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Neuadd y Sir
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA

Dydd Mawrth, 13 Mehefin 2023

Hysbysiad a gyfarfod

Pwyllgor Perfformiad a Throsolwg

Dydd Mercher, 21ain Mehefin, 2023 at 10.00 am,
Neuadd y Sir, Siambr y Cyngor, Y Rhadyr, Brynbuga, NP15 1GA

Nodwch y cynhelir rhag gyfarfod 30 munud cyn dechrau'r cyfarfod ar gyfer aelodau'r pwyllgor

AGENDA

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| 1. | Ethol Cadeirydd | |
| 2. | Penodi Is-gadeirydd | |
| 3. | Datganiadau o Fuddiant | |
| 4. | Fforwm Agored i'r Cyhoedd Canllawiau ~ Fforwm Agored Cyhoeddus y Pwyllgor Dethol Mae ein cyfarfodydd Pwyllgor Dethol yn cael eu ffrydio'n fyw a bydd dolen i'r ffrwd fyw ar gael ar dudalen gyfarfod gwefan Cyngor Sir Fynwy Os hoffech rannu eich barn ar unrhyw gynigion sy'n cael eu trafod gan Bwyllgorau Dethol, gallwch gyflwyno eich sylwadau drwy ddefnyddio'r ffurflen hon <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rhannwch eich barn drwy lanlwytho ffeil fideo neu sain (uchafswm o 4 munud); neuCyflwynwch sylwadau ysgrifenedig (drwy Microsoft Word, uchafswm o 500 gair) Bydd angen i chi gofrestru ar gyfer cyfrif Fy Sir Fynwy er mwyn cyflwyno'r ymateb neu ddefnyddio eich manylion mewngofnodi os | |

ydych wedi cofrestru o'r blaen.

Y dyddiad cau ar gyfer cyflwyno sylwadau i'r Cyngor yw 5pm dri diwrnod gwaith clir cyn y cyfarfod. Os bydd y sylwadau a dderbynnir yn fwy na 30 munud, bydd detholiad o'r rhain, yn seiliedig ar thema, yn cael eu rhannu yng nghyfarfod y Pwyllgor Dethol. Bydd yr holl sylwadau a dderbynnir ar gael i gynghorwyr cyn y cyfarfod.

Os hoffech fynychu un o'n cyfarfodydd i siarad dan y Fforwm Agored i'r Cyhoedd, bydd angen i chi roi tri diwrnod o hysbysiad i ni drwy gysylltu â Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk. Y cadeirydd sy'n penderfynu faint o amser a roddir i bob aelod o'r cyhoedd i siarad, ond i'n galluogi i roi cyfle i nifer o siaradwyr, gofynnwn nad yw cyfraniadau yn hirach na 3 munud.

Os hoffech awgrymu pynciau i un o'n Pwyllgorau Dethol graffu arnynt yn y dyfodol, gwnewch hynny drwy e-bostio Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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Paul Matthews

Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

MAE CYFANSODDIAD Y PWYLLGOR FEL A GANLYN:

County Councillor Jill Bond, West End;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Alistair Neill, Gobion Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Paul Pavia, Mount Pleasant;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Peter Strong, Rogiet;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Ann Webb, St Arvans;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Laura Wright, Grofield;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
Janice Watkins
County Councillor Rachel Buckler, Devauden;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Catherine Fookes, Town;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Tudor Thomas, Park;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Meirion Howells, Llanbadoc & Usk;, Independent

Gwybodaeth I'r Cyhoedd

Mynediad i gopiâu papur o agendâu ac adroddiadau

Gellir darparu copi o'r agenda hwn ac adroddiadau perthnasol i aelodau'r cyhoedd sy'n mynychu cyfarfod drwy ofyn am gopi gan Gwasanaethau Democrataidd ar 01633 644219. Dylid nodi fod yn rhaid i ni dderbyn 24 awr o hysbysiad cyn y cyfarfod er mwyn darparu copi caled o'r agenda hwn i chi.

Edrych ar y cyfarfod ar-lein

Gellir gweld y cyfarfod ar-lein yn fyw neu'n dilyn y cyfarfod drwy fynd i www.monmouthshire.gov.uk neu drwy ymweld â'n tudalen Youtube drwy chwilio am MonmouthshireCC. Drwy fynd i mewn i'r ystafell gyfarfod, fel aelod o'r cyhoedd neu i gymryd rhan yn y cyfarfod, rydych yn caniatáu i gael eich ffilmio ac i ddefnydd posibl y delweddau a'r recordiadau sain hynny gan y Cyngor.

Y Gymraeg Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu cyfraniadau gan aelodau'r cyhoedd drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Gofynnwn gyda dyledus barch i chi roi 5 diwrnod o hysbysiad cyn y cyfarfod os dymunwch siarad yn Gymraeg fel y gallwn ddarparu ar gyfer eich anghenion.

Nodau a Gwerthoedd Cyngor Sir Fynwy

Cymunedau Cynaliadwy a Chryf

Canlyniadau y gweithiwn i'w cyflawni

Neb yn cael ei adael ar ôl

- Gall pobl hŷn fyw bywyd da
- Pobl â mynediad i dai addas a fforddiadwy
- Pobl â mynediad a symudedd da

Pobl yn hyderus, galluog ac yn cymryd rhan

- Camddefnyddio alcohol a chyffuriau ddim yn effeithio ar fywydau pobl
- Teuluoedd yn cael eu cefnogi
- Pobl yn teimlo'n ddiogel

Ein sir yn ffynnu

- Busnes a menter
- Pobl â mynediad i ddysgu ymarferol a hyblyg
- Pobl yn diogelu ac yn cyfoethogi'r amgylchedd

Ein blaenoriaethau

- Ysgolion
- Diogelu pobl agored i niwed
- Cefnogi busnes a chreu swyddi
- Cynnal gwasanaethau sy'n hygyrch yn lleol

Ein gwerthoedd

- **Bod yn agored:** anelwn fod yn agored ac onest i ddatblygu perthnasoedd ymddiriedus
- **Tegwch:** anelwn ddarparu dewis teg, cyfleoedd a phrofiadau a dod yn sefydliad a adeiladwyd ar barch un at y llall.
- **Hyblygrwydd:** anelwn fod yn hyblyg yn ein syniadau a'n gweithredoedd i ddod yn sefydliad effeithlon ac effeithiol.

