and supporting workforce wellbeing, underpinned by a relatively stable core workforce. While significant workforce risks remain, particularly in relation to agency dependency, turnover, age profile and workforce diversity, the Directorate has a clear and targeted plan to address these challenges during 2026/27. Continued focus on sustainable workforce planning, recruitment pathways and retention will be critical to

strengthening resilience and ensuring the long-term sustainability of services. This approach positions the Directorate to respond effectively to future service pressures while maintaining safe, high quality service delivery for residents.

The Directorate continues to operate within a challenging risk environment, with homelessness, asset condition, workforce capacity and financial sustainability remaining high level risks. Risk management arrangements have been strengthened, with risks actively monitored and embedded within governance, planning and transformation activity. While some risks remain largely unchanged due to external drivers, there is clear oversight and assurance in place.

Audit and regulatory audit work during 2025/26 provided overall assurance, with no major regulatory concerns identified. Internal audit opinions ranged from Substantial to Limited, with 62 agreed actions in place to strengthen consistency and controls, while external regulatory recommendations remain largely on track, with one amber-rated action subject to an agreed revised timescale.

Engagement over the year has been constructive, with regular dialogue supporting shared understanding of priorities, risks and performance. Feedback from service users and partners has provided valuable insight to support service improvement and prioritisation and also informed oversight and assurance work. Complaints highlighted the impact of demand and capacity pressures, particularly on response times. Most issues were resolved at an early stage with low escalation, and learning from complaints and engagement has directly informed service changes. The Directorate remains committed to strengthening engagement, improving communication and complaints timeliness, and ensuring that service user and partner perspectives consistently shape future service redesign and improvement.

Directorate Learning, Reflection and What This Means for Change

This self-assessment has deliberately moved beyond a retrospective account of achievements and challenges to focus on what the Directorate has learned during 2025/26, and how that learning is shaping different approaches to service delivery, transformation and risk for the future.

During 2025/26, the Directorate continued to deliver essential services and positive outcomes for residents in a context of sustained financial, demand and workforce pressures. While this has required the effective use of short-term mitigations to protect statutory services and vulnerable residents, an important learning from this year's self-assessment is that such approaches, while necessary, do not in themselves reduce future risk or pressure unless they are accompanied by more fundamental change to operating models, demand pathways and workforce structures.

The Directorate has reflected on the fact that many of the pressures it faces are no longer driven by a lack of policy clarity or strategic intent. Instead, delivery is increasingly constrained by capacity, skills and enabling infrastructure. This includes the ability to design and implement change at sufficient pace and scale, to integrate digital, operational and policy activity effectively, and to use insight consistently to inform preventative approaches. As a result, the focus of improvement is shifting away from doing more activity within existing models, towards strengthening the conditions that enable sustainable change. Taken together, these reflections highlight a shift in emphasis for the Directorate: from managing pressure within existing models towards reshaping the systems, pathways and capabilities that determine how demand is generated, managed and prevented. This theme runs consistently through the learning set out below.

A key learning from experiences this year is that incremental, service specific improvement activity is no longer sufficient to respond to the growth in demand and increasing complexity of need. While individual services have continued to improve within their remit, the Directorate recognises that

future progress will depend on addressing issues at a system and pathway level, particularly where demand cuts across organisational boundaries. This learning is influencing how services are being redesigned, with an increased emphasis on earlier intervention, greater integration across services, clearer end to end pathways, and reducing recurring and avoidable demand rather than managing pressure at the point of crisis.

The Directorate has also learned that how change is delivered is as important as what is delivered. There has been a deliberate shift from managing a series of separate projects towards a more connected, portfolio-based approach to transformation. This enables clearer prioritisation, better understanding of interdependencies, and a focus on achieving cumulative impact rather than fragmented improvements. This approach is particularly relevant in areas such as digital enablement, community asset transfers, service transformation and workforce planning, where progress in one area is dependent on progress in others.

Engagement with residents, service users and partners is also being reframed through learning from the year. The Directorate recognises that engagement quality materially influences delivery outcomes and service sustainability, not just the legitimacy of decisions. Poorly designed or inconsistent engagement can increase complaints, delay implementation and undermine confidence, while meaningful and well-timed engagement can support service redesign, improve take up and reduce avoidable demand. This learning is shaping a more intentional approach to engagement both with residents and with our own staff as part of service delivery and improvement, rather than as a discrete consultation activity.

Taken together, these reflections highlight a broader learning for the Directorate: that while we have demonstrated resilience and effectiveness in coping well under pressure, the focus must now shift towards building the capability to reduce pressure structurally over time. This requires investment in system and service design skills that bridge strategy and operations; improved data and insight literacy across services so that managers and leaders can use complaints, trends and performance information proactively; more consistent commercial and commissioning capability to support partnerships, Community Asset Transfers and alternative operating models; and digital infrastructure that is treated as core service infrastructure rather than an isolated enhancement.

These learning points are shaping the Directorate's priorities for 2026/27 and beyond. They underpin a move away from attempting to "fix everything everywhere" towards clearer prioritisation, a stronger focus on prevention and sustainability, and targeted investment in the skills, systems and behaviours that will enable the Directorate to continue delivering positive outcomes for residents in a financially constrained and increasingly complex operating environment.

The priorities for 2026/27 reflect not only the Directorate's ongoing commitments but are explicitly shaped by the learning from 2025/26 about what needs to change to reduce pressure structurally over time rather than manage it reactively. These priorities will focus on strengthening financial sustainability, sustainable workforce planning, accelerating service transformation, improving asset resilience including through Community Asset Transfers (CATs), increasing the supply of affordable housing, enhancing digital delivery, and further embedding engagement and user insight to support better, more sustainable outcomes for residents.

Overall, the Environment & Housing Directorate assesses its effectiveness in 2025/26 as strong, demonstrating resilience and sustained delivery of essential services in a highly challenging operating environment. While performance and assurance remain positive, this self-assessment highlights that continued reliance on mitigation and incremental improvement will not be sufficient to address future demand, financial and workforce pressures. The Directorate is therefore shifting its focus towards system level change, strengthening enabling infrastructure and capability, and prioritising

prevention and sustainability, providing confidence that it is well positioned to deliver improved and resilient outcomes for residents over the medium to long term.

Post moderation, the Directorate's ratings for Engagement insight was adjusted from 'Good' to 'Fair', reflecting that while there were examples of impactful engagement, this was not yet consistent across the directorate. Additionally, the rating for Risk was adjusted from 'Fair' to 'Good', recognising that despite significant long-term and demand-led risks, robust mitigations were in place, and risks were being effectively managed. These adjustments did not affect the Directorate's overall rating of 'Good'.

3.2.4 Social Services

The Director of Social Services Annual Report is a statutory requirement set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. The five corporate health themes are addressed within Director's report.

To support council-wide judgements within the Annual Self-Assessment (ASA), including Internal Challenge and the moderation process, a high-level Social Services DSA has been completed. This provides a strategic overview aligned to the corporate framework while drawing on the detailed evidence contained within the Director's Report.

Director of Social Services Annual Report 2025/26

In 2025/26, the Social Services Directorate has continued to operate in a highly challenging context characterised by sustained increases in demand, workforce pressures and financial constraint. These pressures are most evident across both Adult Services and Children and Young People Services, where the volume and complexity of need have increased significantly. Despite this, the Directorate has maintained delivery across the majority of its core commitments and continues to demonstrate strong commitment to person-centred, preventative and partnership-led approaches aligned to the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan.

Overall, the Directorate judges its performance for 2025/26 as 'Fair'. This reflects:

- strong and sustained performance in the management of people, assets, performance and engagement, where robust arrangements are in place and contributing to positive outcomes;
- ongoing areas of risk and pressure, particularly in relation to financial sustainability and rising demand, which are impacting the Directorate's ability to consistently operate within budget and maintain capacity across all services.

Social Services continues to demonstrate strong performance in several key areas:

- **Workforce:** The Directorate benefits from a committed and resilient workforce, supported by targeted investment in development and wellbeing. Delivery of a comprehensive training offer alongside initiatives such as "grow your own" Social Worker scheme, is strengthening workforce sustainability and reducing reliance on agency staff. The Directorate has made good progress in implementing the ADSSC recommendations on eliminating racism, supported by workforce development and organisational initiatives. A programme of Compassionate Leadership, delivered with Social Care Wales, has supported also more consistent and supportive management practice across services. Together, these approaches are strengthening workforce resilience, improving retention and supporting consistent, service delivery despite ongoing recruitment challenges.

- **Assets and service transformation**: Continued investment in infrastructure and service models, including new accommodation developments and the planned implementation of a new case

management system, is strengthening the Directorate's ability to deliver modern, integrated services. Key progress includes: development of a third residential home for children, supporting increased placement capacity and reducing reliance on external placements; Approval of new office accommodation for Adult Services to improve working environments and support delivery of front-facing services; and progress towards implementing a new social care case management system, laying the foundations for improved integration, data quality and performance reporting. These developments are strengthening operational efficiency and supporting better outcomes through more integrated and modern service delivery.

- **Performance and delivery:** The Directorate has delivered the majority of its planned activities, with strong performance ensuring 89% (17 out 19) planned actions were completed, with the remaining two (11%) within 10% of completion. Performance against measures has not been rated as only two measures out of 17 were able to have an assigned target and RAG status. Both measures were derived from the Let's Talk Survey and are therefore not solely attributable to the Directorate. The remaining 15 (88%) measures, classified as N/A, could not be assigned a RAG status primarily because targets were not appropriate or due to changes in data collection and reporting arrangements, rather than underlying performance concerns. Available trend data and mitigating actions demonstrate responsive performance management, supporting services in managing increasing demand and achieving reductions where appropriate and safe to do so. Whilst the lack of data limits the completeness of the performance dataset, where trend data is available, this has been considered and this generally indicates positive progress.

- Strong performance is evident across several priority areas, including service transformation, access to children's services and expansion of partnership working and community models of care. These areas reflect effective resource use and the delivery of meaningful benefits for residents. This performance has been delivered against a backdrop of ongoing external pressures, including increasing demand, rising costs and funding uncertainty. Actions are in place to address these challenges and support continued improvement. Overall, performance demonstrates improved responsiveness, strong assurance, and a sustained focus on improvement of recognised challenges that are being proactively managed to support further progress.

- In year successes include: Implementation of the Vale Family Compass, creating a single point of access for families and improving coordination, simplifying referral pathways and enabling more timely intervention; Development of a pre-birth pathway with specialist workers, improving early identification and management of risk and supporting better outcomes for children and families. The continued expansion of preventative models such as reablement, supported individuals to maintain independence and reducing longer-term demand for intensive services, and there was evidence of improved response times for support, enabling more individuals to remain living independently at home. These initiatives are contributing to earlier intervention, improved outcomes and reduced escalation of need, aligning with the Directorate's preventative approach.

- **Partnership working and engagement:** Strong partnership arrangements and engagement remain a core strength of the Directorate. Successes include: Effective delivery of integrated health and social care services, including the Vale Community Resource Service, supporting timely hospital discharge and helping individuals recover and remain independent at home; Collaboration with regional partners on replacement of WCCIS, supporting future integrated digital working across authorities; Continued use of engagement activity, including service user consultation and partnership forums to inform service design and improvement. These arrangements are strengthening service integration, improving user experience and supporting more co-ordinated, person-centred delivery.

- **External regulatory assurance:** There were no outstanding external regulatory recommendations at either local or national level at year end, indicating that the Directorate is operating within expected regulatory standards. Internal audit activity identified 26 recommendations, all of which were either low or medium priority, with no high-priority issues raised. This suggests that while there are areas for refinement, there are no significant control or governance concerns impacting service delivery. Overall, regulatory activity during the year provides a strong level of assurance, with positive inspection outcomes, and evidence of delivery of improvement actions, supporting ongoing service improvement.

However, there are areas where performance is less strong:

- **Financial sustainability:** The Directorate has experienced a significant budget overspend, primarily driven by increased demand for high-cost placements for children and growing levels of need within Adult Services. While a substantial proportion of savings targets has been delivered, these measures are not sufficient to offset underlying demand-led pressures. As a result, financial performance remains a key area of concern and continues to present a significant risk to sustainability.
- **Demand and capacity pressures**: Rising demand across all service areas is placing sustained pressure on workforce capacity, service access and timeliness. This includes increased numbers of children requiring intervention and a growing ageing population requiring higher levels of care and support. While mitigating actions are in place, these pressures continue to impact the Directorate's ability to consistently deliver at the desired pace and scale.
- **Risk environment:** The Directorate continues to operate within a challenging risk environment, including risks relating to demand and capacity, workforce resilience, service delivery models and system transformation (e.g. implementation of the new care system). While these risks are understood and proactively managed, several remain above risk appetite and require ongoing mitigation.
- **Physical and digital assets:** Overall, Social Services assets are sufficient to sustain current delivery and there is clear momentum in improving both physical and digital infrastructure for the future. Nonetheless, suitability and modernisation remain key challenges, particularly in the context of rising demand, financial pressures and the scale of transformation required. Continued focus on improving assets quality, embedding digital systems and aligning infrastructure to future service models will be critical to maintaining service resilience and supporting long-term sustainability.
- **Complaints:** The number of complaints increased during the year (129 from 117),, reflecting rising demand, increasing complexity of need and greater contact with services. Performance in responding within statutory timescales remains an area of focus, with a significant proportion of complaints resolved outside target timescales. Analysis of complaints and contacts highlights recurring themes relating to communication, including the need for clearer, more timely updates, improved explanation of decisions, and better expectations-setting at first point of contact. Service pressures, including capacity and coordination between teams, have also impacted on timeliness and consistency of response. Work remains ongoing to address these and embed learning from complaints more systematically across services to drive improvement. At the same time, there remains a clear focus on sustaining and extending preventative services and maintaining strong engagement with citizens to ensure services continue to reflect their needs and experiences

  Overall, the Directorate demonstrates strong performance across workforce, assets, performance delivery and partnership working, evidenced by tangible service improvements and positive outcomes for residents. However, these strengths are offset by significant and ongoing financial and demand pressures, which continue to impact sustainability. This results in an overall assessment of 'Fair' through the DSA, with good prospects for improvement as transformation activity continues.

An adjustment to the Directorate's rating for Finance, Commissioning and Procurement from 'Poor' to 'Fair' by the moderation panel reflecting strong financial management arrangements despite overspends driven largely by external demand pressures resulted in an improved overall Directorate judgement from 'Fair' to 'Good'

3.2.5 Place

Place is delivering well against our commitments in Vale 2030 and the Directorate Plan, with key areas of success including the Development Management team's performance against key indicators such as time taken to determine planning applications and delivering against the Delivery plan agreed with Welsh Government in respect of the Replacement Local Development Plan.

Other areas of success include the delivery of Shared Prosperity Funding within the financial year, the Transforming Towns programmes and launching Placemaking Plans and the supporting Boards for the towns of Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth.

Important work is underway in Barry town centre with Welsh Government Transforming Towns Loans funding key property acquisitions such as the Wilko building. Excellent work continues in our Country Parks with Welsh Government; "Brilliant Basics" grant funding supporting refurbishments of facilities and the team are working with NRW to expand the already important "Restore the Thaw" with a new grant being awarded for the wider Vale.

Key Regeneration schemes such as "Barry Making Waves" and the Western Gateway project continue to be developed jointly with Housing colleagues and the Council's Housing delivery partners, Lovells Partnership Ltd. UK Government has agreed to extend the funding for Barry Making Waves until end of March 2028 and to agree the recent changes to the scheme thereby ensuring the project remains on track.

To conclude, the extensive consultation undertaken as part of the Placemaking work is now being used to inform where both UK and Welsh Government grant funding is targeted within our towns with aim of making sure that the funding that is awarded is spent in the most effective way.

Specific projects
A number of major projects have made strong progress this year. Firstly the Council has acquired the former Wilko store on Holton Road and is developing plans to revitalise the space for community and business use. Approval has also been secured for grant funding to support the acquisition of Units 1–3 Thompson Street, Barry, paving the way for the development of a new health and social care hub. Improvements at Barry Island have been completed, with new changing rooms and showers installed and the Nells Point former toilet block conversion is progressing well. In addition, the Eastern Gateway project has recently been relaunched, focusing on the strategic development of four key parcels of land situated at a prominent gateway location to the rear of the Docks Offices.

Positive progress has been made towards delivery of the Replacement Local Development Plan, which will structure growth and development in the Vale, and enable the Council to work effectively towards the Climate & Nature Emergencies and the Housing Crisis. The Deposit draft of the plan was completed in Q3, and approval for public consultation was granted by Council early in Q4. A wide reaching and comprehensive consultation exercise was carried out in Q4, including 7 public events, and multiple online events/sessions, and the volume of responses demonstrates the reach of the consultation.

We have successfully engaged a new commercial operator in the café at Cosmeston Country Park, who has made significant new investment in the facility. Work has also progressed in developing the offer available at Cosmeston and this will feed into further development of a plan for wider park income opportunities in 26/27. Q4 saw a temporary extension to the Porthkerry Park Cafe, enabling sustained use throughout the year, with the aim of progressing to a planning application in 2026/27 for a permanent extension to the cafe.

The Place budget is projecting a breakeven position, which reflects that whilst some savings have not been achieved in-year, they are mitigated by other savings or income within the budget. The Directorate has met or mitigated £238K (100%) of its savings target for the year.

The Directorate delivered 100% of its in-year priority actions at end of year. Performance against measures was positive with 79% (15) Green, Amber 10.5% (2) and Red 10.5% (2) and 10 measures were N/As, indicating that for the measures where a RAG status was possible, these generally met targets set or were within tolerance. Whilst the lack of complete data 34% (10 out of 29) limits comparability with previous years, trend data has been considered for these measures where available, and they generally indicate positive progress. Overall, performance in delivering the directorate's in-year priority actions and measures remains consistently strong and effectively managed, demonstrating clear delivery, robust oversight, and a commitment to ongoing improvement. The "Good" rating for performance accurately represents a high standard of achievement while acknowledging that improvement areas identified are proactively being managed.

The Directorate has continued to focus on maintaining service delivery in the context of recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in specialist areas. Workforce resilience has been strengthened through flexible recruitment approaches, reorganisation of teams, and ongoing skills development, although turnover and market pressures continue to impact capacity. Staff engagement has declined compared to previous years and appraisal processes were paused during system transition, but improvements are expected through the introduction of new systems to support performance and development. The Directorate remains focused on succession planning, workforce stability, and building capacity through targeted use of funding and workforce planning measures.

Strong performance in the management of the Directorate's physical and digital assets is ensuring that they effectively support service delivery and future growth with high levels of asset suitability and sufficiency and successful developments such as the BSC 2 development delivering increased business space and high occupancy. Asset value is being maximised through lease renegotiations, income generation, and feasibility work, alongside strengthened governance through improved project management arrangements and the embedding of placemaking and place-based approaches, supporting a more co-ordinated and strategic use of assets across the Council. However, delivery remains challenged by limited funding, rising costs and a continued reliance on external funding streams, which affect the pace and scope of projects, while capacity pressures and the need for stronger corporate-wide coordination across overlapping boards and programmes present ongoing risks. Further work is also required to enhance digital systems, improve asset data, and ensure asset planning fully supports long-term financial sustainability and service transformation. Overall, asset management is strong and improving, but addressing these pressures will be critical to sustaining performance and maximising value.

The Directorate's key risks relate to the delivery of major regeneration projects, uncertainty of external funding streams, viability pressures in development (including reduced Section 106 income), and challenges associated with delivering the Replacement Local Development Plan. While some risks remain significant, particularly those linked to external funding and economic conditions, overall exposure is being proactively managed through robust programme governance, regular monitoring,

and adaptive delivery approaches, with early evidence of risk reducing as major programmes become more established.

In-year external regulatory and internal audit arrangements provide a sound level of assurance, with all internal audits during the year receiving Substantial assurance and no significant systemic control weaknesses identified. A small number of low and medium priority recommendations were raised, focused on strengthening consistency, governance, and documentation, all of which have been agreed and are being addressed. Progress against national regulatory recommendations is on track and rated Green, demonstrating effective oversight and delivery. Overall, the directorate continues to operate within a strong control environment, with actions in place to further enhance governance, compliance and assurance.

Engagement is 'Good', with feedback increasingly shaping decisions and investment; however, improving response times, consistency, and use of insight to drive service improvement remains a key priority for the Directorate.

The Directorate remains focused on strengthening collaborative working across local, regional, and national partners to secure investment, drive regeneration, and deliver more co-ordinated and sustainable long-term outcomes for communities across the Vale of Glamorgan, albeit within a context of ongoing reliance on external funding and complex regional delivery arrangements.

Post moderation, the Directorate's rating for Assets was adjusted from 'Excellent' to 'Good', reflecting that while there were strong examples of delivery and community outcomes, particularly, where projects remain under the Directorate's control, outcomes were not consistently evidenced at a level sufficient to support an 'Excellent' judgement. Additionally, the rating for Risk was adjusted from 'Good' to 'Fair', recognising the heightened delivery risks associated with major regeneration activity and associated external funding uncertainty. These adjustments did not affect the Directorate's overall rating of 'Good'.

3.3 Responding to Our Critical Challenges

Three critical challenges are identified in Vale 2030: poverty, the climate and nature emergencies, and inequalities. Work undertaken in response to these challenges throughout the year demonstrates an increasingly data-led approach with WIMD (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation) data used alongside local intelligence to better understand and target areas of deprivation and inequality.

This is reflected in improvements to service delivery and a stronger emphasis on prevention, targeting and early intervention both within the Council and through partnership working. Whilst progress is positive and outcomes are improving as demonstrated in the end of year overviews below, the full impact of these actions is still emerging as we continue to develop our response to rising deprivation and inequality pressures identified through WIMD. This section highlights our progress and key challenges during 2025/26 in targeting and coordinating support for vulnerable residents and communities aligned to WIMD insights.

3.3.1 Poverty

Good progress has been made during 2025/26 in preventing and tackling poverty, with well-co-ordinated and targeted activity across community support, early intervention, housing, employment, skills and wider access opportunities. This activity remained focused on improving outcomes for residents most affected by cost-of-living pressures. Overall, performance is good, however, sustainability risks, rising demand and data limitations remain, and further improvement is required to strengthen targeting, evaluation and long-term resilience.

Effective coordination of Welsh Government funding during the year enabled a joined-up response to food insecurity and cost of living pressures through supporting community warm spaces and food projects. This included delivery through a GVS led community grants scheme supporting 21 organisations through an £85,000 total grant with successful applications being awarded varying amounts from £400 to £6,000. The launch of the Vale Food Strategy (2025–2030), also provided a shared strategic direction and framework for partner action.

Targeted advice and support helped residents maximise income and access entitlements. The Supporting People budget was fully allocated, securing over £500k in additional benefits for residents. Cost of living digital content on the Council's website was improved in response to resident feedback, with partnership work underway with Citizens Advice to introduce digital referrals and AI enabled call routing within the contact centre. Progress also continued against the Age Friendly Vale Strategy, improving access to information, services and support to reduce loneliness and isolation.

There are a number of hubs across the Vale providing a one-stop shop for a variety of advice and support. A key delivery hub in the Vale of Glamorgan is The Pod, which acts as a central, accessible drop-in centre for employability support. It provides daily access to Communities for Work+ mentors, job clubs, digital skills sessions, confidence and wellbeing courses, and sector-specific training, along with advice on benefits, housing, and a food bank provision, making it a primary engagement point. It has supported 4,248 visitors over the year, with 904 people enrolled in CELT+ of which 78 people moved into employment (target 30), 110 gained qualifications (target 25), and 398 reported improved employability (target 50). The "Pop Up Pod" model extends support into libraries, job centres, community centres and youth hubs.

Work is ongoing to ensure connections are being made across these locations, so that referrals are timely and residents are supported to access all that is available.

Partners and the Council hosted two Your Place health and wellbeing events, one aimed at babies, children, young people and families and the other aimed at older residents in response to findings of challenges for local residents to know about the range of support services available and to encourage relationship building in a friendly and safe space. This work built on a successful model developed in Cardiff basing events at a local secondary school and community centre. Whilst attendance remained lower than expected the events brought over 30 partners and services into the local communities.

Early intervention and family support continued to strengthen, including expanded Flying Start childcare, enhanced play provision, holiday playschemes for disabled children and the launch of Vale Family Compass as a single front door to services.

Housing delivery and homelessness prevention remained strong, with new affordable homes completed, effective money advice support for council tenants, and no families with dependent children placed in B&B type accommodation during the year. Preparation for the forthcoming legislative changes in the homelessness arena were invested in during the budget setting process, with a focus in the future on increased preventative services.

However, delivery in a small number of housing, play and cultural projects was delayed due to planning requirements, approvals or staffing changes, affecting timescales. Some services remain heavily reliant on short term external grant funding, creating uncertainty and limiting longer term planning. Rising demand linked to ongoing cost of living pressures, expanded expectations following WIMD 2025, and reductions in some grant funding streams continue to place pressure on services. In addition, Council data and systems do not yet consistently provide a full picture of need or outcomes, making it harder to target support as effectively as intended.

Further work is therefore required to strengthen how data and insight are used to identify need, track outcomes and target support more effectively, while also ensuring timely alignment of services so that residents are offered a single front door. There is also a need to reduce reliance on short-term funding by embedding successful initiatives into longer term service and financial planning, and to strengthen outreach and place-based approaches so support is more consistently available across the Vale.

In 2026/27, the focus will be on embedding what works, improving the use of data and insight to target need more effectively, strengthening the long-term sustainability of poverty related interventions, and continuing to work with partners to ensure resources are directed where they can make the greatest difference for residents experiencing poverty.

3.3.2 Climate Change and Nature Emergencies

Over the course of 2025/26, Project Zero has continued to make tangible progress across a wide range of climate, nature and decarbonisation priorities, while also facing a number of ongoing challenges as the programme moves into more complex areas of delivery.

Governance and partnership working have remained strong. The Project Zero Board met regularly throughout the year, providing oversight and direction to the programme, and reviewing the Council's 2024/25 carbon data submission to Welsh Government, which was also considered by Cabinet. In parallel, the Vale Public Services Board Asset Management and Climate Emergency sub group met throughout the year to share learning and coordinate activity. Shared Prosperity Funding enabled the completion of a Vale PSB Climate Change Risk Assessment, including stakeholder and community engagement and facilitated workshops to test and refine climate risk priorities and partner agency. This work represents an important step forward in understanding shared climate risks and opportunities across the Vale.

Steady progress has been made in decarbonising the Council's estate. Renewable energy generation increased year on year, with over 1.2 million kWh generated or exported during 2024/25. New photovoltaic arrays have been installed at several sites, including Rhws and Llanfair Primary Schools, Cosmeston Warden's Office and Colwinston Community Centre, with further works underway at St Cyres and Ysgol y Deri. Feasibility and energy efficiency work has been supported through Welsh Government and Ystadau Cymru funding, and the installation of an IQ Vision system is now enabling more centralised control of heating systems, supporting improved energy management and reduced out of hours usage in schools. The Energy and Decarbonisation team has also been strengthened through the recruitment of additional officers, increasing delivery capacity.

In housing, the completion of The Olives redevelopment demonstrates what can be achieved through retrofit. The scheme has delivered ten EPC A rated apartments in a 1950s building, supported by air source heat pumps, insulation and solar generation, alongside EV charging infrastructure for Council vehicles. Alongside this, wider retrofit work and new build programmes have also continued during the year.

Transport, fleet and waste services have also seen positive developments. This includes the approval of the Sully to Cosmeston active travel route, improvements to crossings, bus stops and real time information, and investment in cycling infrastructure to support a behavioural shift. Within the Council's fleet, seven electric vans are now in operation, and work is underway on the development of charging infrastructure close to the Atlantic HWRC in Sully. Waste services continue to perform strongly, with the soft plastics trial diverting over 70 tonnes from residual waste; its success has led to a planned Vale wide roll out in 2026/27, alongside preparations for a textile recycling pilot.

There has been particularly strong progress in community engagement, nature recovery and food systems. Over 10,000 trees have been planted across the Thaw catchment, new hedgerows have been created in partnership with local farms, and biodiversity initiatives such as meadow monitoring, water vole reintroductions and the Our Nature Neighbours project have expanded. Food Vale's work has continued strongly, with the launch of the Vale Food Strategy 2025–2030, achievement of a Silver Sustainable Food Cities Award, support for local growers, and delivery of the annual Vale Food Trail, attracting around 1,000 participants.

Internally, tools such as the Procurement PowerBI, schools' eco directory and Project Zero funding tracker are helping to embed climate considerations more consistently across services.

Despite these successes, there are areas where progress has been slower and challenges remain. The Council's 2024/25 net zero carbon return to Welsh Government showed a 6% increase compared to the previous year, driven primarily by supply chain (Scope 3) emissions. While Scope 1 emissions have reduced slightly, this highlights the scale of the challenge in influencing external emissions and reducing reliance on carbon intensive supply chains. Staff travel data continues to show a high reliance on car travel, underlining the behavioural and infrastructure barriers that remain.

In addition, while most Project Zero actions are on track, a proportion have progressed more slowly than anticipated or reported no progress during the year, reflecting the pressures of capacity, funding constraints and competing service demands. These areas will require renewed focus, clearer prioritisation and continued organisational engagement to maintain momentum.

Overall, 2025/26 has been a year of solid delivery, strong partnership working and expanding community impact for Project Zero, while acknowledging staff capacity and budget constraints. However, in order to work towards our 2030 and 2050 net zero carbon targets, the coming period will need to focus increasingly on tackling harder to reach emissions, embedding behaviour change, maximising funding opportunities, and ensuring that the pace of progress is escalated across the multiple strands of the programme. In addition, work continues to ensure that climate and nature considerations are fully embedded within the Reshaping programme. The year ahead will also see us bed in the learning from the PSB Climate Change Risk Assessment across directorates, which will support corporate risk management as well as inform future climate resilient service delivery

3.3.3 Inequalities

The Council has made sound progress in strengthening its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, with clear alignment to Vale 2030 and the Strategic Equality Plan. Key foundations for improved assurance have been strengthened, although several elements remain at an early stage and are not yet fully embedded, particularly around consistent monitoring, awareness of equality duties, and breadth of engagement.

A more systematic approach to equality monitoring has been introduced, with structured service updates improving consistency and oversight. This provides a strong basis for future reporting and assurance. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process has been simplified and digitalised, supporting better consideration of impacts on protected characteristics, poverty and Welsh language. Use of the process is increasing, with 25 completed assessments now centrally recorded during the year.

Engagement approaches have become more flexible and person-centred, with officers visiting community groups directly rather than relying on formal consultation mechanisms, improving the quality of insight gathered. Stronger internal governance and leadership have been established

through the People Board alongside active staff networks and senior leadership champions. Progress has also been made in inclusive employment practices, supported by the Recruitment and Retention Strategy, positive staff survey results (nearly 73% of respondents agreeing the Council actively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion) and strengthened external engagement and learning through Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) collaboration, regional networks, and Proud Employers accreditation. This has provided external challenge and enabled good practice benchmarking.

However, implementation of the new monitoring framework is uneven across Council services and still bedding in, limiting confidence in consistent outcome and impact reporting at this stage. Whilst work to improve it, awareness of the Public Sector Equality Duty remains variable, and community engagement, while improving, is not yet sufficiently representative of all groups.

In the year ahead, the focus will be on embedding outcome focused equality reporting and strengthening the quality and consistency of Equality Impact Assessments, moving from compliance towards meaningful decision shaping. Further work to improve awareness of equality duties, respond to the implications of the 2026 High Court judgement on the definition of sex, and strengthen engagement with underrepresented groups, will be key to providing assurance that services are accessible, equitable and legally compliant.

4. Our Performance Judgements

This section of the report details performance information at the end of the year, demonstrating progress against each of the Council's five Well-being Objectives and addressing the question of how well we are performing (4.2). This section also provides a detailed response and supporting evidence to demonstrate how well we are using our resources (4.3) and how effective our governance is (4.4).

4.1 Moderation of the Annual Self-Assessment Judgements

Before the Draft Annual Self-Assessment is published for consultation, a final moderation is undertaken. This brings together all evidence, including the DSAs, internal challenge feedback, performance data, risk and engagement insight and independent reports such as audits and inspections, to ensure that:

- conclusions are supported by evidence
- strengths and areas for improvement are described honestly
- judgements are applied consistently across Directorates; and
- wider cross-cutting issues are appropriately recognised.

Where required, wording or ratings are adjusted to reflect the overall organisational picture. This process helps provide assurance that the Annual Self-Assessment is accurate, balanced and reliable.

The moderation exercise draws on a structured internal challenge process comprising:

Internal Peer Challenge, where Directorates presented and tested their DSA judgements through structured challenge sessions. These focused on the strength of evidence, robustness of performance narrative and appropriateness of ratings. Views and recommendations from these discussions are detailed in the information provided to the moderation panel and can be viewed here.

Staff Panel Challenge, where Cross-directorate staff panels acted as critical friends to the proposed council-wide theme judgements (People, Finance, Assets, Performance, Engagement and Risk). Discussions focused on whether judgements, on balance, are proportionate, evidence-based and reflective of organisational performance. Views and recommendations from these discussions are detailed in the information provided to the moderation panel and can be viewed here.

The moderation panel reviewed all DSAs, peer and staff challenge feedback to confirm final council-wide judgements and ensure consistency across the organisation. The Panel confirmed overall judgements for the Council on how well it is performing, how well resources have been used to deliver on the Year 1 commitments in Vale 2030 and effectiveness of governance arrangements in supporting overall performance. A rationale was provided for each of the three main judgements which are reflected in relevant sections of this report. The moderation discussion outcomes can be viewed here.

These judgements will be subject to further stakeholder challenge through planned consultation between July and September 2026 and may be amended to reflect this additional challenge prior to seeking approval of the final judgements through the council's democratic process.

4.2 How well is the Council Performing?

The moderation concluded that, on balance, the proposed judgement of '**Good' for Performance** is appropriate and proportionate.

This judgement reflects strong progress against Vale 2030 Year 1 priorities and improving performance arrangements, but with some inconsistency in outcomes and areas where further improvement is needed.

Across Directorates, there are high levels of delivery against Vale 2030 commitments, with most planned actions completed or progressing at year end. This is consistent across all Wellbeing objectives, which demonstrates organisation-wide progress. There were positive outcome trends where measurable and for those indicators where a performance status was not possible, importantly, trend data indicates positive progress overall. For context, the proportion (40%) not attributed a RAG status were due to baseline setting, data availability and framework development which is typical in the first year of a new performance framework (Year 1 of Vale 2030).

Rationale:

- Strong delivery of Directorate Plan actions, demonstrating progress against the Vale 2030 priorities and tangible service improvements. 91% (88 out of 97) planned actions were delivered, with 6% (6 out of 97) within 10% of completion. Of measures with a valid RAG status, around 64% are Green, indicating more areas performing well than underperforming.
- Where performance fell short, this is identified and appropriate mitigations put in place, and proactively managed through performance oversight and exception reporting.
- Whilst there is a mixed picture in terms of demonstrating outcomes consistently across all services, the majority of in-year activities undertaken are delivering broadly positive outcomes for Vale citizens and this is demonstrable. This provides a strong foundation for achieving intended outcomes over time.
- Available national benchmarking data shows that overall, the Council is performing broadly in line with or above Welsh averages, and demonstrates strong outcomes once services are accessed, but continued focus is required on managing high levels of demand to improve responsiveness.
- A clear focus on outcomes and alignment to Vale 2030 Wellbeing Objectives.
- Well-established and improving performance management arrangements, including enhanced reporting and use of data and insight tools such as Power BI, is enabling effective challenge and continuous improvement.
- There is a more structured and embedded approach to performance, with regular monitoring and challenge at Directorate and corporate level.
- Substantial Internal Audit opinion issued on performance arrangements for monitoring Vale 2030.
- External audit evidence supports positive performance in areas audited as part of the Council's annual audit Plan and good progress is being against all Audit Wales recommendations, indicating that the Council is responsive to external challenge and improving performance where required.

However, the threshold for 'Excellent' has not been met because:

- Although action delivery is strong, performance targets and outcomes are not yet consistently achieved across all areas.
- Some performance data is incomplete or not available at year end, which limits the overall picture.
- There are areas where performance is below target or still improving at a slower rate, showing that progress is not yet consistent across all services.
- Performance continues to be affected by ongoing pressures, including demand, financial constraints and workforce capacity challenges.