- **Gwaith tîm:** anelwn gydweithio i rannu ein llwyddiannau a'n methiannau drwy adeiladu ar ein cryfderau a chefnogi ein gilydd i gyflawni ein nodau.
- **Caredigrwydd** – Byddwn yn dangos caredigrwydd i bawb yr ydym yn gweithio gyda nhw, gan roi pwysigrwydd perthnasoedd a'r cysylltiadau sydd gennym â'n gilydd wrth wraidd pob rhyngweithio.

Canllaw Cwestiynau Craffu Sir Fynwy

1. Pam mae'r Pwyllgor yn craffu ar hyn? (cefndir, materion allweddol)
2. Beth yw rôl y Pwyllgor a pha ganlyniad mae'r Aelodau am ei gyflawni?
3. A oes digon o wybodaeth i gyflawni hyn? Os nad oes, pwy allai ddarparu hyn?
 - Cytuno ar y drefn holi a pha Aelodau fydd yn arwain
 - Cytuno ar gwestiynau i swyddogion a chwestiynau i Aelod y Cabinet

Cwestiynau'r Cyfarfod

Craffu ar Berfformiad

1. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â'r blynyddoedd blaenorol? Ydy e'n well/yn waeth? Pam?
2. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â chynghorau eraill/darparwyr gwasanaethau eraill? Ydy e'n well/yn waeth? Pam?
3. Sut mae perfformiad yn cymharu â thargedau gosodedig? Ydy e'n well/yn waeth? Pam?
4. Sut cafodd targedau perfformiad eu gosod? Ydyn nhw'n ddigon heriol/realistig?
5. Sut mae defnyddwyr gwasanaethau/y cyhoedd/partneriaid yn gweld perfformiad y gwasanaeth?
6. A fu unrhyw awdid ac archwiliadau diweddar? Beth oedd y canfyddiadau?
7. Sut mae'r gwasanaeth yn cyfrannu at wireddu amcanion corfforaethol?
8. A yw gwelliant/dirywiad mewn perfformiad yn gysylltiedig i gynnydd/ostyngiad mewn adnodd?
Pa gapasiti sydd yna i wella?

Craffu ar Bolisi

1. Ar bwy mae'r polisi yn effeithio ~ yn uniongyrchol ac yn anuniongyrchol? Pwy fydd yn elwa fwyaf/leiaf?
2. Beth yw barn defnyddwyr gwasanaeth /rhanddeiliaid? Pa ymgynghoriad gafodd ei gyflawni? A wnaeth y broses ymgynghori gydymffurfio ag Egwyddorion Gunning? A yw rhanddeiliaid yn credu y bydd yn sicrhau'r canlyniad a ddymunir?
3. Beth yw barn y gymuned gyfan – safbwynt y 'trethdalwr'?
4. Pa ddulliau a ddefnyddiwyd i ymgynghori â'r rhanddeiliaid? A oedd y broses yn galluogi pawb â chyfran i ddweud eu dweud?
5. Pa ymarfer ac opsiynau sydd wedi eu hystyried wrth ddatblygu/adolygu'r polisi hwn? Pa dystiolaeth sydd i hysbysu beth sy'n gweithio? A yw'r polisi yn ymwneud â maes lle mae diffyg ymchwil cyhoeddedig neu dystiolaeth arall?
6. A yw'r polisi'n ymwneud â maes lle ceir anghydraddoldebau hysbys?
7. A yw'r polisi hwn yn cyd-fynd â'n hamcanion corfforaethol, fel y'u diffinnir yn ein cynllun corfforaethol? A yw'n cadw at ein Safonau Iaith Gymraeg?
8. A gafodd yr holl ddatblygu cynaliadwy, y goblygiadau cydraddoldeb a diogelu perthnasol eu hystyried?

| | |
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| | <p>Er enghraifft, beth yw'r gweithdrefnau sydd angen bod ar waith i amddiffyn plant?</p> <p>9. Faint fydd y gost hon i'w gweithredu a pha ffynhonnell ariannu sydd wedi'i nodi?</p> <p>10. Sut fydd perfformiad y polisi yn cael ei weithredu a'r effaith yn cael ei gwerthuso?</p> |
|--|---|

Cwestiynau Cyffredinol:

Grymuso Cymunedau

- Sut ydym ni'n cynnwys cymunedau lleol a'u grymuso i ddylunio a darparu gwasanaethau i gyd-fynd ag angen lleol?
- A ydym ni'n cael trafodaethau rheolaidd gyda chymunedau am flaenoriaethau'r gwasanaeth a pha lefel o wasanaeth y gall y cyngor fforddio ei ddarparu yn y dyfodol?
- A yw'r gwasanaeth yn gweithio gyda dinasyddion i egluro rôl gwahanol bartneriaid wrth ddarparu gwasanaeth a rheoli disgwyliadau?
- A oes fframwaith a phroses gymesur ar waith ar gyfer asesu perfformiad ar y cyd, gan gynnwys o safbwynt dinesydd, ac a oes gennych chi drefniadau atebolrwydd i gefnogi hyn?
- A oes Asesiad Effaith Cydraddoldeb wedi'i gynnal? Os felly a all yr Arweinydd a'r Cabinet /Uwch Swyddogion roi copïau i'r Aelodau ac eglurhad manwl o'r Asesiad o'r Effaith ar Gydraddoldeb (EQIA) a gynhaliwyd mewn perthynas â'r cynigion hyn?
- A all yr Arweinydd a'r Cabinet/Uwch Swyddogion sicrhau aelodau bod y cynigion hyn yn cydymffurfio â deddfwriaeth Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol? A yw'r cynigion yn cydymffurfio â Chynllun Cydraddoldeb Strategol yr Awdurdod Lleol?