This means that, while performance management is strong, the Council does not demonstrate the consistent and sustained outcomes required for an 'Excellent' judgement.

Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.5 together with the data dashboard provide detailed information to support this judgement.

4.2.1 Vale 2030 Performance Snapshot : Overall Performance RAG status for Year 1 Vale 2030

Performance in achieving the commitments in Vale 2030 is monitored through the systematic tracking of progress against planned actions and performance measures set out within the Directorate Plans.

A comprehensive view of end of year performance for 2025/26 is available through the linked Power BI dashboard. This dashboard brings together performance data from all five Directorate Plans to show organisational progress against the Year 1 commitments within Vale 2030. It outlines progress on 97 actions and 149 measures, includes performance snapshots for each of the five Wellbeing Objectives, and provides directorate-level summaries highlighting how each Directorate is contributing to delivery in Year 1.

Where data is available, the dashboard also presents trend analysis, allowing current performance to be compared with that of the previous year. In addition, it summarises each Directorate's key achievements and main challenges at end of year.

The dashboard further includes snapshots of the Council's Corporate Health Measures, covering areas such as people, assets, finance, reshaping, and engagement.

A RAG (Red, Amber or Green) performance status has been attributed to each action and measure where possible. This designates whether performance has met target, Green (target has been met or exceeded), Amber (performance is within 10% of target), Red (target has been missed by more than 10%). Where it is not possible to attribute a RAG status (.e.g. a target was not appropriate for the action/measure, data was unavailable or baseline performance is being established) an N/A status will be attributed.

In Year 1 of Vale 2030, overall performance indicates good progress in delivering our planned actions with 91% attributed a Green RAG status and fair progress against our planned measures with 64% attributed a Green RAG status. Further detail on the performance of actions and measures can be seen in the snapshots below, which provide an overview of how the performance rating has been calculated, including a breakdown of performance RAG statuses for actions and measures aligned to each Wellbeing Objective. Detailed information on the key achievements and challenges from each Directorate aligned to the five Wellbeing Objectives is also set out below to provide further context on performance outcomes.

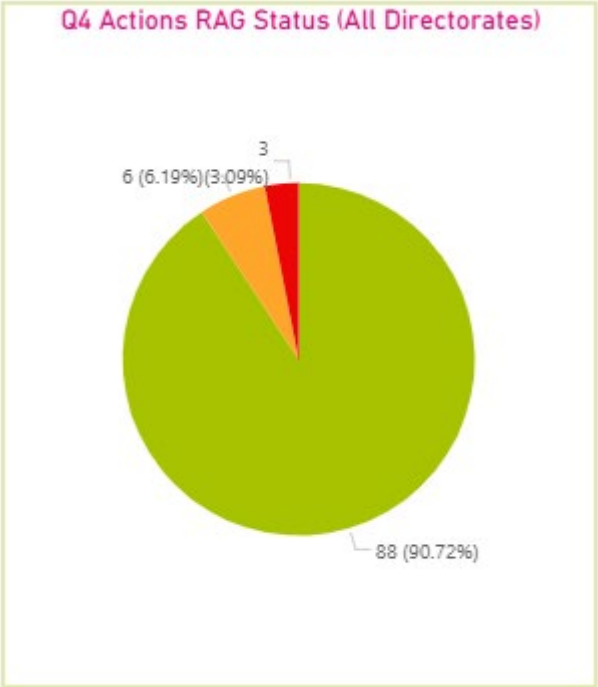
While there has been strong progress against priorities and delivery of Vale 2030 commitments, we recognise that there are some areas where performance has not met expectations (performance exceptions). These include measures where targets were missed and actions that are incomplete or have slipped in progress, covering actions and measures assigned an Amber or Red RAG status. These areas for improvement are acknowledged and are outlined below.

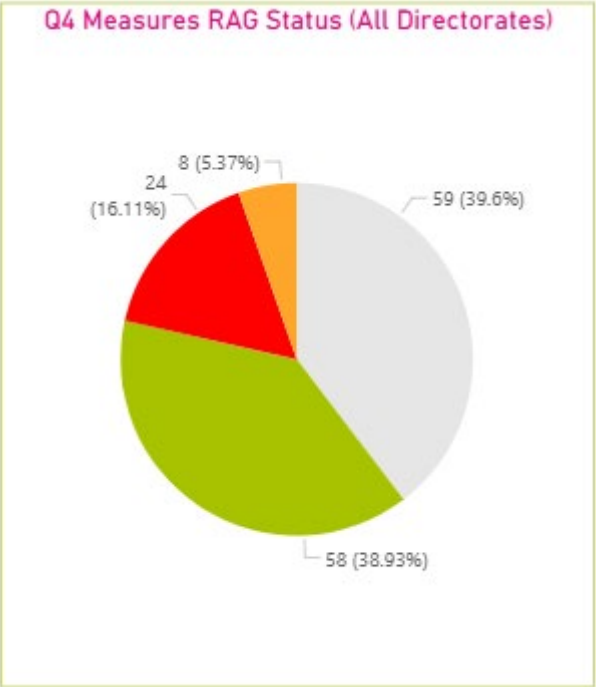
A review of local service performance indicators alongside national benchmarking data where available is included below to provide additional context for the overall performance ratings. Despite

ongoing financial and workforce pressures and increasing demand on services, the Council's performance remains positive across a wide range of service areas.

Overall RAG Status (Actions): Good - 90.72%* | Overall RAG Status (Measures): Fair – 64.44%*									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/As*	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
97	149	88 (90.72%)	58 (64.44%)	6 (6.19%)	8 (8.88%)	3 (3.09%)	24 (26.67%)	0	59

*Overall performance RAG statuses exclude actions and measures that were attributed an N/A RAG status at Q4. No actions were attributed N/A performance status. 59 out of 149 measures (40%) were assigned N/A status, meaning no RAG status could be applied. However, given that many N/A measures relate to baseline setting and performance framework development in Year 1 of Vale 2030, this position is expected and transitional. Additionally, it is not always appropriate to set targets for measures that are volatile and in a number of measures this is the case, instead trends are monitored to learn from these. Whilst the high number of unrated measures limits the completeness of the performance dataset, a combination of rated data and trend data where available, has been considered to provide a holistic view of our delivery of Vale 2030 Year 1 priorities.





Overall N/As Measures**											
Existing Annual			New Annual				Existing Quarterly		New Quarterly		
No target set	Target not appropriate	Data Not Available	Establishing baseline	Target not appropriate	Data Not Available	Measure Removed	No Update Provided	Target Not Appropriate	Establishing Baseline	Target Not Appropriate	Data Not Available
1 (1.69%)	14 (23.73%)	2 (3.39%)	13 (22.03%)	1 (1.69%)	4 (6.78%)	6 (10.17%)	1 (1.69%)	4 (6.78%)	8 (13.56%)	4 (6.78%)	1 (1.69%)

**Of the 149 measures in the Corporate Performance Management Framework for 2025/26, a RAG status was not applicable for 59. Of the 59 measures, data was unavailable for 7 existing and new measures due to delays and changes in data publication and collection.

A RAG status could not be assigned to 6 new annual measures relating to the Let's Talk Survey 2025, as these were removed following revisions to the survey design.

No update was provided for 1 existing quarterly measure, which meant a RAG status could not be assigned. 1 existing annual measure did not have a target set for 2025/26 and could therefore not be assigned a RAG status.

It was not appropriate to set targets for 23 existing and new measures, which potentially may have resulted in missed opportunities for improvement during the year. This has been reviewed as part of the Directorate Plan 2026/27 target setting process.

A total of 21 new measures were unable to be assigned targets as baseline performance levels were being established. End of year performance has subsequently been used to inform target setting for 2026/27.

4.2.2 Performance Snapshot by Wellbeing Objective

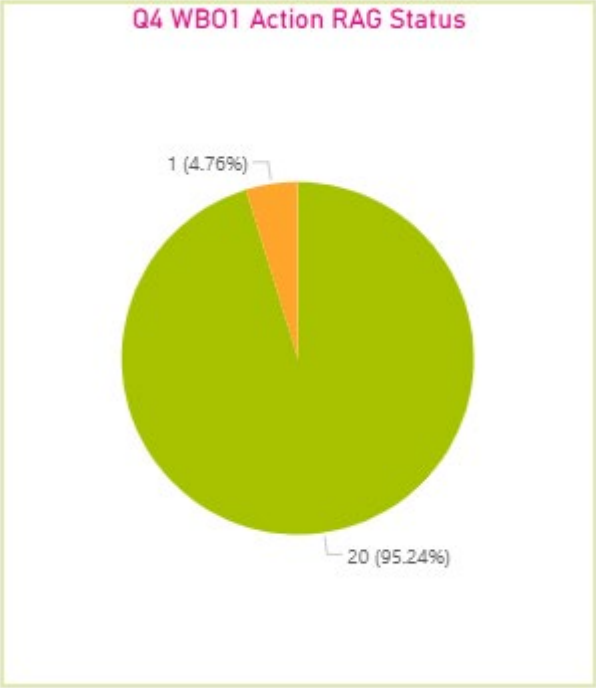
Wellbeing Objective 1									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/A	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
21	29	20 (95.24%)	19 (86.36%)	1 (4.76%)	2 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.55%)	0	7

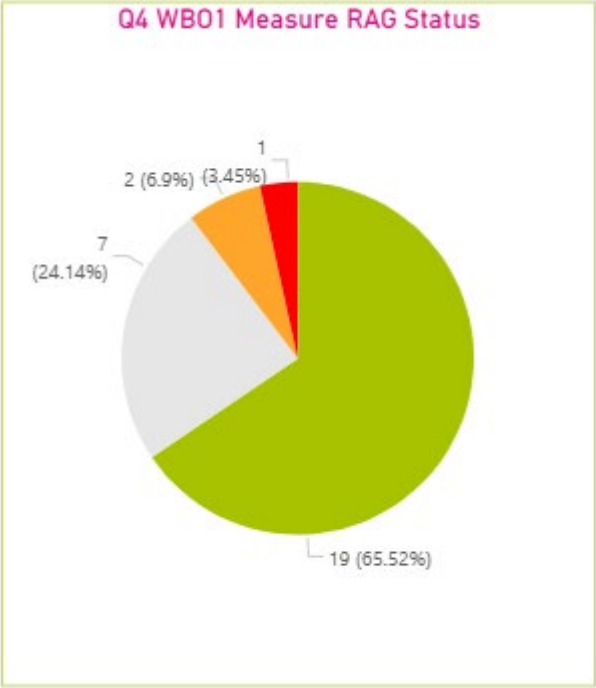
Wellbeing Objective 2									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/A	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
13	30	12 (92.31%)	13 (81.25%)	1 (7.69%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	2 (12.5%)	0	14

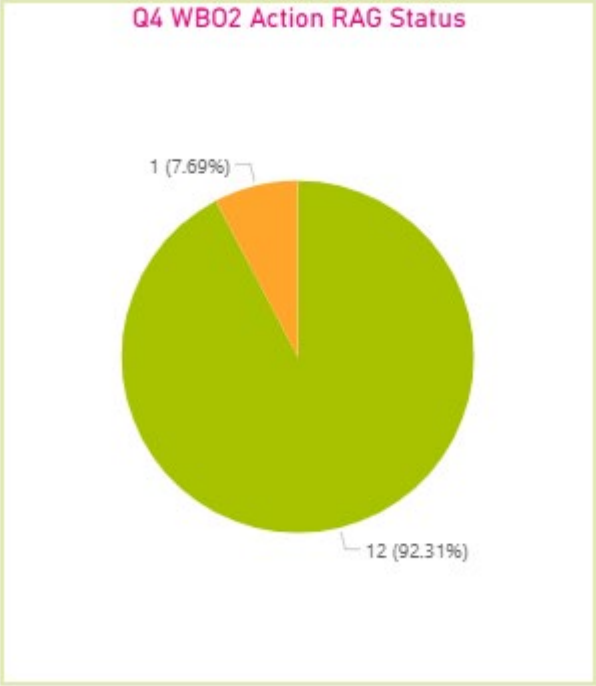
Wellbeing Objective 3									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/A	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
17	17	16 (94.12%)	4 (36.36%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (63.64%)	0	6

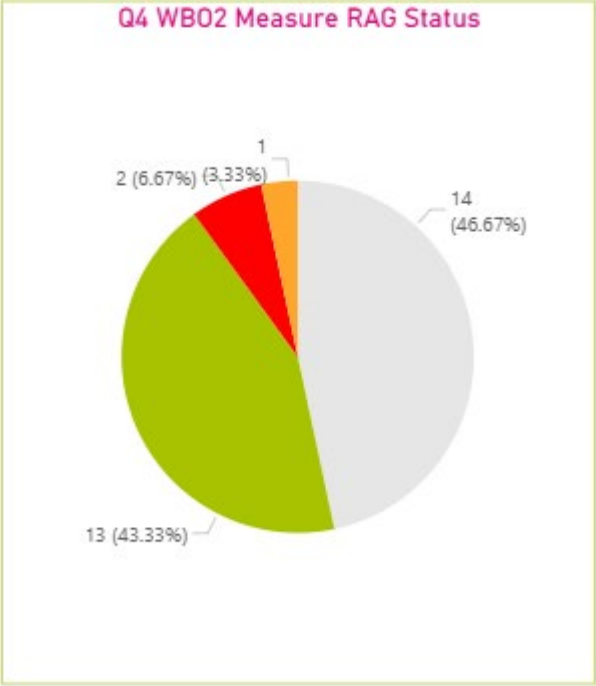
Wellbeing Objective 4									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/A	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
17	35	16 (94.12%)	5 (33.33%)	1 (5.88%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	7 (46.67%)	0	20

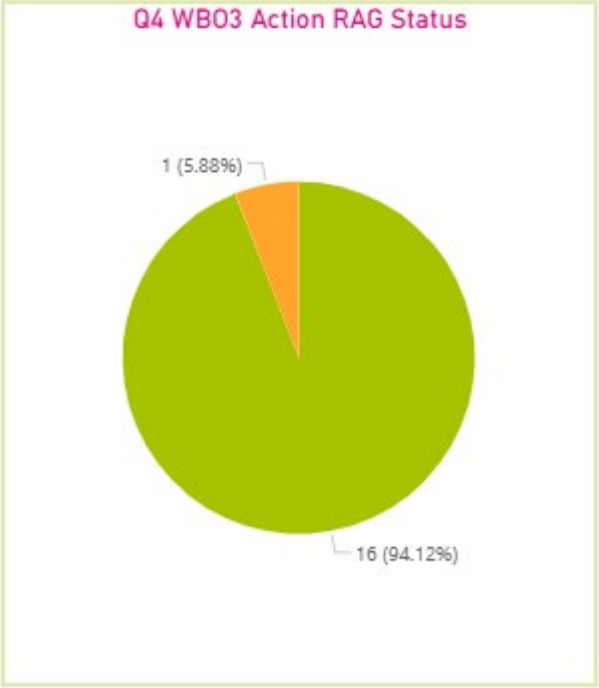
Wellbeing Objective 5									
Total		Green		Amber		Red		N/A	
Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures	Actions	Measures
29	38	24 (82.76%)	17 (65.38%)	2 (6.9%)	2 (7.69%)	3 (10.34%)	7 (26.92%)	0	12