Galwadau'r Gwasanaeth

- Sut fydd newid polisi a deddfwriaeth yn effeithio ar y ffordd mae'r cyngor yn gweithredu?
- A ydym ni wedi ystyried demograffeg ein cyngor a sut bydd hyn yn effeithio ar ddarparu gwasanaethau a chyllid yn y dyfodol?
- A ydych chi wedi adnabod ac ystyried y tueddiadau tymor hir a allai effeithio ar eich maes gwasanaeth, pa effaith allai'r tueddiadau hyn ei chael ar eich gwasanaeth/allai eich gwasanaeth ei gael ar y tueddiadau hyn, a beth sy'n cael ei wneud mewn ymateb?

Cynllunio Ariannol

- A oes gennym ni gynlluniau ariannol canolig a hirdymor cadarn yn eu lle?
- A ydym ni'n cysylltu cyllidebau â chynlluniau a chanlyniadau ac adrodd yn effeithiol ar y rhain?

Gwneud arbedion a chynhyrchu incwm

- A oes gennym ni'r strwythurau cywir ar waith i sicrhau bod ein dulliau effeithlonrwydd, gwelliant a thrawsnewid yn gweithio gyda'i gilydd i sicrhau'r arbedion mwyaf posibl?
- Sut ydym ni'n gwneud y mwyaf o incwm? A ydym ni wedi cymharu polisïau eraill y cyngor

i sicrhau'r incwm mwyaf posibl ac wedi ystyried yn llawn y goblygiadau ar ddefnyddwyr gwasanaeth?

- A oes gennym ni gynllun gweithlu sy'n ystyried capasiti, costau, a sgiliau'r gweithlu gwirioneddol yn erbyn y gweithlu a ddymunir?

Cwestiynau i'w gofyn o fewn blwyddyn i'r penderfyniad:

- A gafodd canlyniadau arfaethedig y cynnig eu cyflawni neu a oedd canlyniadau eraill?
- A oedd yr effeithiau wedi'u cyfyngu i'r grŵp yr oeddech chi ar y dechrau yn meddwl fyddai wedi cael ei effeithio h.y. pobl hŷn, neu a gafodd eraill eu heffeithio e.e. pobl ag anableddau, rhieni â phlant ifanc?
- A yw'r penderfyniad yn dal i fod y penderfyniad cywir neu a oes angen gwneud addasiadau?

Cwestiynau i'r Pwyllgor ar ddiwedd y cyfarfod ...

A oes gennym ni'r wybodaeth angenrheidiol i ffurfio casgliadau/i wneud argymhellion i'r pwyllgor gwaith, cyngor, partneriaid eraill? Os nad oes, a oes angen i ni:

- (i) Ymchwilio i'r mater yn fwy manwl?
- (ii) Gael rhagor o wybodaeth gan dystion eraill - Aelod o'r Bwrdd Gweithredol, arbenigwr annibynnol, aelodau o'r gymuned, defnyddwyr gwasanaeth, cyrff rheoleiddio...

Cytuno ar gamau pellach sydd i'w cymryd o fewn amserlen/adroddiad monitro yn y dyfodol.

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC PROTECTION 2022/23 PERFORMANCE REPORT

MEETING: Performance & Oversight Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21st June 2023

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To undertake scrutiny of service delivery across Public Protection services for the financial year 2022/23, with comparison to previous years. The Public Protection division comprises of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Animal Health and Licensing.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To consider and comment on the contents of the attached report – Appendix One - entitled 'Public Protection Performance Report 2022/23'.
- 2.2 Noting the breadth of services provided, Members to consider whether they would like to scrutinise a specific area of Public Protection work.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 This is the eighth annual report summarising performance across the Public Protection division. Members in 2015 requested an annual report to enable them to be sighted on performance, particularly how this varies when compared to previous years. The concern mainly related to ensuring the respective teams had capacity to deliver the array of services provided across all disciplines. The last annual performance report was presented to this Performance and Oversight Committee in January 2023. One of the recommendations last January was to bring the annual report closer to 'end of year', preferably in June or July each year.
- 3.2 The attached report, Appendix One, summarises performance for the twelve month period of 2022/23, and highlights the following -
- The four service teams are reverting to more normal service delivery after being significantly diverted as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a significant shift in working with the removal of Welsh Government Alert Levels, and all the requests for service that generated. Some limited capacity to respond to Covid-19 clusters, primarily in care homes, was retained within our Environmental Health service.
 - As detailed in Appendix One, proactive work has returned, with notable increases particularly in Environmental Health (Commercial) and Licensing. 'Service requests' –

which refer to complaints from the public and businesses, and business/public requests for advice and information – saw an overall increase in demand.

- The Environmental Health (Commercial) team returned to proactive food safety inspections, and inspected 681 premises. Communicable diseases increased significantly to a total of 287 (non-Covid) in the year. The EH (Public Health) team responded to an increase in noise complaints, environmental protection and housing issues, and dealt with a total of 2,485 service requests. Trading Standards also witnessed an increase in service demand, (725 for year) and Licensing applications (1,603) remained high. 322 animal health visits were undertaken, again showing some return to pre-pandemic service levels.
- As national restrictions were lifted for organised events, the number of interventions to organisers also subsequently increased, 118 organisers were assisted last year. The Monmouthshire Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) provides partnership support, and helps mitigate risks, to music, sporting, agricultural and cultural events.
- Annual reports will continue to be made to this Committee to assess performance over time, and help inform future priorities noting the competing demands. Future annual reports will be scheduled for June or July each year.
- Services may struggle to take on any new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment, and therefore funding must be sought to support any new work.
- Future strategies for sustaining Public Protection services will be developed, (to include further income generation and collaboration), locally, regionally and nationally.
- Further Public Protection funding was secured from April 2022. This provided much needed extra capacity to the four PP teams.
- Services will improve linkages to the Authority's Community and Corporate Plan 2022 - 2028 and other key drivers when prioritising future service delivery.
- Regard was had for 'lessons learnt' in 22/23 as requested at the last P&O committee in January 2023, (section 6 in annual report attached).