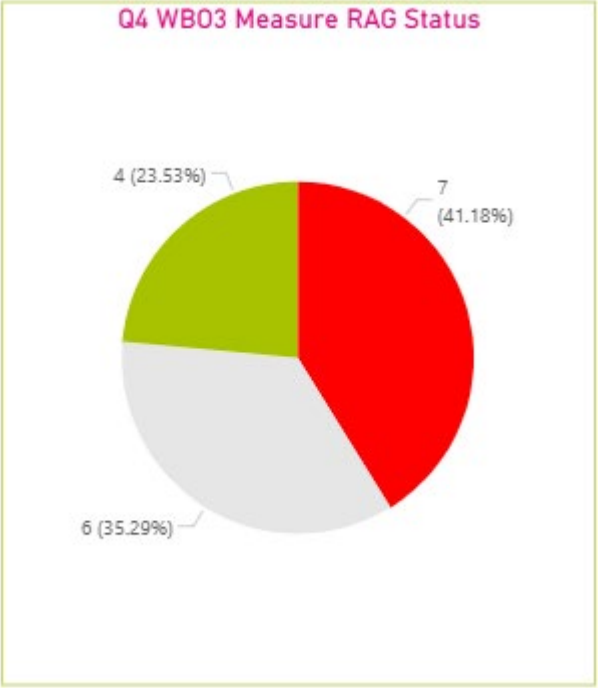


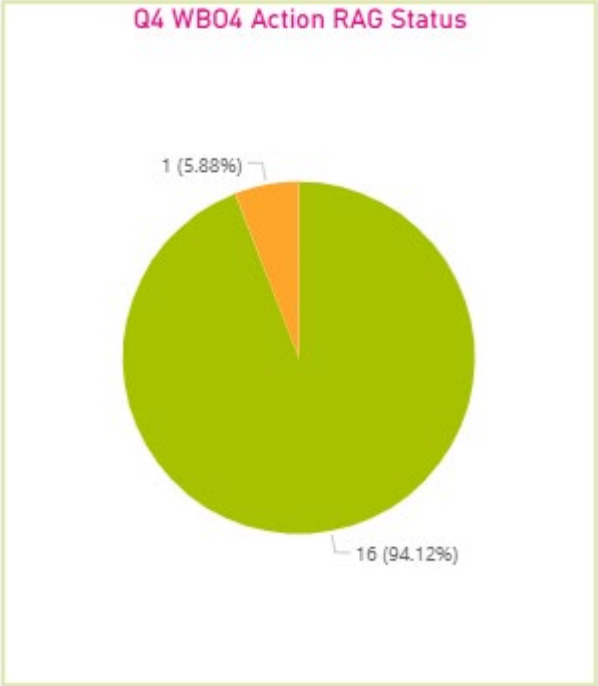


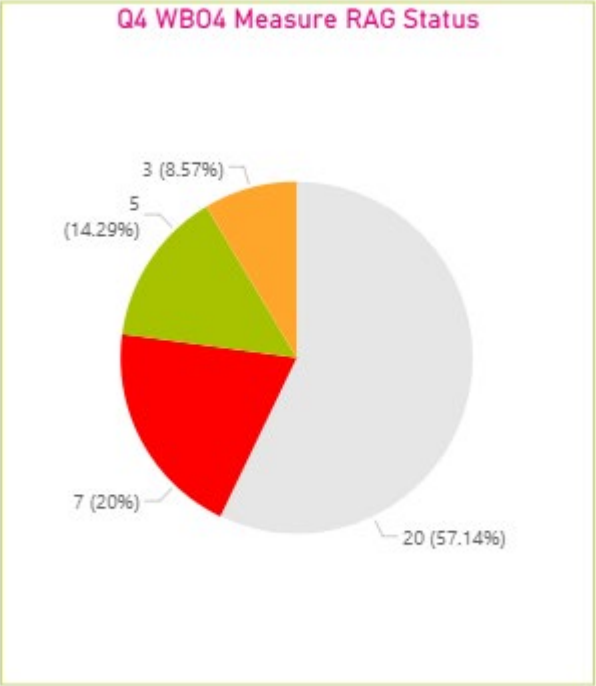


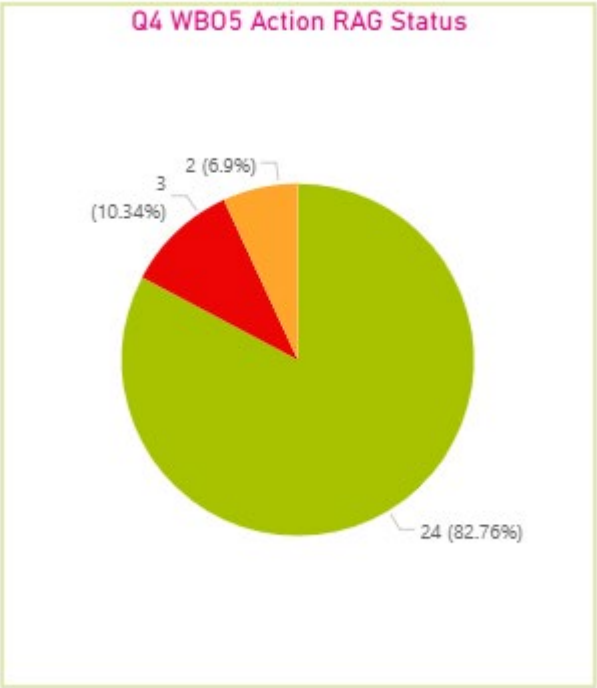


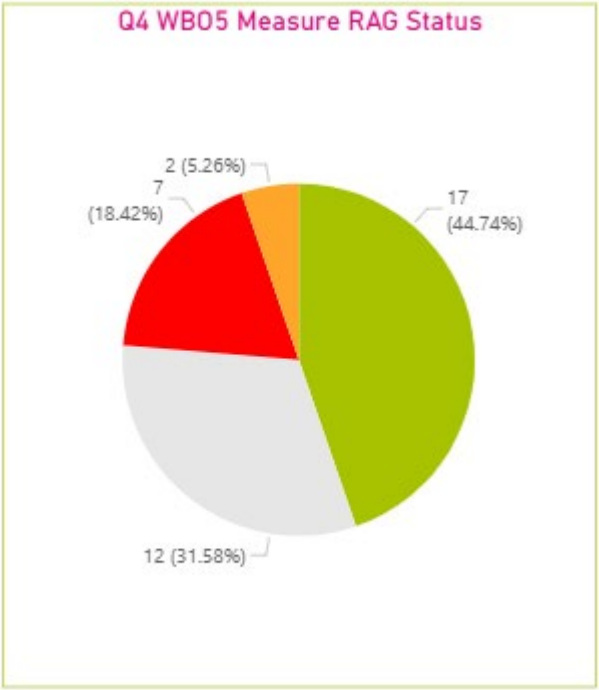

Q4 WBO3 Action RAG Status
1 (5.88%)
16 (94.12%)


Q4 WBO3 Measure RAG Status
4 (23.53%)
7
(41.18%)
6 (35.29%)


Q4 WBO4 Action RAG Status
1 (5.88%)
16 (94.12%)


Q4 WBO4 Measure RAG Status
3 (8.57%)
5
(14.29%)
7 (20%)
20 (57.14%)





4.2.3 Exceptions

Total Action Exceptions: 9 (6 Amber / 3 Red)		
Change in Action RAG status from Q3	**Amber**	**Red**
Improved	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Worsened	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
No Change	2 (33%)	0 (0%)
Newly Emerging Challenge	4 (67%)	2 (67%)
Total	6 (100%)	3 (100%)
Total Measure Exceptions: 32 (8 Amber / 24 Red)		
Change in Measure RAG status from Q3	**Amber**	**Red**
Improved	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Worsened	0 (0%)	1 (4.16%)
No Change	1 (12.50%)	7 (29.17%)
Newly Emerging Challenge	7 (87.50%)	16 (66.67%)
Total	8 (100%)	24 (100%)

The Quarter 4 (Q4) 2025/26 results identify exceptions relating to actions and performance measures that did not meet their targets and are currently rated a Red or Amber RAG status.

The accompanying Power BI Dashboard 'exceptions' page provides additional context by showing how performance has changed over time. It identifies where performance has worsened (i.e. continued deterioration in performance, declining further from an Amber status in Q3 to a Red status in Q4), improved or remained stable, as well as areas that show new trends of decline after previous positive performance and are now classified as "new challenges" (i.e. measures or actions that have slipped from a Green status in Q3 into Red or Amber status at Q4). This approach helps distinguish between longer-term issues and more recent declines in performance and supports a clearer understanding of where further attention is required.

There was a total of 9 action exceptions in Q4, comprising 3 Red and 6 Amber. Action exceptions were most largely concentrated in WBO5, particularly for Red status action, indicating challenges

associated with organisational or enabling activity. Analysis of movement of action RAG status shows deterioration in the performance of 1 action, which decreased from an Amber status in Q3 to Red in Q4. There was also persistence of Amber (2) statuses across both quarters, indicating ongoing delivery challenges. 6 exceptions emerged as new challenges in Q4, having not been identified as Amber or Red in Q3 This indicates that a number of actions deteriorated in performance towards the end of the year, moving from previously on-track positions to Amber or Red as deadlines approached. As with measures, there were no actions that improved from a Red to an Amber Status or an Amber to a Green Status.

In Q4 there were a total of 32 measure exceptions, of which 24 were classified as Red and 8 as Amber. Measure exceptions were predominantly concentrated within Wellbeing Objectives 3, 4 and 5. Analysis of movement of measure RAG status between Q3 and Q4 indicates continued pressure and limited improvement. Several indicators remained persistently Red (7) and Amber (1) across both quarters, demonstrating that these issues are ongoing rather than short-term fluctuations. There was some deterioration, with 1 indicator moving Amber into Red RAG statuses by Q4. In addition, many indicators (23) appeared as new Red (16) or Amber (7) exceptions in Q4, largely reflecting annual measures that are only fully assessed at year end. There were no measures that improved from a Red to an Amber Status or an Amber to a Green Status.

Overall, the Q4 action and measure exception position highlights a combination of sustained performance challenges and late-emerging delivery pressures, indicating the need for continued focus on outcome improvement. Further detail on the actions and measures exceptions can be found on the linked dashboard exceptions page.

4.2.4 Performance Overview by Wellbeing Objective

Wellbeing Objective 1: Creating great places to live, work and visit

What's gone well

- Town centres strengthened through delivery of all four Placemaking Plans, improving alignment to community priorities and supporting reduced vacancy in Barry 9.6%, Penarth 7.8%, Llantwit Major 3.2% and Cowbridge 9.2 %.
- Increased the supply of high-quality affordable housing through new Council developments in Clos Holm View Phase 2, Coldbrook East and Olive Lodge in Barry, with further schemes progressing including the former Cowbridge Police Station and 102 homes at Hayeswood Road Place 2 and Myrtle Close.
- Regeneration momentum established through major projects including Barry Making Waves, Plans for Neighbourhoods, Aberthaw and the Docks Office, creating a pipeline for economic growth and place-making.
- Enhanced local infrastructure and connectivity improving accessibility and safety through road resurfacing and active travel schemes.
- Delivered a comprehensive public consultation on the Deposit Draft Replacement Local Development Plan, engaging residents and stakeholders through a wide-ranging programme of in person and online events. This has strengthened the evidence base and community voice, providing a clear foundation to refine and progress the Plan in 2026/27.
- Public library visits reached 5,044 per 1,000 residents (over five visits per person annually), exceeding the 3,500 target. Physical visits increased from 480,029 to 494,881 and digital visits rose significantly from 132,000 to 186,050, reflecting strong engagement and successful expansion of both in person and online services.

- The Council's leadership of the Tai ar y Cyd partnership was recognised nationally, including receiving a Construction Excellence Award and being the first authority to achieve Welsh Government Technical Approval using the Tai ar y Cyd pattern book, supporting the delivery of high quality, low carbon affordable homes.
- Sustained growth in usage across all leisure centres supported by ongoing investment and site improvements. Usage increased by 17.5%, gym membership rose by over 14%, and community benefits (social value) increased by 8.8% compared to the previous year (£3,845,282 to £4,183,547), demonstrating both improved community outcomes and value for money.

Our challenges

- Delays to Barry Making Waves due to regulatory requirements and funding gaps.
- 2025/26 saw no growth in affordable housing approvals, and recovery is dependent on market conditions.
- Slight decline (1%) in number of visitors staying in the Vale linked to economic pressures.
- Resilience of community assets with some at risk of closure without long-term funding and maintenance solutions.

Partnership highlights

- Effective partnership working to support housing delivery, Joint work with housing partners (including registered social landlords and developers such as the Lovell Partnership) delivered new council housing and has increased affordable housing supply.
- Continued collaboration on community safety priorities, supporting early intervention and risk reduction.
  - Continued partnership working through Shared Regulatory Services improved compliance and public protection outcomes, with strong performance and external recognition (Food Standards Agency and RSPCA awards).
  - Ongoing collaboration with partners such as probation, youth offending and regulatory bodies supported co-ordinated responses to community safety risks.
- Progression of Placemaking Plans for all four towns in partnership with local Town Councils and communities.
  - Placemaking Plans for all four towns were developed and adopted in partnership with Town Councils, supported by Town Boards and a Vale wide governance structure.
  - Extensive consultation, including public events and engagement activity, informed priorities and ensured funding was targeted based on local need and community input.
  - Delivery of placemaking programmes combined funding streams for example, Transforming Towns and Shared Prosperity Funding to maximise regeneration impact and strengthen town centre outcome.

Wellbeing Objective 2: Respecting and celebrating the environment

What's gone well

- Continued improvement in waste reduction through new recycling services including a Vale wide soft plastics scheme and a textiles pilot in Barry, with overall recycling performance exceeding the statutory target on 70%.
- Collected 7760.50 tonnes of food waste and 6,114.36 tonnes of green waste, which is being used to create nutrient-rich fertiliser that is supporting local agriculture and reducing reliance on chemical alternatives.
- Biodiversity and climate resilience were strengthened through expanded wildflower areas (up 21%) and tree planting (17,556 trees).

- Active travel and road safety improvements delivered including 48 road safety schemes and new infrastructure funded through £2.4m of investment.
- Strong planning performance supported timely development for householders and across the board. Performance exceeded targets at 96% and 97% respectively.
- Successful ongoing partnership with Keep Wales Tidy/Caru Cymru on litter picking, hubs and community environmental initiatives ensuring a co-ordinated approach to improving environmental quality. 5097 bags of waste and 443 bags of recycling were collected through 11,041 volunteering hours.
- 44 Electric Vehicle installations in 33 sites across the Vale has increased public access to charging infrastructure and strengthened network resilience, while supporting a wider transition to electric vehicles, contributing to both national and local decarbonisation targets.
- Expanded Waste Services by bringing on board 52 schools, generating over £133,000 in savings reducing costs for participating schools.
- Expanded access to play and leisure, driving inclusion, wellbeing and increased participation. Nearly 8,600 participations were delivered across 173 play sessions, alongside targeted activity through the Vale Sport & Physical Activity Plan for residents facing barriers which had over 5,108 participations through the 60+ Active Leisure programme and more than 21,712 participations in the Active Young People programme.

Our Challenges

- Carbon emissions increased despite ongoing preventative actions (most recent data is for 24/25 with 2025/26 data expected in late September 2026).
- Highways and infrastructure are deteriorating due to limited resources and rising costs.

Partnership highlights

- Productive regional collaboration, enabling shared learning, capacity and resources to address shared challenges and deliver services more efficiently.
  - Regional collaboration across the 10 authorities within the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) supported delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund, achieving targets and maximising impact across the region.
  - Joint working with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and other partners supported environmental programmes such as Restore the Thaw, extending delivery and strengthening biodiversity outcomes.

Wellbeing Objective 3: Giving everyone a good start in life

What's gone well

- Improved learner outcomes through strengthened school improvement partnerships and a literacy focus via a new collaborative partnership board.
- Primary school attendance improved (93.02%) exceeding the target of 93%, reflecting stronger engagement.
- More effective ALN approach reducing escalation and out of county placements.
- The percentage of young people leaving Year 12 who are NEET improved to 0.23%, from 0.47% last year, exceeding the average reduction of 0.13%.
- The Young Ambassadors and Leadership programme delivered over 83,975 participations. Young people played an active role in delivering 3,205 sessions, contributing more than 5,751 voluntary hours and 703 hours of training. A total of 142 pupils were recruited as Silver, Gold, and Platinum Young Ambassadors, enhancing their Wellbeing, confidence, and leadership skills. This also contributed positively to school culture, engagement, and behaviour.

Our challenges

- Persistent challenges with attendance, rising exclusions and learner disengagement, especially in secondary schools.
- Growing demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) provision.
- Financial pressures across schools, with many in deficit.
- Continued concerns in some secondary school inspection outcomes.

Partnership highlights

- Partnership led approaches to tackling inequalities and supporting children, families and older people through joined up local and regional initiatives.
  - Implementation of the Vale Family Compass created a single point of access for families, improving co-ordination between services and enabling earlier support for children and families.
  - Education partnerships (schools, new school improvement service, and other local boards) supported vulnerable learners through improved early identification, attendance interventions and targeted support, including ALN.
  - Youth and community engagement through the Youth Council, play and leisure programmes for example, improved inclusion, wellbeing and participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

Wellbeing Objective 4: Supporting and protecting those who need us

What's gone well

- Expanded early years support improving access for vulnerable families. Flying Start extended to 934 postcodes, with 280+ children supported.
- Earlier intervention and improved coordination enabling more timely support through the pre-birth pathway and the Vale Family Compass hub.
- High levels of independence maintained among Supporting People service users alongside a 93.51% satisfaction rating.
- Strong volunteering outcomes (94% positive impact) achieved through the Value in the Vale volunteering programme.
- Increased residential provision strengthening local care capacity through the development of a third children's home.
- Effective delivery of integrated health and social care services, through the Vale Community Resource Service, supporting timely hospital discharge and helping individuals recover and remain independent at home. This is contributing to earlier intervention, improved outcomes and reduced escalation of need.

Our challenges

- Rising homelessness and demand for temporary accommodation.
- Housing supply not keeping pace with demand.
- Increasing pressure from an ageing population and children's services demand.
- Delivering a new record system in social services to ensure staff have the best tools for the job.

Partnership highlights

- Strong collaboration with health, third sector and community partners to support vulnerable residents, promote independence, and improve access to services.
  - Integrated health and social care delivery through the Vale Community Resource Service supported timely hospital discharge and enabled more residents to remain independent at home.
  - Expansion of preventative models such as reablement services improved response times for support and reduced longer term demand for care by helping people maintain independence.
  - Strong engagement with service users and partners, including consultation forums, informed service design and improved co-ordination of support.
  - Continued delivery of the integrated Wellbeing Matters service as a partnership between the UHB and Contact OneVale.
- Effective partnership working to prevent homelessness including joint work with registered social landlords and regional partners.
  - Multi-agency homelessness prevention approaches enabled no routine use of hotel accommodation for families and strengthened pathways into sustainable accommodation.
  - Collaboration across housing and support services increased temporary accommodation provision, including acquisition and refurbishment of additional schemes to reduce reliance on unsuitable placements.
- Continued collaboration on safeguarding priorities, supporting early intervention and risk reduction.
  - Strengthened safeguarding arrangements and early intervention pathways for example, through the pre-birth pathway and interventions hub has improved identification and management of risk for children and families.

Wellbeing Objective 5: Being the best council we can be

What's gone well

- Stronger governance and insight supporting evidence-based decision-making through Vale 2030, the Let's Talk survey and strengthened scrutiny arrangements.
- Modernised and improved resident experience through digital transformation including launch of Amazon Connect, expanded channels and enabling self-service on a 24-hour basis.
- Workforce capacity strengthened through a new People Strategy, skills programme and apprenticeship programme. 87 staff achieved qualifications during the year, exceeding our target of 72.
- Service efficiency improved through channel shift and new technology, enabling 15% of calls to be redirected to digital via SMS with further enhancements on the way.
- Increased digital resilience through AWS cloud migration and the delivery of 3k Windows 11 upgrades as well as introducing a new intranet.
- Kier supported its new Ysgol Iolo project by co-hosting Gwyl Gymreig, a Welsh cultural festival in Cowbridge, celebrating local culture and promoting Welsh-medium education. The event featured community activities, performances, and engagement sessions, while also showcasing plans for the new school, which will expand to 420 places including a nursery. It generated strong community interest, with high demand from parents and plans to repeat the successful event across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Our Challenges

- Ongoing budget pressures despite savings delivery, 80% of saving targets have been achieved over the year.

- Workforce challenges remain in recruitment, retention and succession.
- Asset maintenance pressures due to limited funding and rising costs.
- Need to further strengthen engagement and responsiveness to feedback, including complaints.
- Deliver digital transformation at pace.

Partnership highlights

- Co-ordinated multi-agency responses to cost of living pressures, helping residents access financial support, advice services and community-based assistance.
  - Joint work with partners such as Citizens Advice, warm spaces and community organisations which has improved access to advice, financial support and support networks for residents experiencing financial hardship.
  - Collaboration with partners supported targeted outreach in deprived areas, using WIMD data and engagement activity to better connect residents with services and support.
  - Collaboration on digital transformation, for example, replacement of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) supported future integrated working across authorities.

4.2.5 How are we performing on a range of indicators

Local perspective

Local performance data indicates a generally positive direction of travel, with notable improvements in place-based outcomes, environmental activity, resident satisfaction and aspects of workforce performance. Early intervention work in education is also showing positive impact, with improved attendance and reduced persistent absence. However, this progress is not consistent across all areas. Increasing demand and complexity are placing pressure on social care and housing services, evidenced by rising numbers of children looked after, reduced homelessness prevention outcomes and declining satisfaction in some areas. In addition, while environmental ambition is strong, delivery challenges remain in areas such as affordable housing and enforcement activity. Overall, the Council is improving performance and delivering positive outcomes in several areas, but this is being achieved within a context of growing demand and resource constraints, which continue to limit the pace and consistency of improvement.

Wellbeing Objective 1: Creating great places to live, work and visit

- **5,044** visits to public libraries during the year per 1,000 population, improving on **4,543** visits in 2024/25.
- **99%** of adults reported positive impact on their health and wellbeing through participation in community learning activities, decreasing from **100%** in 2024/25.
- A total of **264** local businesses received advice on funding, business planning, and new start-ups, representing a substantial improvement on the **80** businesses supported in 2024/25.
- **11.69%** of private sector dwellings that were vacant for more than 6 months and were returned to occupation during the year through direct action from the local authority, increasing on our previous year's performance of **10.44%.**
- **13.9%** of private sector dwellings that were vacant for more than 12 months and were returned to occupation during the year through direct action from the local authority, slightly improving from 2024/25 figure of **13.1%.**
- **60.22%** of residents in the Vale strongly or slightly agree that they feel part of their local area, increasing on 2024/25 figure of **56.6%.**
- **8** new additional dwellings created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use, mirroring the 2024/25 performance.

- **90** community led organisations were advised, down from last year's figure of **174.**
- **64.09%** of residents were very or fairy satisfied overall with the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live, improving on our previous year of **59.60%.**
- **18** MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) cases in 2025-26, decreasing from **30** last year.
- **75** Anti-Social Behaviour referrals in 2025/26, improving on the previous year's performance of **124**.
- **119** Anti-Social Behaviour incidents in 2025/26, decreasing by **8% (129)** from 2024/25.
- **6** Target Hardening referrals in 2025/26, a reduction for the 2024/25 figure of **8.**

Wellbeing Objective 2: Respecting and celebrating the environment

- Significantly increased the area of parks, open spaces and highways land managed as wildflower or naturalised areas, from **362,020 to 438,857 m2,** an increase of **21.23%.**
- **13.27%** of local authority vehicle fleet are zero emissions, improving on our previous year's figure of **10.96%**
- **0** additional affordable housing units granted planning permission during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units granted planning permission during the year, decreasing from **46.53** in 2024/25.
- **15%** of reported fly tipping incidents lead to enforcement activity decreasing from **39%** in 2024/25.
- **96.09%** of all planning applications were determined within 8 weeks or subject to Planning Performance Agreement or Extension of Time, improving on the previous year's figure of **94.3%**
- **97.09%** of householder planning applications were determined within 8 weeks or subject to Planning Performance Agreement or Extension of Time, slightly decreasing from **97.67%** in 2024/25.
- **100%** of dangerous structures were inspected within 1 working day, mirroring last year's performance.
- **64.83%** of residents used Public Transport, improving on the previous performance of **58.4%.**
- **75.85%** of resident used walking routes in the Vale of Glamorgan, increasing from our previous figure of **68.7%**

Wellbeing Objective 3: Giving everyone a good start in life

- **0.23%** of young people classed as not in education, employment, or training (NEET) upon leaving Year 12, improving on last year's figure of **0.47%,** and better than the Welsh average of **0.6%** for 2025/26.
- **2.13%** of Year 11 leavers became NEET, improving on last year's figure of **2.5%.** This performance is slightly below the Welsh average of **2.1%** for 2025/26.
- **2.35%** of young people NEET upon leaving Year 13, slightly decreasing from the previous year of **2.3%.** This performance is better than the Welsh average of **3.64%** for 2024/25.
- Pupil attendance in primary schools has improved to **93.02%** compared to last year's figure of **92.9%.**
- Pupil attendance in secondary schools has slightly improved this year from **87**% in 2024/25, to **87.49%.**
- The percentage of school days lost due to fixed term exclusions during the academic year in primary schools has increased slightly from **0.01%** in 2024/25 to **0.02%** in 2025/26.
- **0.13%** of school days were lost due to fixed term exclusions during the academic year in secondary schools, increasing from last year, **0.08%.**
- The percentage of persistent absence (where attendance is below 90%) across both primary and secondary schools has decreased this year from **28.95%** in 2024/25 to **22.26%.**

- **14** children looked after who have experienced three or more placements during the year, increasing from last year's figure of **7.**

Wellbeing Objective 4: Supporting and protecting those who need us

- **356** children have been looked after and cared for over the year, up from last year's figure of **347.**
- **308** carers needs assessments for adults were undertaken during the year, increasing from **172** in 2024/25.
- **266** adults purchased their services using a direct payment, slightly decreasing from **293** in 2024/25.
- Tenants' satisfaction with landlord services decreased slightly from **76%** to **74%** in 2025/26**.**
- **93.51%** of Supporting People service users said the support they received helped them to maintain their independence, improving on last year's figure of **91.55%.**
- **78.95%** of residents described their mental health as very or fairly good, improving on previous figure of **70.3%.**
- **30%** of schools signed a pledge to become a school of sanctuary decreasing from last year's figure of **47%.**
- **94%** of Value in Vale volunteers reported a positive outcome, improving from **90%** last year.
- **92.04%** of residents aged 65+ are concerned about services and support for older people, worsening from last year's figure of **73.1%.**
- **133** additional affordable housing units were delivered during the year per 10,000 households, up from **46** last year.
- **29.01%** of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless, down from **43%** last year.

Wellbeing Objective 5: Being the best council we can be

- Sickness absence rate improved from **12.14** days per full time equivalent employee to **11.41 days.**
- **20.54%** of residents strongly or slightly agree that the Vale of Glamorgan Council acts in the interest of local residents, improving on last year's figure of **16%.**
- **95%** of pupils transferred from Welsh Medium Primary to Welsh medium Secondary schools, slightly decreasing from last year's figure of **97.2%.**
- **87** staff completed formal recognised qualifications within the authority during the year, increasing from last year's figure of **72.**
- **17.67%** of people in the most deprived areas of the Vale think the Council is doing enough to support people to gain skills and employment, slightly improving on the previous figure of **17.3%.**
- **£6,792,256** was spent on agency staff across the Council, decreasing from **£6,951,892** last year.
- **8.22%** of employees voluntarily left the organisation during the year, compared to last year's **8.1%.**
- Number of apprentices on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes within the Council increased from **4.31** to **4.77** per 1,000 employees.

National perspective

Given the limited availability of national benchmarking data, the most recent information from Data Cymru's self-assessment toolkit has been used to provide an overview of the Council's performance across key themes and services.

The data indicates that the Council is performing generally at or above the Welsh average in several areas. The Council receives a higher number of complaints and sees more cases escalated to the Ombudsman, but with no complaints upheld. Workforce data shows positive staff retention, although there are higher levels of sickness absence. In waste services, the Vale performs strongly, with lower-

than-average fly-tipping incidents and higher recycling rates. Homelessness outcomes are also positive, with better success in relieving homelessness despite demand levels. Planning activity is higher than average, showing strong development demand, although approval rates are slightly lower and withdrawals higher. In social care, performance is mixed, children's services respond quickly and efficiently, but a lower proportion of advice and support is provided, while adult services show lower assessment and advice rates but strong conversion to care packages. Overall, the data suggests that the Council delivers positive outcomes once services are accessed, but continued focus is required on managing demand, improving early intervention and strengthening responsiveness.

Corporate Health

- **Complaints and Compliments (2023/24 data)**
  - Number of complaints received by the Local Authority, 1,103 which is higher than the Welsh Average of 830.90. Number received reduced to 988 in 2024/25 and increased to 1013 in 2025/26.
  - 75.2% of complaints closed within 20 days, lower than the Welsh Average of 76.8%.
  - 9.2% of complaints referred to the Ombudsman, higher than the Welsh Average of 6.3%.
  - 0% of complaints to the Ombudsman were upheld against the local authority, lower than the Welsh Average of 3.8%, ranked first.

  Public Services Ombudsman Wales (PSOW 2024/25 data)
  - PSOW received 64 complaints in 2024/25, a reduction from 77 in 2023/24. The council rate of PSOW complaints of 0.48 per 1000 residents is just below the Welsh Average of 0.45.
  - 97.72% of cases were concluded within three months, broadly in line with the Welsh Average of 97.29%.
  - Fourth highest rate of complaints per 1,000 residents for local authorities in Wales at 9.99.
  - No complaints were taken into investigation during 2024/25 although 11 were resolved through the Early Resolution process.
  - The Council PSOW intervention rate was 19%, against a Wales average intervention rate of 13%.

- **Council Tax (2025/26 data)**
  - 60,842 dwellings in the Vale of Glamorgan were chargeable for Council Tax.
  - 2.7% of dwellings were exempt from Council Tax, against the Welsh Average of 4.5%

  (2024-25 data)
  - 61.4% of Council tax arrears debit outstanding at the end of the year, lower than the Welsh Average of 73.4%.
  - 98.8% of council tax collected as a percentage of the total budgeted amount, higher than the Welsh Average of 98.2% and ranked 8th in Wales.
  - No council tax debt was written off during the year, ranked joint first in Wales.
  - 36.8% council tax arrears received as a percentage of arrears debit, higher than Welsh Average of 22.7, ranked 2nd in Wales.

  (2025/26 data)
  - 96.8% council tax collected, third highest in Wales.
  - Spend per head £2,966, lower than Welsh average of £3,240 and fourth lowest spend in Wales.

- **Human Resources (2024/25 data)**
  - 10.8% of staff who left employment in the Council, lower than the Welsh Average of 11.7%.
  - 22.3% of staff exited the organisation initiated by the employer, lower than the Welsh Average of 27%
  - 77.7% of staff exited the organisation initiated by the employee, higher than the Welsh Average of 73%.

- 12.14 days were lost due to sickness absence, slightly higher than the Welsh Average of 12.1 days.
- 3.4 days were lost due to short term sickness, lower than the Welsh Average of 4.2 days
- 6.9 days were lost due to long term sickness against the Welsh Average of 7.5 days. Comparing this data to our most recent sickness 2025/26 figures show that the overall sickness absence figure has improved to 11.41 days, and short-term sickness has improved slightly to 3.09 days, whereas long term sickness has seen an increase to 8.32 days.

- **Finance**
  - In 2025/26, £8,183 was spent per pupil on education in the Vale, up 8.4% from £7,547 last year, 7th highest in Wales and below Welsh average of 8.7% increase (£8,616)
  - The Council's budgeted revenue expenditure for 2025/26 was £399.589M, 13th highest in Wales.
  - In 2024/25, revenue expenditure for the Council totalled £402.4 million, which was below the Welsh national average of £457.9 million.
  - Total capital expenditure in 2024/25 for the Vale was £65.8 million, which was below the national average of £92.3 million.
  - Capital expenditure per head totalled £484 in 2024/25, below the Welsh Average of £640.
  - Capital expenditure for Education Services in the Vale in 2024/25 totalled £16.4 million, which was lower than the Welsh Average of £21.6 million.
  - Also in 2024/25, capital expenditure of Transport services totalled £8.4 million, which was lower than the Welsh Average of £10.5 million.
  - Capital expenditure for Housing Services totalled £28.3 million in 2024/25, which was above the Welsh Average of £24.6million.
  - Capital expenditure for Social Services totalled £1.1 million in 2024/25, below the Welsh average of £2.6 million.

Council Services

Waste

- **Fly Tipping (2024/25 data)**
  - 270 total number of fly tipping incidents were reported in the Vale, the total for Wales was 48,367, contributing roughly 12% to the Wales total and below the average of 2,198.
  - 2.0 total number of fly tipping incidents recorded per 1,000 population, lower that Welsh Average of 12.2, and ranked first.

- **Recycling (2023/24 data)**
  - 52,570 tonnes of municipal waste was collected; the Welsh total was 1,408,509. The Vale contributed 3.73% and Welsh Average is 64,023 tonnes.
  - 62% of municipal waste collected to be reused, recycled or composted overachieving the Welsh Average of 58.2%. The Council has exceeded the national recycling target of 70% over the past two years.

- **Homelessness (2024/25 data)**
  - 858 households accessing the service, total for Wales is 33,609, the Vale makes up 2.55%.
  - 27.1 households were successfully relieved from Homelessness, higher than the Welsh Average of 25.4, ranked 9th.
  - 38.3 temporarily accommodated per 10,000 households, ranked 9th.
  - 92.3% households positively discharged from homelessness ranked 2nd.

- **Housing 2024/25**
  - Number of private properties empty for more than 12 months (496) second lowest in Wales, with percentage brought back to use within year 13.1%, the highest in Wales.
  - 452 total number of new dwellings, 3rd highest in Wales.
  - 124 new local authority dwellings completed during the year, ranked first.

- **Planning (Q3 2025/26 data)**
  - 344 planning application received, total for Wales was 5,370, making up 6% of the applications, and above the Welsh Average of 244 applications.
  - 70.1% of all applications were approved during the year, slightly below Welsh Average of 70.7%.
  - 93.5% of householder applications were approved during the year, above the Welsh average of 90.7%
  - 100% major applications approved during the year, above Welsh average of 85.5%.
  - 90 days average time taken to determine all applications joint 8th best in Wales.

- **Education (2025)**
  - 2.4% of school leavers Year 13 NEET (known not to be in employment, full time education or work based training for young people), ranked 4th in Wales.
  - 2.1% of school leavers Year 11 NEET (known not to be in employment, full time education or work based training for young people), ranked 10th in Wales.
  - 55% of learners achieving 3 or more A levels; A* to C, ranked first in Wales.

Social Care

Adults (2024/25 data)

- In 2024/25, there were 4,575 contacts received by adult social services, out of 195,090 total contacts in Wales.

Children (2024/25 data)

- There were 10,504 contacts for children received in 2024/25, out of 273,047 total contacts in Wales.
- In 2024, 120 children per 10,000 population were looked after by the local authority in the Vale of Glamorgan, which was higher than the Welsh national average of 116 children per 10,000 population.
- According to Public Health Wales data, 18% of children receiving care and support in the Vale are affected by substance misuse which is markedly higher than the Welsh average of 8% and is the highest proportion of all Local Authorities in Wales.

Social Care

National benchmarking data for 2025/26 is not yet available for many social care indicators measures. Trend analysis of social care data reported by the Council has therefore been undertaken to provide context for recent performance.

Children and Young People (2025/26 data)

- There has been a 9% decrease in contacts received for children this year, from 10,504 in 2024/25 to 9,542 in 2025/26.
- This year there has been a 13% increase in contacts received for children where advice or assistance was provided from 2,232 in 2024/25 to 2,520 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 4% increase in contacts for children where a decision was made by the end of the next working day, rising from 95% (9,944 of 10,504) in 2024/25 to 99% (9,467 of 9,542) in 2025/26.

- There has been a 19% increase in new assessments completed for children during the year, rising from 2,187 in 2024/25 to 2,594 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 17% increase in children whose needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan, rising from 251 in 2024/25 to 293 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 36% increase in children whose needs were able to be met by any other means, rising from 1569 in 2024/25 to 2135 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 55% decrease in children where there were no eligible needs to meet, falling from 367 in 24/25 to 166 in 2025/26.

Adults (2025/26 data)

- There has been a 7% increase in contacts received for adults this year, from 4,575 in 2024/25 to 4,878 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 10% increase in new assessments completed for adults during the year, rising from 747 in 2024/25 to 823 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 18% increase in adults whose needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan, rising from 624 in 2024/25 to 735 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 40% decrease in adults whose needs were able to be met by any other means, falling from 96 in 2024/25 to 58 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 11% increase in adults where there were no eligible needs to meet rising from 27 in 2024/25 to 30 in 2025/26.
- There has been a 12% decrease in the number of reablement packages completed during the year, falling from 497 in 2024/25 to 436 in 2025/26.
- 16% (68/436) of reablement packages reduced the need for support in 2025/26, increasing from 7% (35/497) 2024/25.
- 21% (91/436) of reablement packages maintained the need for the same level of support in 2025/26, rising from 19% (94/497) in 2024/25.
- 59% (257/436) of reablement packages resulted in no ongoing support requirement in 2025/26, falling from 71% (355/497) in 2024/25.
- 5% (20/436) of reablement packages neither reduced, maintained nor removed the need for support in 2025/26, rising from 3% (13/497) in 2024/25.

4.3 How well is the Council using its resources?

The moderation concluded that, on balance, the proposed judgement of '**Good' for Use of Resources** is appropriate and proportionate.

This reflects strong arrangements and generally effective use of resources, alongside some pressures and areas requiring further strengthening.

Rationale:

- There is a consistent and integrated approach to managing key resources (people, finance, assets, performance, risk and engagement), aligned to Vale 2030.
- Directorates Self-Assessments (DSAs) report positive performance across most resource themes, particularly people, performance, risk and engagement, supported by established frameworks and governance arrangements.
- There are high levels of delivery against in-year planned actions and commitments aligned to Vale 2030, indicating that resources are supporting delivery of our priorities.
- Continued investment in assets, transformation and digital activity is improving efficiency and supporting service delivery within a challenging financial context.

- The Council benefits from a skilled and committed workforce, supported by workforce planning, staff development and targeted initiatives. The latest staff survey results show an improved picture with the employee engagement index indicator rising from 71.2% to 73.5%. This reflects the impact of focused and ongoing workforce planning, wellbeing and inclusion activity and leadership oversight.
- Partnership working and engagement are strong, supporting more joined-up and preventative approaches to service delivery. Outcomes from partnership arrangements are significantly contributing to delivering Vale 2030 commitments and outcomes.
- Corporate and Directorate level risks are clearly understood and being managed with no uncontrolled risk escalations
- The Council is learning from engagement with residents and partners, with increasing evidence that insight from engagement is being used to inform service improvements, priorities and decisions, helping the Council understand what matters most to residents.