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 The Cabinet decision log from 7th January 2015 stated:- 'Noting the continually changing legislative landscape in the future, it was decided Strong Communities Select Committee would receive six monthly performance reports on Public Protection services'. In 2019 it was decided to report annually to allow Members to scrutinise performance across the Division. Under the new administration, since May 2022, it provides good governance to continue providing performance reports to scrutinise service delivery and be open to any suggestions for improvement.
- 4.2 Officers would welcome any thoughts on specific topic areas for scrutiny in the future to provide a more detailed understanding, a deeper consideration of pertinent matters and suggestions on potential improvements.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None as a consequence of this report.

6. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT, (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting).

Assessments were previously completed for the Cabinet report in 2015. This report serves to update the position in relation to performance, and therefore does not require a further assessment. As referenced in Appendix One, however, clearly Public Protection services contribute to protecting our environment, helping vulnerable people, providing safe food and consumer protection, etc. which are all positive contributions to people living, working and visiting our county. The Division also supports local businesses by providing consistent advice and tackling those that do not comply with legal requirements, (thus providing a 'level playing field' for fair trade).

7. CONSULTEES:

Public Protection service managers (& contributors)
Chief Officer, Social Care & Health

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Report to Cabinet, 7th January 2015, entitled 'Review of Service Delivery in Public Protection Department'.

9. AUTHOR:

David H Jones, Head of Public Protection

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644100 **E-mail:** davidjones3@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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REPORT TO PERFORMANCE & OVERSIGHT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE21st June 2023**PUBLIC PROTECTION PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23****1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Since 2015 annual performance reports on Public Protection services have been provided to Scrutiny Committees. This has proved beneficial for Members to understand the broad range of services provided by the teams, overall performance and how this compares to previous years.
- 1.2 The Public Protection division, which sits within the Social Care & Health Directorate, comprises of four distinct teams -
- (i) Environmental Health, Commercial
 - (ii) Environmental Health, Public Health
 - (iii) Licensing
 - (iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of Public Protection (PP) services can be summarised as follows –
- a. Protect people from harm and promote health improvement.
 - b. Promote a fair and just trading environment for the public and businesses.
 - c. Improve the local environment to positively influence quality of life and promote sustainability.
 - d. Ensure the safety and quality of the food chain to minimise risk to human and animal health.
- 2.2 These four outcomes contribute to Wales' seven well-being goals. They directly help achieve a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. It also resonates with this Council's Community & Corporate Plan 2022/28, which sets out the Authority's goals under the current administration. PP services contribute to the goals of making Monmouthshire (a) a safe place to live, (b) a fair place to live, (c) a green place to live and work, and (d) a thriving and ambitious place.

3. RESOURCES

3.1 Staff resource

(i) Environmental Health – Commercial:-

- 7 Environmental Health Officers including Principal EHO, 6.8 FTE's, (Full Time Equivalent). 1 FTE has been seconded to Covid related work since September 2020, and 1 FTE seconded to Corporate Health and Safety work during 2022/23.
- 2 Commercial Services Officers, 2 FTE's
- 1 Systems Administrator, 1 FTE

(ii) Environmental Health – Public Health:-

- 5 Environmental Health Officers, including Principal EHO, 5 FTE's, increased to 6 EHOs (6 FTE's) February 2023.
- 2 Enforcement Officers, 1.9 FTE's

(iii) Licensing:-

- 5 Licensing Officers, including Principal, 4.5 FTE's

(iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health:-

- 3 Trading Standards Officers, 3 FTE's (including TS&AH Manager post)
- 1 Senior Fair Trading Officer, 1 FTE (reducing to 0.6 from 1st April 2023)
- 2 Fair Trading Officers, 2 FTE (1 started in January 2023)
- 3 Fair Trading (Animal Health) Officers, 2.8 FTE

Animal Licensing Project attached to TS but Wales wide:-

- 1 Project Manager/Regional Co-ordination role, funded by Trading Standards Wales
- 8 Animal Licensing Officers
- 2 Animal Welfare Intelligence Officers
- 2 Support Officers

(v) Support team:-

- 4 Support Officers, 4 FTE's

Above staff resource adds up to a total of 35 Full Time Equivalents, excluding the national Animal Licensing team of 13 Officers. The Public Protection division also comprises the Authority's Registrar service, but this report covers 1.2 services only, as directed by Members in January 2015.

3.2. Financial resource

In 2022/23, the budget allocation and actual spend is shown below -

| <u>SERVICE</u> | Budget | Net Spend | Under or (over)spend |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Environmental Health – Commercial | £578,314 | £526,127 | £52,187 |
| Environmental Health – General public health | £503,943 | £470,066 | £33,877 |
| Trading Standards & Animal Health | £489,447 | £468,691 | £20,756 |
| Licensing | £65,500 | £66,526 | (£1,026) |
| Management & generic costs (eg software) | £152,313 | £144,676 | £7,637 |
| Total | £1,789,517 | £1,676,086 | £113,431 |

The budget position for the 2022/23 year was an underspend of £113,431. This underspend was due to delays appointing to positions across the division and contributed positively to the overall overspend in SC&H Directorate. The Public Protection underspend for 22/23 represents 6.3% of the total annual budget.

4. PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 Internal performance monitoring – the four teams within Public Protection each complete an annual Business Service Plan. These outline annual targets, specific projects etc. and progress is reviewed regularly both by the teams themselves and Departmental Management Team.
- 4.2 External reporting – regular returns are made to the Food Standards Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Welsh Government and other organisations.
- 4.3 In early 2022/23, up to late May, additional performance was monitored in relation to our Track and Trace service. Reports were submitted to Welsh Government and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, (ABUHB) on number of cases, clusters investigated, enforcement of isolation rules and business compliance. One of our Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) continues to provide advice and support to our care home sector and schools, also working closely with ABUHB and Public Health Wales.
- 4.4 2022/23 Performance (and comparison to previous years)

The right-hand columns summarises performance during the 2022/23 year. The left-hand columns cover the previous 4 years, to enable comparisons to be made.

The following table summarises performance data from the four service teams.

Figure One

| <u>Service</u> | <u>2018/19 Performance</u> | <u>2019/20 Performance</u> | <u>2020/21 Performance</u> | <u>2021/22 Performance</u> | <u>2022/23 Performance</u> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Environmental Health (Commercial) | | | | | |
| Food safety full inspections | 513 (100%) | 561 | 28 - suspension of programme due to Covid response and businesses closed, (same as all other Welsh LA's) | 152 full inspections | 681 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Other interventions – sampling, verification etc (Not H & S) | 285 | 336 | 287 | 160 | 260 |
| Total | 798 | 897 | 315 | 312 | 941 |
| Inspection within 28 days of scheduled date | 88.6% | 86% (incomplete programme) | As business closed and inspections suspended due to Covid this figure not collected 20/21 | On catch up and carry over from lockdown when premises closed – data not collected | Reintroducing this PI for the team for year 2023/24, having caught up on High risk inspections |
| Number of new businesses opened | 151 | 134 | 101 | 76 | 126 |
| Broadly compliant food businesses (high risk) | 93.2% | 93.4% | Proactive visits suspended | 94.4.% | 95% |
| Broadly compliant food businesses – All | 97.2% | 96.9% | As above | 97.4% | 99% |
| Service Requests - food safety | 456 (85% within 3 working days) | 720 (85% within 3 working days) | 453 (78% within target) | 533 | 450 |
| Service requests, total | Total SR's 1463 | Total SR's 1444 | Total SR's 1,792 but more likely 2,500 due to under-reporting during pandemic | Total SR's 1321 | Total SR's 1142 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| Food Hygiene training | 208 food handlers trained | 123 food handlers trained (courses in March cancelled due to Covid) | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Communicable Diseases cases dealt with | 210 including Typhoid outbreak | 191 (includes one case of Covid before end of March 2020) | 3,826 Covid 142 notifiable diseases | 15,584 Covid 217 notifiable diseases | 915 Covid 287 notifiable diseases all contacted within the target response times |
| Health and Safety notifications | 41 accidents notified. 12 serious incidents investigated. 90 events reviewed | 58 accident notifications 11 serious incidents investigated 25 events reviewed | Vast amount of proactive and reactive work in relation to Covid regs. Not all work recorded due to time constraints, e.g Covid responses to schools and care homes. | 36 reportable accidents with 2 formal investigations. 95 Service Requests from businesses | 45 interventions/visits 12 visits for complaints and accidents |
| Notices served | 12 Notices served (gas and cellar safety) | 2 Notices served (gas safety) | | 4 Notices served, (2 prohibition) | 5 improvement notices served |
| Environmental Health (General public health) | | | | | |
| Housing service requests (SR's) | 164 Total 141 within 3 working days = 86% | 158 Total | 105 Total | 110 Total 79 within 3 working days = 71.8% | 207 Total 162 within 3 working days = 78.3% |
| Noise | 374 Total. 318 within 3 working days = 85% | 317 Total. 258 within 3 working days = 81.4% | 366 Total. 300 within 3 working days = 82% | 388 Total. 308 within 3 working days = 79.4% | 405 Total. 319 within 3 working days = 78.8% |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | 152 closed within 3 mths = 40.6% | 181 closed within 3 mths = 57.1% | 199 closed within 3 mths = 54.4% | 211 closed within 3 mths = 54.4% | 217 closed within 3 mths = 53.6% |
| Statutory nuisance, excluding noise | 176 Total. 145 within working 3 days = 82.4% | 154 Total. 127 within working 3 days = 82.5% | 236 Total. 209 within working 3 days = 88.6% | 182 Total. 153 within working 3 days = 84.1% | 166 Total. 131 within working 3 days = 78.9% |
| | 92 closed within 3 mths = 52.3% | 86 closed within 3 mths = 55.8% | 155 closed within 3 mths = 65.7% | 114 closed within 3 mths = 62.6% | 96 closed within 3 mths = 57.8% |
| Environmental Protection (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc.) | 484 Total. 446 within 3 working days = 92.1% | 448 Total. 387 within 3 working days = 86.4% | 705 Total. 651 within 3 working days = 92.3% | 743 Total. 697 within 3 working days = 93.8% | 771 Total. 721 within 3 working days = 93.5% |
| | 421 closed within 3 months = 87% | 395 closed within 3 months = 88.2% | 534 closed within 3 months = 75.7% | 598 closed within 3 months = 80.5% | 616 closed within 3 months = 79.9% |
| Pest Control | Total 78. 61 within 3 working days = 78.2% | Total 85 66 within 3 working days = 77.6% | Total 113. 95 within 3 working days = 84% | Total 129, 96 within 3 working days = 74.4% | Total 109, 82 within 3 working days = 75.2% |
| Licensing | | | | | |
| Applications dealt with by Licensing | 1813 applications. This includes 425 Temporary Event Notices | 1666 applications, including 384 TEN's, (a decrease on previous year | 1142 applications - 31% decline from previous year as a direct result of Covid lockdown and restrictions. Only 2 | 1515 applications, including 210 TEN's. Big increase due to events recommencing after lockdowns. | 1603 applications, including 373 TEN's – over 50% more previous year due to lifting of all restrictions. |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | (TEN's) requiring a 24 hour turnaround | due to events cancelled in March 2020) | TEN's due to events not being permitted. | | |
| Inspections carried out | 325 inspections (174 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment) | 247 inspections (133 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment). | 237 inspections (no risk rated premises were included this year; team concentrated on Covid advice/enforcement). | 212 inspections. Still dealing with Covid restrictions and impact on hospitality sector. | 60 premises inspected – lower number due to changeover of staff and training requirements. Risk rated inspections of premises to recommence 2023-24. |
| Service Requests carried out | 974 service requests - 92% with a 3 day turnaround for first response, (on target). | 821 service request - 90% with a 3 day turnaround for first response, (on target). | 922 service requests - 92% with a 3 day turnaround for first response, (on target). | 873 service requests - 93% on target for first response. | 644 service requests – 92% on target for first response. Drop due to less Covid-related requests. |
| Trading Standards & Animal Health | | | | | |
| Trading Standards Visits | 126 | 113 | 115 | 78 | 50 |
| Trading Standards Complaints/Advice | 443 | 547 | 1018 | 622 | 725 |
| Citizens Advice Consumer Service | 305 Referrals 863 Notifications | 322 Referrals 922 Notifications | 341 Referrals 956 Notifications | 352 Referrals 962 Notifications | 372 Referrals 981 Notifications |
| Animal Health Visits | 219 | 324 | 231 | 244 | 322 |
| Animal Health Complaints/Advice | 242 | 266 | 282 | 293 | 198 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| Inspections at our: High Risk premises, Upper Medium premises. | No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures including loss of Feed Officer | No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures | No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures. | No formal programme due to other pressures but looking to commence in 2023/24. | No formal programme due to other pressures but looking to commence in 2023/24. |
| Feed Law Enforcement | 100% - 212 | 59% - 144 supplemented by 254 ceased trading visits | Visits were suspended with database cleansing | 68% - 93/136 64 ceased operations | 94% - 117/124 additional inspections undertaken 30 due to regional shortfalls. |
| Programmed animal health inspections | No formal programme of inspection due to long term sickness | No formal programme of inspection | No formal programme due to Covid | Combined with feed inspections. | Combined with feed inspections – additional high risk to be programmed for 2023/24. |
| New Business Visits | 29% TS (23/80) 66% AH (18/27) | 56% TS (32/57) 73% AH (40/55) | 61% TS (32/52) 74% AH (52/70) | 51% TS (48/95) 48% AH (32/66) | 23% (35/153) 79% (57/72) |
| Animal Welfare Complaints | 92.6% | 63% | 74.5% | 68% | 95% |
| Vulnerable Scam Reports | 12 visits contact with 149 individuals | 10 visits contact with 159 individuals (running total) | 0 visits due to Covid 187 individuals (running total) | 0 visits due to Covid 214 individuals (running total) | 4 visits 219 individuals (running total) |
| Other | | | | | |
| FOI Requests (PP Total) | 66 | 74 | 39 | 79 | 51 |
| Events requiring advice via Safety Advisory Group | 156 | 105 | 39, 30 cancelled due to national restrictions | 63 | 118 |