The Council's three-tier assurance approach (DSAs, internal challenge and moderation) provides a robust and triangulated evidence base, strengthening confidence that the judgement is well evidenced and consistently applied.

Taken together, this demonstrates that resources are being used effectively to support delivery, maintain service resilience and contribute to outcomes for residents.

However, moderation concluded that the criteria for a higher judgement have not been met because:

- Whilst overall performance is strong, there is evidence of variation across directorates and resource themes, meaning the effective use of resources is not yet fully consistent across the organisation.
- There are ongoing and significant cross cutting pressures, particularly:
  - Financial sustainability and increasing service demand
  - Asset condition and long-term investment requirements
  - Workforce capacity, and recruitment challenges in specialist areas and wider staff wellbeing pressures.
  - Inconsistent use of data and insight
- Although mitigating actions are in place, these pressures create risks to the long-term sustainability and consistency of resource use.
- The Council is progressing a significant programme of transformation (Reshaping), but benefits are still in the early stages of being realised, and impact is not yet fully embedded across all services. The pace of transformation is also being constrained by staff capacity.

Collectively, taking all of this into account, the panel concluded that a rating of 'Good' is fair and balanced.

Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.5 provide more detailed information to support this judgement.

4.3.1 Directorate Self-Assessments (DSAs) 2025/26

The Directorate Self Assessments provide a structured, evidence-based assessment of each directorate's performance and use of resources, which is subject to challenge and moderation and then aggregated to inform the Council's overall Annual Self-Assessment judgements on how well it is performing, using resources and the effectiveness of its governance in supporting both. The outputs of the DSAs are a key source of evidence to demonstrate the Council's integration of performance, resources and governance which supports an integrated Annual Self-Assessment. A summary overview of each DSA can be viewed here.

4.3.2 Internal Challenge

Pre-moderation judgements

Directorate Self-Assessments undertaken alongside the end of year performance review proposed an overall judgement of '**Good**' for the Council's use of resources for the reporting period 2025/26. The judgement is an aggregation of the individual directorate level judgements given to how well we have used our people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Council's Vale 2030 Year 1 priorities (see ratings table below).

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary 2025/26	Corporate Resources	Environment & Housing	Learning & Skills	Place	Social Services
People	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Poor
Assets	Good	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Good
Performance	Fair	Good	Fair	Good	Good
Risk	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair
Engagement and Insight	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Fair

Peer Challenge Panel recommendations

Overall, the Internal Peer Challenge broadly validated proposed Directorate and council wide judgements, with most areas considered appropriate and evidence based. However, the process highlighted the need to strengthen consistency and robustness in how judgements are formulated, particularly in relation to evidencing outcomes and management effectiveness.

Review of judgements were recommended in specific areas, including Engagement and People ratings within Corporate Resources, and strengthening outcome-based performance measures within Place, particularly for regeneration, housing and placemaking alongside addressing gaps in target setting and the use of 'not applicable' indicators. While no changes were recommended for Environment & Housing, Learning & Skills, and Social Services, panel feedback consistently emphasised the presence of significant ongoing risks, including sustainability pressures, demand management, and financial resilience.

Staff Challenge Panel recommendations

The Staff Challenge Panels broadly supported the proposed council wide judgements, with recommendations focused on improving accuracy, consistency, and the evidencing of impact and outcomes. There was particular emphasis on ensuring that judgements are grounded in demonstrable outcomes and effectiveness, rather than activity delivery alone and that they reflect the lived experience of staff across the organisation.

In relation to the People theme, feedback highlighted that while the overall direction and proposed 'Good' judgement were broadly supported, this should be balanced with a clearer articulation of workforce challenges. These include ongoing pressures relating to capacity, recruitment and skills shortages, wellbeing and resilience, and the need for stronger staff engagement. The People Board also emphasised the importance of recognising a degree of disconnect between staff and corporate transformation programmes (including Vale 2030) and ensuring that this is appropriately reflected within the narrative and supporting evidence. There was a consistent message that greater emphasis is required on how staff feedback (e.g. staff survey insights) is used to drive improvements, alongside ensuring staff are equipped with the tools and resources needed to deliver effectively.

Changes were recommended in specific areas, including adjusting the Engagement Insight judgement from 'Good' to 'Fair' to reflect inconsistent practice and limited evidence of impact, and considering a proposed uplift in the Risk judgment from 'Fair' to 'Good' to ensure the assessment reflects the effectiveness of risk management arrangements rather than the scale of risk exposure. Staff panels also highlighted the importance of consistency across Directorates, particularly in financial assessments where comparable pressures exist. This especially related to Learning & Skills and Social Services which had proposed 'Fair' and 'Poor' judgements respectively.

In other areas, such as Finance, Performance and Assets, staff panels supported the overall direction of travel, recognising strengthened frameworks, improving processes, and positive outcomes in several Directorates. However, feedback emphasised the need to address cross cutting issues, including inconsistent practice, clarity of performance measures, and the distinction between different asset types (digital and physical). Across all themes, there was a strong message on the need to maintain a balanced narrative, one that recognises progress and improvement, while being open about the scale of ongoing challenges and avoiding any perception of complacency.

DMT Rating of the Council aligned to the DSA themes
All Directorate Management Teams (DMTs) rated the Council as 'Good' overall when considering progress against the DSA themes, indicating broad organisational alignment with the proposed council-wide judgements. This provides a strong internal endorsement of the direction of travel, although it should be considered alongside the identified risks and areas for improvement raised through challenge processes.

4.3.3 Post Moderation

Post Moderation Judgements: Use of Resources by Directorate

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary 2025/26	Corporate Resources	Environment & Housing	Learning & Skills	Place	Social Services
People	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair
Assets	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Performance	Fair	Good	Fair	Good	Good
Risk	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair
Engagement and Insight	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good

Post moderation Judgements: Compared to previous years

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	2021/22 Rating	2022/23 Rating	2023/24 Rating	2024/25 Rating	2025/26 Ratings	Direction of Travel (DoT)
People	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	↔
Assets	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Performance	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Risk	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Engagement and Insight	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	↔
Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔

Post moderation, the overall judgement for how the Council is using its resources remains 'Good'. This reflects that strong arrangements are in place for managing people, performance and risk, and that the Council is generally operating well in a very challenging environment.

However, this judgement is finely balanced and informed by both Directorate Self-Assessments and robust internal challenge, including staff panel feedback, which highlighted a number of important considerations that have been explicitly reflected in the rationale for this judgement. A summary of the moderation discussions are provided here.

4.3.4 Directorate Self-Assessment Trends 2021/22 – 2025/26

An overview of Directorate Self-Assessment trends over the past five years highlights that whilst the Council has maintained an overall judgement of 'Good' for its use of resources in 2025/26, sustaining this level of performance is becoming increasingly challenging in the context of rising demand for services, particularly in key areas such as social care, education and housing, alongside ongoing financial pressures and workforce capacity constraints. A full breakdown of trends can be viewed here.

These challenges are compounded by a complex and evolving local government landscape, characterised by increasing legislative and regulatory requirements, ambitious national and regional policy expectations, and short-term funding settlements that limit longer-term planning and financial certainty.

In response, the Council has continued to strengthen its strategic approach to resource management, integrating planning, performance, financial and workforce considerations more effectively and ensuring that resources are increasingly focused on delivering priorities and outcomes aligned to Vale 2030.

The Council's Reshaping Programme has been refocused to support this, driving change through key areas including service transformation, digital innovation, strengthening communities, and economic resilience. This work is critical to ensuring that the Council remains financially sustainable, continues to protect and support vulnerable residents, and delivers valued services, while adapting to the scale and pace of the challenges it faces.

Overall, while the Council continues to demonstrate good use of resources, the direction of travel reflects increasing pressure on sustainability, requiring continued transformation and prioritisation to maintain performance and deliver our Vale 2030 commitments.

4.3.5 Supporting Statements: Use of Resources

This section provides more detail about work undertaken in 2025/26 with regards to people, finance, reshaping, assets and engagement to demonstrate how we are using our resources and to enable a judgement to be made.

People

Overall, the Council has made measured progress in strengthening its workforce arrangements, while recognising that recruitment and retention pressures remain a significant and ongoing challenge. This position is consistent with the findings of the Audit Wales report Recruitment and retention challenges – the right people at the right time? (April 2026), which concluded that the Council has a good understanding of its recruitment and retention challenges and has implemented a range of appropriate responses, with some success.

Audit Wales noted that senior officers have clear oversight of recruitment pressures, difficult to fill roles and workforce risks, supported by performance dashboards, directorate management arrangements and regular reporting to Senior Leadership Team. These arrangements continue to underpin targeted use of workforce management approaches, including market supplements, agency staffing, apprenticeships and "grow your own" development pathways, particularly within Social Services and other specialist frontline roles.

During the year, progress has been made in stabilising key workforce indicators, including modest improvement in sickness absence, with reductions in long term absence evident across several directorates, contributing to improved workforce resilience. Agency spend has reduced overall, with notable reduced reliance in Resources, Learning & Skills and Social Services. Workforce diversity continues to improve year-on-year, demonstrating the positive impact of the Council's anti-racism and inclusion focus, with some directorates now meeting or exceeding the 6% diversity measure. Turnover has stabilised or reduced in several areas, particularly in Resources and Social Services, reflecting the impact of targeted workforce planning and "grow your own" approaches. The latest staff survey results show an improved picture with the employee engagement index indicator rising from 71.2% to 73.5%. These trends reflect the impact of focused workforce planning, inclusion activity and leadership oversight, and are broadly consistent with the positive practice highlighted by Audit Wales.

However, Audit Wales also identified that the Council does not yet consistently evaluate whether it's different recruitment and retention approaches represent value for money, making a recommendation to strengthen arrangements in this area. This finding aligns with the Council's own assessment that structural workforce challenges remain, including ongoing reliance on temporary staffing in some services, uneven capacity linked to service demand, and constraints arising from pay competitiveness and funding uncertainty. Further work is also needed to ensure staff feel valued and understand their contribution to Vale 2030, and this is being progressed through the new People Strategy.

In response, preparatory work has continued to strengthen workforce planning, improve management information, and modernise performance and development arrangements, including implementation of the Thinkii staff appraisal system from 2026/27. Addressing the Audit Wales value for money recommendation, alongside reducing dependency on temporary staffing and building longer term workforce capacity, will remain a key focus for 2026/27. These actions are expected to support improved resilience and assurance over the medium term, recognising that impacts will be gradual rather than immediate.

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
CPM/030: Employee turnover (voluntary).	8.04	9.20	10.93	8.12	8.51	↓
CPM/166: Total number of staff on formal recognised qualifications (apprenticeships, personal learning accounts, etc) within the authority during the year.	N/A (New Measure 2023/24)		41	72.00	87	↑
CPM/212: Percentage of Council employees from minority ethnic backgrounds (representative of the local population profile.)	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			3.30	3.66	↑
CPM/294: Number of apprentices, excluding teachers, on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes within the authority during the year per 1,000 employees.	4.4	10	4.31	13	4.77	↓
CPM/334: Percentage of respondents who plan to stay with their employer over the next 12 months.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			N/A Survey undertaken in 2025	82	N/A
CPM/335: Percentage of respondents who feel they are able to make improvements happen in their area of work.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			N/A Survey undertaken in 2025	72	N/A
CPM/336: Total spend on agency staff as a percentage of the total pay bill.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			7.50	7.14	↑
CPM/337: Percentage of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence during the year, by reason: •total •minor illnesses •musculoskeletal •mental health conditions •Other	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			6.70 2.05 0.91 3.09 0.65	5.59 1.9 1.02 2.61 0.06	↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓
CPM/338: Percentage of staff exiting the organisation who are permanent and leave	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			3.8	12.47	↓

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
within their first 12 months of employment.						
CPM/373: Percentage of respondents who would be happy to recommend their employer to a friend / family member as a place to work.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			N/A Survey undertaken in 2025	77	N/A

Finance

Overall, the Council maintained a balanced financial position and demonstrated sound financial management, procurement and commissioning arrangements despite operating in a highly challenging and uncertain environment.

Strong governance, effective budget-setting processes and regular oversight of financial performance have supported continued financial stability. The Council has delivered a balanced budget and strengthened its Medium-Term Financial Plan, with a clear focus on aligning resources to the priorities set out in Vale 2030. Engagement with Members, stakeholders and the public has also improved, supporting greater transparency and understanding of the Council's financial position.

Good progress has been made in delivering the Reshaping Programme, with the Council achieving or mitigating 80% of its savings target, an improvement on the previous year. This reflects a proactive and organisation-wide focus on financial sustainability, transformation and value for money. Procurement and commissioning arrangements have also strengthened, with improved corporate oversight, clearer governance and a greater emphasis on social value (such as inclusion of apprenticeships, work experience, and community initiatives in Council awarded contracts), sustainability and collaboration. These developments are supporting more consistent and strategically aligned use of resources.

External assurance provides further confidence in the Council's arrangements. Audit Wales found that appropriate systems are in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and the Council has assessed itself as complying fully with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, with strong prospects for further improvement (this has been subject to Internal Audit verification).

However, the Council continues to face significant and sustained financial pressures, including rising demand, inflation, workforce costs and ongoing service pressures, particularly in social care and education. These pressures are reducing financial flexibility and increasing reliance on transformation and commissioning solutions to deliver future savings. There remain risks around the deliverability of savings and medium-term financial sustainability, particularly where these depend on longer-term transformation programmes and constrained funding and reserves. There is also a specific risk with school deficits which is being strongly managed though intervention with the Chief Executive, Director of Learning & Skills and s151 Officer.

Looking ahead, maintaining momentum in delivering the Reshaping Programme and further strengthening procurement and commissioning arrangements will be critical. Continued focus will be required to enhance commissioning capability, refine processes and strengthen the link between financial planning, performance and outcomes, ensuring resources are increasingly targeted in line with demand and corporate priorities.

In summary, the Council demonstrates good financial stewardship and improving arrangements, but the scale of ongoing pressures means that continued focus on financial resilience, transformation and strategic commissioning will be essential to sustain this position in the medium term.

Overall, the Council demonstrates good financial stewardship and improving procurement and commissioning arrangements, but the scale and complexity of ongoing pressures mean that continued focus on transformation, financial resilience and strategic commissioning will be critical to sustaining this position in the medium term.

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
CPM/009: Performance against savings targets.	N/A (No data reported)	79%	88%	77%	80	↑
CPM/291: Reduction in overall level of outstanding sundry debt.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			13.4%	46% increase (12 months) 30% (6-12 months)	↓
CPM/332: Percentage of council contracts with social value targets to improve equality/ environmental outcomes.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				86.96%	N/A

Reshaping Programme

The Reshaping Programme has continued to provide a structured approach to transforming how the Council delivers services, with a focus on sustainability, efficiency, and responsiveness to community needs. It remains aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Plan and is focused on transforming high-pressure areas to reduce the need for short-term savings and protect preventative services. During 2025/26, progress has been made across all workstreams, supported by strengthened governance, improved performance reporting, and clearer programme oversight. However, delivery has been variable, reflecting the scale and complexity of transformation activity and the broader operational context.

What's gone well

There have been a number of areas where progress has been demonstrated:

- **Income generation and cost recovery**: A council-wide review of income services has aligned fees and charges to the full cost of delivery and identified new income opportunities. Telecare income increased from £450,949 in 2024/25 to £507,960 in 2025/26. Waste service contracts with schools have generated additional income while saving schools £140,000 per year, and parks services generated an additional £120,000 through changes to operating models.
- **Service transformation**: Progress has been made in Social Services, including reducing agency social workers, expanding childcare provision, and implementing a reablement approach. In

Learning & Skills, efficiencies have been identified through procurement and transport changes, with estimated savings of £130,000–£300,000 redirected to support learners.
- **Asset management and use of resources:** Implementation of the Corporate Landlord model has improved oversight of assets, alongside continued work on asset rationalisation and community asset transfer.
- **Digital and process improvements**: Digital transformation has supported efficiencies and savings, including £28,000 savings from translation services, £15,000 from improvements to the Council Tax helpline, and wider automation and system improvements across services. Significant foundational work has been undertaken in the areas of cyber security and the migration of on premise servers to Amazon Web Services (cloud).
- **Governance and organisational development**: The establishment of boards (e.g. Income Board), improved performance reporting, changes to scrutiny arrangements, delivery of the People Strategy, and the introduction of initiatives such as Brilliant Basics have strengthened governance, consistency, and organisational capability.

What's not gone so well

A number of areas have not progressed as planned:
- **Pace of delivery**: Some projects have not progressed at the expected pace, with delays linked to capacity constraints, complexity, and competing service pressures.
- **Income delivery challenges**: Planned initiatives such as car parking charges were paused following feedback, and some income streams (e.g. filming) reduced due to external market conditions.
- **Complex programme areas**: Progress on community asset transfers has been relatively slow due to legal and external factors, and shared services work remains at an early stage with limited engagement.
- **Consistency of implementation:** Variation in digital skills and engagement across services has affected the consistent adoption of new systems and approaches.

Key challenges during the year

Several recurring challenges have impacted delivery across the programme:
- Increasing demand, particularly in Social Services and Housing, placing pressure on services and limiting the impact of some transformation activity.
- Workforce capacity and skills, including recruitment and retention challenges and reliance on key roles to deliver transformation.
- Financial pressures, requiring prioritisation and limiting the ability to invest in transformation at pace.
- Governance complexity, including duplication across boards and lack of clarity in some areas, affecting efficiency and decision-making.
- Digital maturity, with varying levels of capability across services affecting the pace of change.

These challenges are reflected in programme risks including financial sustainability, workforce capacity, and digital capability.

Performance information

Monitoring demonstrates:
- Increased income generation across multiple services, including Telecare (+£57,000 year-on-year), waste contracts (saving £140,000), and parks services (£120,000 additional income).
- Delivery of savings and efficiency improvements through digital transformation and service redesign.

- Progress against transformation priorities across workstreams, although benefits realisation is not yet consistently measured across all areas.