5. ANALYSIS AND ACTIVITY 2022/23

Although some Officers were still providing services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, this work typically ceased in May 2022, eg. the holding of Monmouthshire Incident Management Teams (IMT's) with ABUHB and PHW. IMT's triggered work involving care homes, schools and various workplaces. Figure One above shows some return to pre-pandemic levels of activity, eg. food safety inspections, together with general increases in our reactive work. Across the PP Division, we received 5,194 service requests, (complaints, seeking advice, etc.), compared to 4,398 in 18/19 four years earlier. This represents an 18% increase in a relatively short space of time. Whereas EH Commercial and Licensing were able to return to a level of more proactive working, EH Public Health and Trading Standards witnessed a significant increase in requests for service, so had to focus on reactive work.

The number of events also returned to pre-pandemic levels and these need PP interventions, eg. providing advice on Health and Safety arrangements, noise mitigation and licensing requirements. Each section provides the following narrative for their work last year -

5.1 Environmental Health – Commercial

5.1.1 Food safety (food hygiene and food standards)

The backlog of inspections for the high risk premises, for food safety and standards - those risk rated A to C – were completed, as per the national FSA recovery programme. A full complement of staff towards the end of 2022 enabled the team to achieve this significant milestone. Last year included inspecting all new businesses, providing support and advice on running successful food premises. Formal enforcement with a prosecution and improvement notices continued with non-compliant premises with serious breaches. Our Primary Authority Partnership portfolio was widened with a major national food bank provider and working with The Royal Borough of Greenwich.

A substantial quantity (small skip full) of illegally imported sweets were destroyed by Officers who discovered them on a routine inspection.

5.1.2 Business improvement – typically the team provide advice to improve the food hygiene rating score of businesses, which has been recognised to improve both the economy and food safety. We have provided a bespoke service to new businesses and in 2023/2024 will reinstate our ACESS, (Accelerating Compliance and Economic Success through business Support), along with our well-regarded food hygiene training to assist businesses and provide welcome income generation.

5.1.3 Responding to complaints

The team continue to respond to a large number of varied service requests (1,142 last year) covering food hygiene, allergens, health and safety, infectious disease control and, to a lesser degree recently, on smoke free legislation.

5.1.4. Communicable Diseases

Investigation of all cases of statutorily notifiable diseases received. The numbers of confirmed Covid cases fell to 915 in the year, mainly due to significantly less testing, and only cases in care homes are now followed up. There were 45 incidents which are defined as two or more linked cases. 35 of these incidents were Covid related. The team was involved in a large outbreak of Shigella Flexneri in early 2023 which has not occurred in the UK since 2015. This singular outbreak involved over 60 days of EH work. The numbers of infectious disease cases in 22/23 exceeded pre-pandemic days, at 287 non-Covid cases, with instances of E Coli, including the more serious 0157 type, Salmonella, Giardia, Cryptosporidium, Legionella and higher numbers of Campylobacter.

5.1.5 Income-generating consultancy work. As stated in 5.1.1 we have expanded our Primary Authority Partnerships that provide an income and will reintroduce our paid for advisory service and food hygiene training in 2023/2024.

5.1.6 Health and Safety at Work

Officers of the team investigated 5 accident notifications and handled 36 reported accidents via the RIDDOR system (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations). For 2022/23 two Officers in the team covered Corporate Health and Safety whilst awaiting the appointment of a new manager, (appointed 1st March 2023). They were also heavily involved in the setting up of the Special Procedures register for skin piercing and tattooing etc., that MCC is hosting on behalf of Wales working with Welsh Government. 21 Special Procedure inspection visits were carried out. Other interventions include hazard spotting visits and responding to service requests.

5.2 Environmental Health – Public Health

5.2.1 Housing

Almost a doubling in the complaints and requests for advice in the private rented housing sector compared with the previous 2 years with 207 requests received. Probably attributable to significant focus nationally on damp/mould growth and excess cold related to rising fuel bills. Just a marginal increase in the number of inspections though with 42 in the year compared to 37 in 21/22 period, with 19 category 1 hazards (most serious) and 47 category 2 hazards identified. Of the total of 66 hazards identified, a substantial number (36) related to damp, cold and fire safety issues.

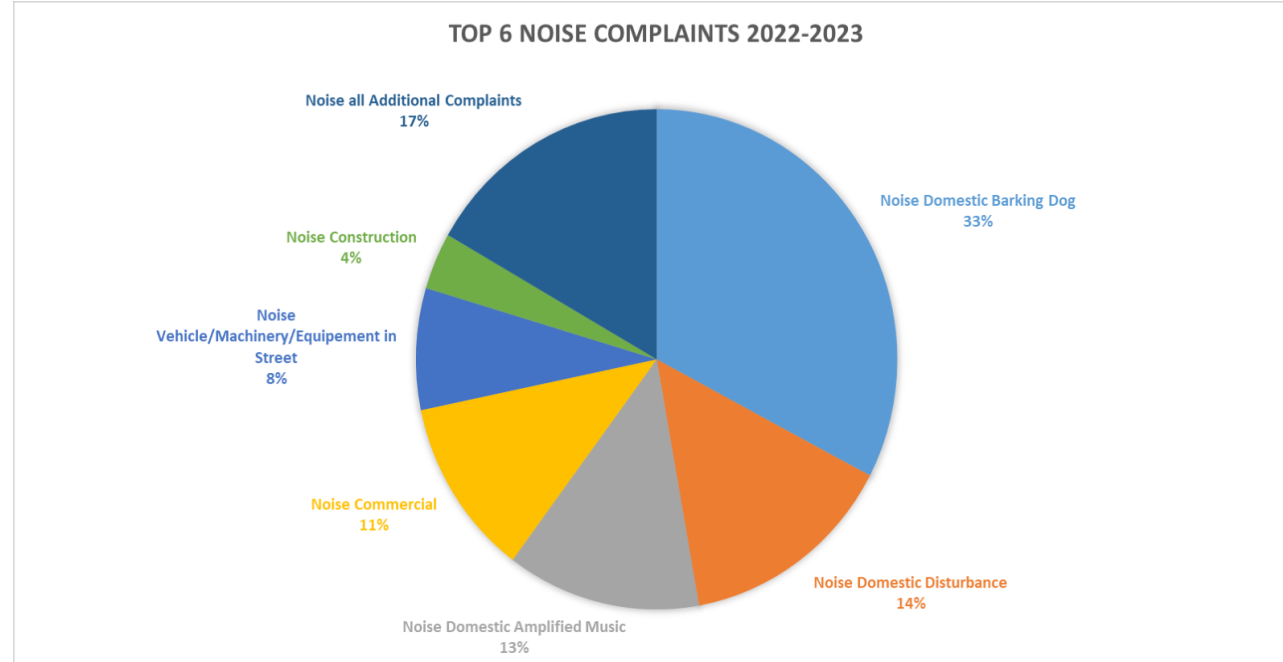
In the 42 dwellings inspected, 76 adults and 28 children were exposed to significant hazards. Officers engage with landlords, make clear their responsibilities under housing legislation and seek their cooperation to undertake the required works to remove the hazards identified. A range of enforcement actions are available and used where landlords do not cooperate such as the service of Improvement Notices, (2 served) and in the most serious cases Prohibition Orders (nil served). A total of 32 adults and 13 children protected in the period as a result of landlords undertaking the required remedial works, with works ongoing to protect the others identified.

An example of the importance of this work is shown in the feedback from a local councillor:

'I just wanted to convey some thanks for the actions of Xx from the Environmental Health team. Two of our residents were temporarily housed in Xxxx Abergavenny after being made homeless in the Severnside area. They have been struggling with the accommodation being of a really low standard (no insulation, heating not being maintained by the landlord, serious rat infestation) and had been struggling to get the issues recognised by housing. Xx did an environmental health inspection last week and took appropriate action. Our residents have told me he was absolutely wonderful. They have been moved to some B&B accommodation which is warm and clean. One of the residents said they cried when they were able to wash their hands in warm water for the first time in months. I just wanted to say thank you because Xx's actions and the respect he showed our residents was brilliant.'

5.2.2 Noise

Noise complaints continue to rise with 405 in the period, eclipsing the 388 noise complaints received in 21/22. Complaints of noise from residential properties, mainly barking dogs, loud music and domestic disturbance, account for 60% of these (245). Significant effort is put in by Officers in the early stages of an investigation to try to deal with the complaints quickly, in the hope of limiting escalating tensions and ultimately enforcement action. A noise abatement notice had to be served though on 2 occasions (barking dog and loud music) and warrants obtained from the Magistrates Court to enable our Officers to enter a person's home on 2 separate occasions. This was needed to seize



equipment which was used to play loud music on a regular basis throughout the night causing very substantial disturbance to neighbours. Prosecution proceedings are being taken against the individual concerned for breach of the noise abatement notice served.