These figures provide an indication of impact but are not yet standardised across the programme.

Looking ahead

Work during 2025/26 has been informed by engagement and insight activity, including placemaking, participation work, and broader community engagement, highlighting the importance of accessible, sustainable services.

Learning from inspections and service reviews, including education and social care activity, has also informed service improvements and priorities.

In response, the programme will continue to focus in 2026/27 on:
- Improving pace, prioritisation, and governance of delivery
- Strengthening demand management and preventative approaches
- Expanding income generation and financial sustainability
- Building workforce capacity and capability
- Increasing consistency in digital adoption and use of data
- Strengthening engagement with communities to inform service design

Overall, the Reshaping programme has made progress in improving how resources are used, with clear examples of income generation, efficiency, and service redesign. However, further work is required to accelerate delivery, manage demand pressures, and ensure consistent realisation of benefits across all areas.

Assets

Overall, 2025/26 was a year of consolidation and structural improvement in the management of the Council's physical and digital assets. Governance and strategic direction were strengthened, and asset management increasingly supported service delivery, financial resilience and sustainability. While challenges remain around legacy assets, funding constraints and the completion of service modernisation improvements, the Council is on a clear improvement path heading into 2026/27.

Physical Assets
During 2025/26, steady progress was made in strengthening the strategic management of the Council's physical building assets. Governance and oversight improved notably through the Reshaping Assets Board and the adoption of the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023–2028, providing a clearer corporate framework for decision making. A significant step forward was Cabinet's endorsement of the Corporate Landlord model, marking a move away from historically devolved arrangements towards a more consistent, corporate view and management of the estate.

The asset base is well understood and proactively managed, supported by condition, suitability and sufficiency assessments informing prioritisation and investment decisions. Condition surveys were progressed across parts of the leisure estate, with further survey programmes agreed for office accommodation, social services, community centres and Learning & Skills buildings. This has strengthened the evidence base for future planning.

Operationally, assets continued to support frontline service delivery. Office rationalisation through the Eich Lle programme, now in its sixth phase, alongside changes in working patterns and increased colocation, improved space utilisation and reduced under used accommodation. Assets were also

increasingly viewed as a strategic resource, contributing to capital receipts, maintenance prioritisation and wider financial resilience. Progress continued on sustainability and decarbonisation, with energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy installations, EV charging infrastructure, energy audits and feasibility studies completed. These activities have helped align asset management with wider wellbeing, climate and corporate objectives within the constraints of available funding.

Despite progress, financial constraints continued to limit the pace and scale of improvement, particularly in addressing backlog maintenance and estate wide decarbonisation. Parts of the estate remain adequate rather than optimal, especially older buildings, and service demand pressures restrict opportunities for faster rationalisation. While good progress has been made, full implementation of the Corporate Landlord model is still ongoing and will continue into 2026/27.

The highways asset continues to be proactively managed within the challenging context of an ageing asset network base, increasing demand and ongoing financial pressures. Capital investment, including Local Government Borrowing Initiative funding for highways including highways structures (£2.75m over 2025/26, and a further £1.8m in 2026/27), alongside £2m of Council funding over the next three year is supporting targeted improvements to carriageways, footways and structures. However, investment remains below the level of what is required to sustain the asset over the longer term. The Council's Highway Resurfacing Plan estimates an investment of £7m is required annually to maintain the asset, while external benchmarks 'Asphalt Alarm' suggests this may be closer to £9m per annum for carriageways alone, excluding critical assets such as footways, structures, lighting columns, signs, traffic signals and highway surface water drainage assets.

Asset management maturity has continued to improve through adoption of the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure code of practice and ongoing development of the Highways Asset Management Plan. This is strengthening a more risk-based and evidence-led approach to maintenance and investment decisions.

Performance data indicates that the condition of A, B and C classified roads is broadly maintained as a steady state. However, limited data on unclassified roads, due to resource pressures, reduced the Council's overall understanding of network condition, and these parts of the network are likely declining at a faster rate. While LGBI investment has enabled increased resurfacing of the classified network, a growing backlog persists across the wider asset base.

The end of year position therefore remains challenging for the highways asset, with continued pressures from traffic volumes, severe weather, reactive maintenance demands and historic underinvestment due to scarcity of available funding. Longer-term improvement and network resilience remain dependent on securing sustainable funding and improving asset intelligence across the full network.

Digital Assets

During the year, the Council continued to strengthen the management and use of its digital assets, recognising their role in supporting efficient, resilient and well-governed services. Focused investment significantly moved the safety, resilience and capabilities of our core systems through a cloud migration. Established digital governance arrangements supported clearer prioritisation and alignment with service needs and the Council's risk appetite.

Challenges remain around system dependencies, capacity pressures and legacy systems, and we continue to work with residents and service areas to embed improvements. Our governance controls ensure that we are consistently delivering value for money and service benefits.

Overall, the Council has made sound progress during 2025/26 in strengthening the governance, management and strategic use of both its physical and digital assets. Foundations are now firmer, with clearer corporate oversight, improved data and more consistent decision-making supporting service delivery, financial resilience and sustainability. While financial constraints, legacy assets and system dependencies continue to limit the pace of improvement, appropriate controls are in place, and risks are being proactively managed in line with the Council's risk appetite. Continued focus in 2026/27 on embedding service modernisation improvements, prioritising investment and aligning assets to future service models will be critical to sustaining and building on this progress in particular as part of the Reshaping Programme.

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
Physical						
CPM/339: Reduction in the carbon footprint of the Council's non-domestic buildings.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			131.3 tons increase (target of 1,300 tons reduction)	N/A*	N/A
Digital						
CPM/340: Percentage of council services based with partial digital journeys.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				58.9	N/A
CPM/341: Indicative efficiencies identified through digitalisation.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				N/A	N/A
CPM/342: Percentage of council services based with full digital journeys.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				28.1	N/A

*Data subject to national verification and will be published in September 2026.

Engagement

Overall

During 2025/26, residents continued to engage with the Council through a wide range of channels including consultations, surveys, service user feedback, complaints and compliments, place-based activity, and digital engagement. This provides good assurance that residents care about their communities and want to have a say, particularly where decisions affect everyday life.

Specific exercises include the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey. The survey exercise is run by the Council in partnership with Data Cymru to understand residents' experiences of life in the Vale of Glamorgan and identify their priorities to inform future service delivery. There were a total of 2507 responses to the 2025 survey.

The survey results enable us to draw a number of conclusions about citizens perspective of the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live and a number of aspects of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's performance.

The survey results show that residents consider the Vale of Glamorgan to be a good place to live. 64.09% of respondents are either very satisfied or very satisfied with their local area as a place to live. 83.34% of respondents would recommend the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live.

More than half of respondents strongly or slightly agree with the following statements:

- People in their local area get on well and help each other (71.17%).
- People in their local area pull together to improve their local area (51.55%).
- They feel part of their local area (60.22%).
- The air quality in their local area is good (53.3%).
- There are enough green spaces in their local area (69.35%).

The survey results show that residents have a good opinion of a number of council services. More respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the provision of education (36.56%), waste management (54.66%) and leisure, cultural and tourism services (44.12%), compared to very or fairly dissatisfied.

However, this is not true of all areas of the Council's work. More respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied with the provision of housing (28.47%), social services (21.40%), highways and transport (63.37%), environmental health and services (31.83%), planning and building control (47.49%) and economic development (49.15%), compared to very or fairly satisfied.
When asked to consider the Council's work overall, only a quarter of respondents are satisfied with how the Council runs things. 29.74% of respondents are very dissatisfied with the way the Vale of Glamorgan Council runs things, and 26.43% are fairly dissatisfied. This compares to 3.19% of respondents who were very satisfied and 22.08% who were fairly satisfied. A further 18.56% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. It is important to note that some of these satisfaction ratings with services are very different from individual service based satisfaction surveys undertaken directly with service users.

The survey results show that the priorities set out in Vale 2030 still align with the concerns of residents. Since the 2023 survey and creation of the new corporate plan there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents who are very or fairly concerned about the cost of living crisis from 2023 (77.95%) to 2025 (82.65%). This was also the case for the percentage of respondents who were very or fairly concerned about the nature emergency increasing from 64.48% (2023) to 64.99% (2025), concern about employment opportunities increased from 47.68% (2023) to 54.43% (2025) and concern about services and support for older people increased from 73.08% (2023) to 75.10% (2025). During the same period the percentage of respondents in 2023 who were very or fairly concerned about services and support for children and young people (60.64%), and climate emergency (66.82%) has decreased in 2025 to 59.19% and 63.41% respectively.

More broadly the Council's engagement insight consistently highlights the importance residents place on early involvement, clear communication and seeing how their views influence decisions. Where feedback leads to visible change, trust and willingness to engage increases. Overall, engagement activity provides a strong picture of frontline service experience, alongside clear signals about growing expectations and service pressure that need to shape future priorities. Residents' views also informed the budget setting process for 2026/27.

What went well
Results from the Let's Talk survey exercise give a robust data set to enable us to monitor performance and changes to public perception of the Council's engagement work.

Engagement linked to place making, regeneration, town centres, and neighbourhood services was wide reaching and well participated in, with strong interest in housing, green spaces and local facilities.

Community-based activities such as leisure, play, neighbourhood initiatives, warm spaces, family information events demonstrated that accessible, local engagement is effective in reducing barriers to participation.

There is also increasing evidence that feedback from engagement is being used to inform service improvements, priorities and decisions, helping the Council understand what matters most to residents.

During 2025/26, we developed our approach to evaluating social media performance by placing greater emphasis on audience sentiment. While reach, impressions, and engagement levels remain important measures of success, we began looking more closely at how content was received by audiences, providing a deeper understanding of public reaction and perception.

By analysing reaction types (such as likes, loves, laughter, and anger) alongside the tone and content of comments, we introduced a simple sentiment scoring framework to assess whether posts generated a predominantly positive, neutral, or negative response.

The analysis revealed clear and consistent trends throughout the year. Content that celebrated, thanked, recognised, or highlighted individuals and groups consistently achieved the strongest positive sentiment scores. Whether profiling staff, residents, volunteers, foster carers, or community organisations, audiences responded positively to stories that focused on people and their contributions. This insight has informed our content planning, with a greater emphasis now placed on the people behind a story wherever possible. Examples include our Meet Our Foster Carers series, the Unsung Heroes volunteer series, stories from those behind out Shared Lives scheme, and content celebrating employee achievements.

We also found that posts highlighting the delivery of projects, services, and improvements that provide visible benefits to residents generated strong positive engagement. Examples included the introduction of a paint re-use station, investment in new gym equipment at leisure centres, upgrades to town centre public toilets, progress at Nell's Point, and the launch of a soft plastics recycling service.

Sentiment analysis identified a number of topics that consistently attracted more negative responses. These tended to be issues that are either sensitive or controversial in nature, or those that form part of wider national debates. Examples included council budget decisions, paid-for garden waste collection subscriptions, potholes, and housing developments.

Monitoring audience reactions has helped us better understand public concerns and provided valuable insight into where additional explanation, engagement, or communication may be required. Overall, the introduction of sentiment analysis has enhanced our understanding of audience behaviour and enabled a more evidence-based approach to content planning.

Challenges

Despite extensive engagement activity, participation and insight are not consistently representative. Some groups are not being effectively engaged with, and response levels vary between services, limiting the depth and consistency of insight.

The results of Let’s Talk show a negative perception of the Council’s work to engage citizens in its work and formal decision making. There has however been a slight increase in the percentage of residents who strongly or slightly agree that the Vale of Glamorgan Council takes residents’ views into account when making a decision (from 16.10% to 19.82%).

Complaints, enquiries and survey feedback continue to highlight increasing demand and pressure on services. While many residents understand these pressures, dissatisfaction increases where communication is unclear or responses are delayed.

Although large volumes of engagement data are collected, it is not yet used consistently to anticipate demand or to redesign services early enough to prevent issues escalating. This is one of a number of issues the Council's forthcoming Public Participation Strategy will seek to address.

In 2026/27, the focus will be on using engagement and complaints insight more systematically to support prevention, service redesign and demand management. This includes strengthening how engagement data, social media sentiment and Let's Talk Vale findings are brought together, improving consistency in how insight is captured and analysed across services, and targeting underrepresented groups more effectively. Clearer feedback loops will remain critical to demonstrate how resident views influence decisions, helping to build trust and sustain participation, particularly in the context of ongoing financial and service pressures.

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
CPM/205: Percentage of residents that strongly or slightly agree that the Vale of Glamorgan council acts in the interest of local residents.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			16.00	20.54	↑
CPM/211: Percentage residents' satisfaction with how their complaint has been dealt with overall.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			N/A Data unavailable due to system transition	38.76	N/A
CPM/216: Percentage of residents who agree that the council is doing enough to address the climate emergency.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			16.00	18.8	↑
CPM/229: Percentage of residents agreeing that the Council is doing enough to provide services and support for children and young people.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			15.70	14.00	↓
CPM/234: Percentage of residents agreeing that the Council is doing enough to provide services and support for older people.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			13.10	12.19	↓
CPM/264: Percentage of residents who agree that the council is doing enough to	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			12.60	12.49	↓

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
address the nature emergency.						
CPM/269: Percentage of residents who strongly or slightly agree that they feel part of their local area.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			56.60	60.22	↑
CPM/270: Percentage of residents who strongly or slightly agree that the people in their local area get on well and help each other	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			64.10	64.10	↔
CPM/271: Percentage of residents very or fairly satisfied overall with the Vale of Glamorgan as a place to live.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			60.00	64.09	↑
CPM/323: Percentage of residents strongly or slightly agreeing that the services provided by the Council represent good value for money.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			16.40	34.72	↑
CPM/324: Percentage of residents who have attempted to influence a council decision(s).	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			39.50	37.10	↓
CPM/325: Percentage of residents aware of all or some of the responsibilities of their local councillors.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			81.50	83.98	↑
CPM326: Percentage of residents who agree that they are easily able to access local facilities and services.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			36.80	N/A	N/A
CPM/327: Percentage of residents who strongly or slightly agree that the Vale of Glamorgan Council takes residents' views into account when making a decision.	N/A (New Measure 2024/25)			16.10	19.82	↑

Description	Performance					Direction of Travel (DoT)
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	
CPM/328: Percentage of customers who are satisfied with their interaction with the Contact Centre.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				N/A Data Not Available due to system transition	N/A
CPM/329: Average rating for digital customer experience.	N/A (New Measure 2025/26)				4.27	N/A

4.4 How effective is the Council's Governance?

The moderation concluded that on balance, the proposed judgement of **'Good'** or '**Reasonable Assurance for Governance'** is appropriate and proportionate. This reflects strong governance arrangements overall, but with some inconsistency and areas that still need to improve.

There is clear evidence that governance is working well:

- Internal Audit (through its Annual Audit Plan) provides Substantial and Reasonable assurance across key systems, with no Limited opinions, showing that core governance, risk and control arrangements are sound and operating effectively.
- The Annual Governance Statement review 2025/26 concluded that the Council's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements remain effective and continue to support the delivery of corporate priorities. Whilst recognising ongoing financial and service demand pressures, the review confirmed compliance with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and relevant legislative and professional frameworks, demonstrating that effective governance arrangements remain in place across all seven CIPFA/SOLACE governance principles.
- External audit evidence supports this, including an unqualified audit opinion and good progress against Audit Wales recommendations, indicating that the Council is responsive to external challenge and improving arrangements where required.
- Having considered the six principles of the Financial Management Code and the Financial Management Standards that underpin these principles the Council's S151 Officer considers that the Council complies fully with the Financial Management code with strong prospects for improvement. Key aspects of this assessment have been independently verified by Internal Audit.
- Risk management is well embedded, with clear oversight and no unmanaged high-level risks. Substantial audit opinion has been issued on the Council management arrangements on risk over past three years.
- Scrutiny and committee processes are improving, strengthening challenge, transparency and accountability.

Taken together, this provides a strong and reliable evidence base that governance arrangements are strong and fit for purpose.

However, moderation concluded that the criteria for a higher judgement (Substantial Assurance) have not been met because:

- Strong governance structures do not yet consistently translate into improved outcomes, so impact is not evident across all areas.
- The Council also faces ongoing challenges, such as financial pressures, demand for services and capacity constraints, which can affect how effectively governance arrangements translate into real impact.

- A large number of performance measures are reported as establishing baseline or N/A, which limits the strength of evidence for decision-making and reduces confidence in how mature performance and governance are.
- There are ongoing capacity and financial pressures, as well as challenges in delivering transformation at pace, which create risks to consistent delivery and impact.
- Some areas of governance are still developing, particularly:
  - Using engagement and insight consistently in decision-making
  - Improving complaints handling and organisational learning
  - Better linking performance, risk and resources into a single, clear narrative.

Overall, this shows that governance is sound and provides a strong foundation, but further work is needed to strengthen how it drives consistent improvement across all services.

Sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.4 provide more information about the different elements that inform this judgement.

4.4.1 Annual Internal Audit Plan and Head of Audit Annual Opinion

The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion given as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report gives a 'Reasonable Assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control environment for 2025/26.

The majority of internal audits completed during the year as part of the Annual Internal Audit Plan provide Reasonable or Substantial assurance, indicating that the Council's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements are generally effective, with no widespread significant weaknesses identified.

While isolated areas of weaker control were identified, these are limited in number and are being addressed through targeted recommendations. The main areas for improvement relate to strengthening the consistency, documentation and monitoring of existing controls, rather than addressing fundamental weaknesses and there is a need for continued focus on embedding good practice and maintaining consistency across services.

A small number of audits were ongoing/carried forward (6) or deferred (5) to 2026/27 reflecting prioritisation of higher risk work and the need to maintain flexibility to respond to new or emerging risks and issues.

Performance snapshot

- Strong delivery against the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan with the majority of planned audits completed and reported during the year. A small number of audits (11) remain on-going or have been deferred for 2026/27.
- In terms of assurance, of the 49 audit opinions issued, 19 (39%) were substantial, 28 (57%) reasonable and 2 (4%) limited. The majority of audits receiving Substantial or Reasonable assurance, indicates that internal control, governance and risk management arrangements are generally effective and operating as intended. Only two audits resulted in Limited assurance, suggesting isolated areas of weaker control requiring targeted improvement.
- Of the 263 recommendations issued, 7 (3%) were high priority, 116 (44%) were medium priority and 140 (53%) were low priority. This indicates that any significant control weaknesses are limited and localised. The majority of recommendations are medium or low, suggesting incremental improvements are required rather than action to address fundamental failures. This

aligns with the overall assurance position of systems being broadly sound but with opportunities to strengthen consistency and controls.

Key messages from the audit work

- Most audits confirm that governance, risk management and internal controls are established and broadly effective. Strong assurance opinions, 'Substantial' were reported across several areas, including, the Performance Management Framework, Risk Management arrangements and Financial systems and grant certifications.
- Medium priority rated recommendations highlight inconsistent application of controls across services, rather than absence of controls. This is particularly evident in operational service areas (e.g. fleet management, fuel systems, stores, and schools' audits), where processes exist but are not always applied consistently and documentation and monitoring could be strengthened.
- ICT audits (e.g. identity access, electoral systems, Oracle Fusion) generally reported sound controls, with only minor improvements required. This suggests that core digital infrastructure is secure and well managed, though ongoing oversight remains important.
- Reviews across Environment & Housing, Learning & Skills and Social Services identified good underlying frameworks, but opportunities to improve record keeping, monitoring, and compliance consistency. Some areas (e.g. vehicle fuel management, schools' audits) generated higher volumes of high and medium priority rated recommendations, reflecting operational complexity and inconsistency in local implementation.
- Cross-cutting audits (e.g. safeguarding, corporate risk, communications, recruitment) confirm that policies and frameworks are in place and generally compliant, with improvements focused on embedding and evidencing practice.

Challenges

- The significant number of recommendations (263) issued places demands on services to deliver improvements and on Internal Audit to undertake timely follow-ups on areas of high priority recommendations in particular, in order to ensure strengthening of controls.
- Eleven audits remain on-going/ carried forward or deferred to 2026/27 indicating capacity and or complexity pressures in delivering the full plan within the year across a wide audit remit.

Overall, the audit results show that the Council is well managed and has effective systems in place. There are no widespread major issues, but there is a need to be more consistent in how processes are applied and strengthen monitoring and record keeping in some areas. This means the Council is in a strong position overall, with clear actions in place to make further improvements. Looking ahead, the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 will focus on completing outstanding reviews, strengthening follow-up of recommendations, and providing assurance over key transformation and digital programmes. The approach will remain risk-based and flexible, with increased use of data insight and continued emphasis on integrating governance, risk and performance to support effective decision-making and continuous improvement.

4.4.2 Annual Audit Report (Audit Wales) and Strategic Insight Board External Regulatory Tracker

The Auditor General's Annual Audit Summary (AAS) published in February 2026, consolidates all audit work undertaken within the Council during 2025.

The Auditor General's Annual Audit Summary for the Vale of Glamorgan Council presents a positive overall position, confirming that the Council's financial statements were properly prepared and received an unqualified audit opinion for 2024/ 25. This provides assurance that the Council's accounts give a true and fair view and that key financial reporting arrangements are sound.

The audit also found that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, with a clear commitment to continuous improvement. However, some areas require further strengthening, particularly in relation to the timeliness of responses to complaints and the effectiveness of arrangements to support schools in addressing deficit balances. Whilst actions are in place, these are not yet consistently delivering the intended impact.

Audit Wales made a number of recommendations to support improvement, including enhancing complaints handling arrangements, strengthening oversight and challenge of school financial recovery, and improving aspects of financial processes. Overall, the findings indicate a Council with sound governance and financial management foundations, but where progress in some service and performance areas needs to be accelerated to ensure consistent outcomes and long-term sustainability.

The Council has made strong progress in responding to its regulatory recommendations and proposals for improvement during 2025/26. The high proportion of actions attributed a Green RAG performance status (86%) demonstrates effective delivery arrangements, clear governance, and strengthened oversight through the Strategic Leadership Team, Governance & Audit Committee, the Strategic Insight Board and corporate performance processes. A small number of actions remain Amber, reflecting areas where delivery is ongoing or requires further embedding to demonstrate full impact.

At Quarter 4, there are 28 ongoing regulatory actions within the Strategic Insight Board Regulatory Tracker, with the majority progressing positively. 86% (24) of actions are Green and 14% (4) are Amber and no actions have been attributed a Red performance status.

Of the 24 actions relating to local regulatory recommendations, 21 have been attributed a Green RAG status, 3 an Amber status. The 3 actions attributed an Amber performance status relate to the 'Welsh Housing Quality Standard review including Council housing tenants.', 'Digital Strategy Review' and 'Corporate complaints – Supporting service improvement'.

There are currently 4 on-going actions in the Insight Tracker relating to national regulatory recommendations of which 3 have been attributed a Green RAG status. One action has an Amber RAG status, and this relates to the Time for Change, Poverty in Wales report.

During 2025/26, 1 action relating to national regulatory work has been completed (Audit Wales: Equality Impact Assessments (EIA): more than a tick box exercise?). In relation to local regulatory work, 9 actions have been completed (Audit Wales: Urgent & Emergency Care: Flow out of hospital Cardiff & Vale Region, Audit Wales: Arrangements for Commissioning Services, Audit Wales: Corporate complaints – Supporting service improvement; and Audit Wales: Application of the sustainable development principle in service areas). Whilst our response to recommendations have been addressed, many of these actions are long term in nature and work will remain ongoing in a business-as-usual capacity to further embed the required changes to ensure their sustainability in response to audit recommendations.

Progress against regulatory priority actions demonstrate a strong focus on managing risk and delivering improvement. High priority rated audit actions (15) are progressing well with most (12) attributed a Green performance status and a small number (3) rated Amber, reflecting complex or externally dependent areas requiring further time to deliver sustainable outcomes. All (10) medium rated priority actions have been attributed a Green performance status reflecting timely progress in delivery. In relation to low priority rated actions, progress is positive, with 2 actions rated Green and 1 rated Amber, reflecting good progress in embedding improvements. This profile demonstrates that

the Council is prioritising areas of greatest risk, with the strongest control evident across medium and low priority actions and continued progress being made against more complex high priority rated areas.

Alongside demonstrating the impact of actions, in the coming year, there will be continued focus on:

- embedding changes into business-as-usual activity to ensure improvements are sustainable and consistently applied across the organisation; and
- maintaining focus on high-priority rated regulatory actions, ensuring timely delivery and reducing reliance on revised timescales where possible.

In summary, the Council is delivering good overall progress against its regulatory recommendations, underpinned by robust governance, effective prioritisation and a clear focus on improvement. While some areas require further delivery and embedding, particularly across high-priority actions, the overall trajectory remains positive and demonstrates a strong and improving position moving into 2026/27.

4.4.3 Corporate Risks: End of Year Position

At the end of 2025/26, the Council continues to operate in a challenging risk environment, with a mix of very high, high and medium risks across key service areas.

Overall, risks are being managed effectively, with strong governance, clear oversight, and consistent monitoring in place. This means the Council understands its risks and is taking appropriate action to manage them. However, some risks remain at a higher level than we would ideally want. This is mainly due to external pressures, such as rising demand for services, financial constraints, workforce challenges and national policy requirements, rather than any failure of internal controls.

At Q4 2025/26:

- The Council has 13 corporate risks on its Risk Register, including one very high risk (Additional Learning Needs) and several high risks (Financial Resources, Workforce and Organisational Change, Climate and Nature Emergency, Social Care Demand and Capacity, Housing and Homelessness, Information and Cyber security and Schools Budget Deficits).
- The overall position has remained broadly stable over the year, with no significant escalation across the majority of risks.
- Most risks are not worsening, but some are expected to remain high due to ongoing financial, demand and capacity pressures.
- One new corporate risk, 'School Budget deficits' was included on the corporate risk register during the year, reflecting findings and recommendations from Audit Wales's review of the Council's position discussions within SLT and with Cabinet Members and to formalise the work programme in place being led by Learning & Skills in collaboration with Corporate Resources and schools.

Key areas of ongoing pressure include:

- Financial sustainability and demand-led services
- Workforce capacity and skills shortages
- Digital and cyber security risks
- Climate change and long-term commitments

What's working well

- The Council has strong governance and risk management arrangements in place, with risks reported regularly and clearly understood.

- Controls and mitigation actions are largely effective and consistently applied.
- Internal Audit issued a Substantial Assurance' opinion, confirming that systems of governance and control are sound and working effectively.
- A differentiated risk appetite is consistently applied, ensuring no tolerance in key areas such as safeguarding, statutory compliance and safety.
- Risks are managed as part of an integrated approach, recognising links between finance, workforce, service demand and delivery.

Key risks to watch/ Challenges

Whilst well understood and proactively managed, several risks remain significant and are unlikely to reduce quickly as they are influenced by wider national and economic factors. These are:

- Financial pressures: there is an ongoing need to balance budgets while maintaining services.
- Workforce capacity: recruitment, retention and skills gaps challenges persist.
- Demand pressures: particularly in social care, housing and education services.
- Digital and Information and cyber security: ongoing and ever-increasing external threats.
- Climate change and long-term sustainability.

Direction of Travel (DoT)

- Most risks are static, reflecting stable risk positions and effective mitigation, with no major deterioration over the year.
- Some risks (e.g. Information and Cyber Security, Digital and Climate Change and Nature Emergency) are forecast to increase over time due to external pressures.
- Workforce and Organisational Change is forecast to improve slightly, reflecting strengthened workforce planning and wellbeing support, but will remain high risk.
- All other risks are expected to remain broadly stable.

Over the year, there has been no uncontrolled risk escalation.

At Q4, the Corporate Risk Register demonstrates that the Council has robust and well-embedded risk management arrangements, with risks clearly identified, transparently reported and proactively managed. While some residual risks remain above appetite, these are known, justified and proportionately managed within the context of wider external pressures. The overall position provides confidence that the Council is maintaining control and oversight of its most significant risks, with governance arrangements in place to respond effectively to emerging challenges in 2026/27.

4.4.4 Scrutiny

During the year, the Council introduced significant changes to the Scrutiny system, informed by a recommendation from the PPA and as part of implementing Vale 2030 and Reshaping (target operating model theme). The year saw the Council undertake the first Scrutiny cycle under the new arrangements, representing a significant change in ways of working for Members and officers. Further on these arrangements, are set out in Reshaping Scrutiny.

In line with the assurance methods outlined within CIPFA's framework, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government framework, the year-end assurance position for Scrutiny is **Reasonable.** This means that,

"There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, noncompliance or scope for improvement were identified which may, if unaddressed, present a risk to the achievement of objectives in the area audited".

This judgement reflects that whilst there have been demonstrable positives as a result of the new arrangements, the Council is only one year into implementation, and the changes are still being embedded. As such it is not yet possible to fully assess the longer-term system and cultural impacts of changes as stakeholders continue to adapt. Audit Wales undertook a review of the revised arrangements in March 2026 and made a small number of recommendations to support further embedding.

Over the year, all Scrutiny Committees have met regularly under their new remits, considering a wide range of topics and utilising different modes of scrutiny. Five Task and Finish reviews were completed, joint scrutiny meetings were held, and Member briefings were delivered to strengthen understanding and effectiveness. The introduction of a public recommendation tracker has improved transparency and monitoring of scrutiny impact, while public participation and engagement activity has increased, supported by improved communications and outreach.

The changes to Scrutiny arrangements have also had a positive impact in a number of softer areas, such as Scrutiny now getting involved earlier in the decision-making process and proactively identifying areas for improvement, better visibility of risk, moving to a more strategic level in consideration of their Scrutiny of delivery against the Corporate Plan and annual the Budget setting process.

However, challenges remain. Public engagement levels have been inconsistent, ambitions around the number of Task and Finish reviews have not been achieved due the depth of work required, and reflective practice within committee meetings has not yet been consistently embedded. Addressing these issues, alongside further strengthening engagement, particularly with young people, and sustaining learning and improvement will be key priorities moving forward.

Overall, Scrutiny has provided effective governance assurance during 2025/26, supporting informed decision making through strengthened challenge, improved integration with risk and performance management, and more transparent tracking of recommendations. While the new scrutiny arrangements are still being embedded, the Council has demonstrated a clear commitment to learning, improvement and openness, with Scrutiny increasingly effectively influencing decisions and shaping policy development. This provides a sound foundation for further strengthening Scrutiny's role in 2026/27.

5. Areas for Improvement

The areas for improvement identified through the Annual Self-Assessment reflect the key organisational challenges experienced during 2025/26. Where these challenges remain ongoing, actions to address them have been incorporated into Directorate Plans for 2026/27 to strengthen performance, resilience and long-term sustainability.

The key cross-cutting challenges that influenced Council performance during 2025/26 and will continue to shape performance in 2026/27 are:

- Increasing demand and complexity of need across services
- Sustained financial pressures and funding uncertainty
- Workforce capacity, recruitment and retention challenges
- Asset condition and infrastructure pressures
- The need to further strengthen the use of data, insight and engagement to inform decision-making.

In response, the Council is progressing the following improvement actions:

People

- Strengthen workforce capacity, skills and succession planning, particularly in hard to recruit and specialist roles.
- Reduce reliance on agency and temporary staff and improve workforce stability.
- Address recruitment and retention pressures, including ageing workforce risks and grant dependency.
- Improve recruitment and retention in critical service areas, including Shared Regulatory Services, Social Services and Environment & Housing.
- Continue to support leadership capability, wellbeing, and organisational resilience to deliver service transformation.

Finance, Commissioning & Procurement

- Improve financial sustainability in the context of continued budget reductions and demand growth.
- Focus on delivering service transformation at pace to reduce dependency on short term mitigations.
- Strengthen medium term financial planning, including schools, social care, housing, and Shared Regulatory Services.
- Improve income generation, cost recovery and debt management, where appropriate to improve resilience.

Assets

- Address the condition and maintenance backlog of key assets, particularly highways, structures, schools, and community facilities.
- Progress Community Asset Transfers and new asset operating models to support long term sustainability.
- Embed the Corporate Landlord Service approach and strengthen asset data and prioritisation.
- Strengthen alignment of asset decisions with carbon reduction and Project Zero ambitions.

Performance

- Improve performance reporting to better demonstrate impact and outcomes, including increasing the number of measures reporting progress throughout the year.

- Strengthen performance oversight for large programmes and projects, and in areas with declining or variable outcomes.
- Improve complaints handling and learning from performance exceptions.

Risk

- Further strengthen the embedding of risk management into service planning, transformation programmes and project governance.
- Strengthen management of strategic and cross cutting corporate risks, particularly those linked to financial sustainability, schools' financial resilience, workforce capacity, demand management, housing and homelessness and asset condition and infrastructure.

Engagement Insight

- Improve the systematic use of complaints, engagement feedback and service user insight to manage demand, re-design services and target resources more effectively.
- Strengthen communications and engagement with residents and communities to improve understanding of service pressures and build trust and support for co-production of more sustainable solutions, including embedding the Customer Charter and Public Participation Strategy.

6. Reviewing Our Self-Assessment Approach

It is important that our approach to self-assessment continues to evolve to drive improvement and support delivery of our Vale 2030 Wellbeing Objectives and national wellbeing goals. Each year, we reflect on and refine our approach, informed by feedback from Members, partners and the public through self-assessment activity embedded across the annual performance cycle.

The 2025/26 self-assessment reflects learning from the previous year, alongside feedback gathered throughout the process. While many areas have been addressed, some will remain a focus for 2026/27, including consideration of feedback from this year's engagement process, Welsh Government, Audit Wales, the WLGA and emerging best practice across Wales.

What you said	Our response
Streamline and better align Directorate Self-Assessments and Directorate Plans to reduce duplication and enhance future focus.	DSAs were brought forward to commence in December 2025, aligning with the 2026/27 planning, budgeting and performance cycles, reducing duplication and supporting a more integrated and forward-looking approach to performance and resource planning.
Strengthen our use of outcome focused PIs throughout the year to evidence progress against the Vale 2030 commitments and support DSA & ASA performance judgements at end of year.	Performance measures were reviewed and refined to strengthen the focus on outcomes, supported by an increased number of quarterly indicators to improve in-year oversight of Vale 2030 delivery. A moderation exercise with SLT ensured consistency, robustness and accurate representation of performance.
Build in engagement earlier in the self-assessment process to inform our findings, including liaising with key stakeholders such as Town and Community Councils to increase community feedback.	A 6 to 7 week engagement programme introduced for this year's assessment, including earlier circulation of the draft ASA, an easy read version to support engagement with young people, and a structured feedback process for partners to strengthen participation and insight.

What you said	Our response
Simplify the method for calculating performance judgements to ensure clarity and provide assurance on how judgements have been reached.	A clearer, three-tier evidence framework was introduced to strengthen transparency and assurance in performance judgements: Tier 1: DSA: Baseline self-assessment (This is what we know from our own data). Tier 2: Internal Challenge (Scrutiny, triangulation and challenge. This is how we have sense-checked and tested our own views). Tier 3: External Evidence Integration (This is how independent evidence (data and insight) validates our judgements.
Enhance internal challenge processes to provide assurance on the ASA process and judgements.	An enhanced internal challenge stage was introduced, enabling a wider range of officers to review and test DSA judgements. This, alongside strengthened moderation, has improved consistency, transparency and assurance in council wide judgements.
Clarify methodology for reporting on actions which are near completion but attributed a Red performance status.	Clearer performance thresholds were implemented. 10% threshold consistently applied to actions, with enhanced QA by Strategy & Insight Team. Actions within 10% of completion at year end are rated Amber, with supporting commentary. Progress on actions and measures are now reported separately, improving clarity and strengthening the rationale for overall performance judgements.
Integrate the Annual Scrutiny Report into the ASA to understand the impact of this element of political governance on Council performance.	Greater integration of scrutiny insights by aligning the Annual Scrutiny report more closely with the ASA process, helping to strengthen the links between, governance, performance and improvement planning.
Strengthen partner engagement in the ASA process.	Continued focus on strengthening partnership engagement in line with the Partnerships Statement. This will help improve the breadth and quality of external insight informing council-wide judgements.
Continued focus on demonstrating the impact of major decisions.	The new Mid-Year Vale 2030 Performance Report has improved visibility of achievements and outcomes strengthening how the Council demonstrates the impact of decisions and communicates progress to residents and key stakeholders.