5.2.3 Environmental Protection

2022/23 also saw an increase in the number of complaints on the previous year up from 743 to 771. Of these 63% (487) related to fly tipping incidents. Evidence gathered resulted in 3 fixed penalty notices being issued.

Collaboration with colleagues from the Waste and Street Cleaning section and Town & Community Councils continues in the eighth year of the '**Give Dog Fouling the Red Card**' scheme which endeavours to maximise our shared resources. Members continue to report generally good news but dog fouling hot spot areas continue with fouling on play areas and sports pitches of particular concern. Progress is therefore being made on the potential introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog controls (fouling, dogs on leads/exemption areas) in the county, with a public consultation on the draft PSPO planned June – August 2023.

5.2.4 Private Water Supplies

The team has the responsibility for fulfilling the Council's duty of risk assessing all 'large' and 'small' private water supplies (PWS), where water is intended for human consumption. Improvements are undertaken where necessary to ensure a wholesome and sufficient water supply is provided.

We currently have 122 'small' and 64 'large' supplies, the vast majority of which have received an initial risk assessment. There is an ongoing statutory requirement to risk assess supplies every 5 years and this area of largely proactive work has been highlighted consistently in the last 5+ years in the service plan as an area of significant resource pressure.

The post Covid recovery position has meant little progress in this proactive area of work.

46 of the 64 known large supplies are in the high risk category = 72%

70 of the 122 known small shared/domestic tenancy supplies are in the high risk category = 57%

It is hoped that recruiting an additional EHO in February 2023 will help the section allocate resource to this area of work and reduce the number of high risk supplies in the county.

5.2.5 Pest Control

Complaint levels remain very similar to previous years with 109 in total, the majority of these relate to rats (96).

5.2.6 Air Quality

The team met its inspection targets for the industrial permitted sites (18 inspections) and petroleum certified sites (17 inspections) which we have responsibility for from a pollution legislation perspective, ensuring continuing compliance. The 22/23 period also saw 4 new permit applications, meaning there are now 26 permitted sites in the county. Permit work can be complex with the varying nature of the industry involved and the experience of our Pollution Specialist EHO of significant value to the businesses as highlighted by recent feedback:

My name is Xxx, I work for Xxxxx based near Newcastle upon Tyne. We have another facility in Monmouth. I have been working with EHO Xx to apply for a permit. I asked Xxxx for your details because I felt compelled to give my feedback on him - don't worry, all good! Xx has been so helpful throughout the process, and I cannot thank him enough for his advice and support. I had the pleasure of meeting him on site recently. Great guy. I cannot rate my experience of your organisation highly enough and wanted to let you know.

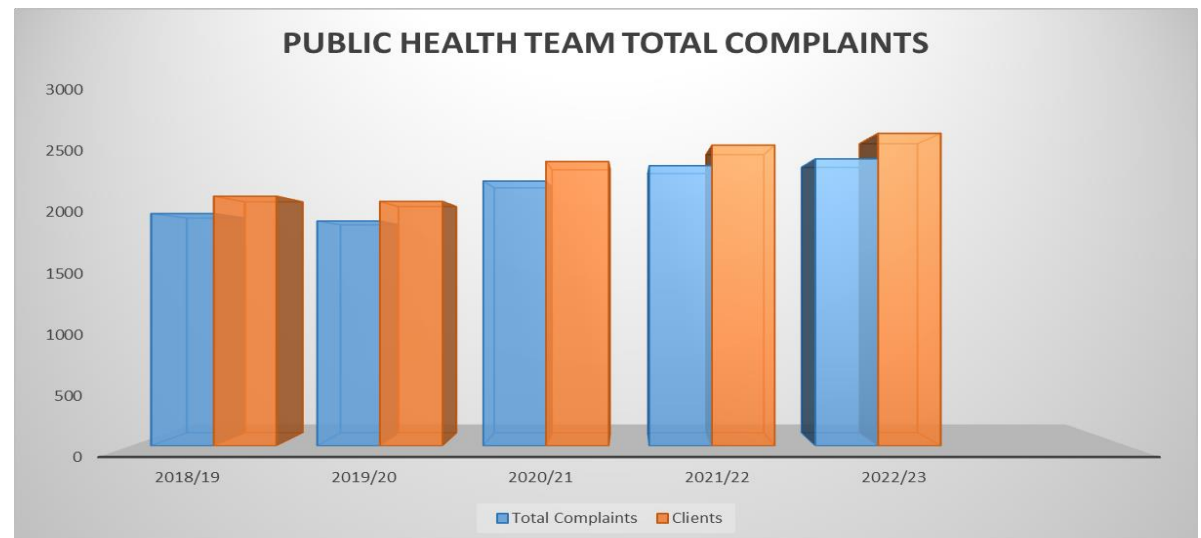
Monitoring continued of traffic related pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in our 4 major towns and advice given in meetings of the steering groups in the Chepstow and Usk Air Quality Management areas.

Again there were no exceedances in the county in 2022 (calendar year) of the nitrogen dioxide annual objective level, which builds on the previous two compliant years.

2022 was the 8th year that levels in the Usk Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) were below the nitrogen dioxide objective level and the fifth year below 36 µg/m³ (which is below 10% of the objective level). Welsh Government have suggested that five years below 10% of the objective level is appropriate to consider revocation of the AQMA. Making allowances for lower traffic levels during the covid pandemic if 2023 is again below 10% of the objective level, consideration will be given to revoking the AQMA status.

5.2.7 Total Enquiries

2022/23 continued the trend of increasing service requests across the range of functions delivered by the team, with an increase to 2485 received comparable with 2426 in 21/22 (2.4% increase). The trend can be illustrated as follows:



5.3 Licensing

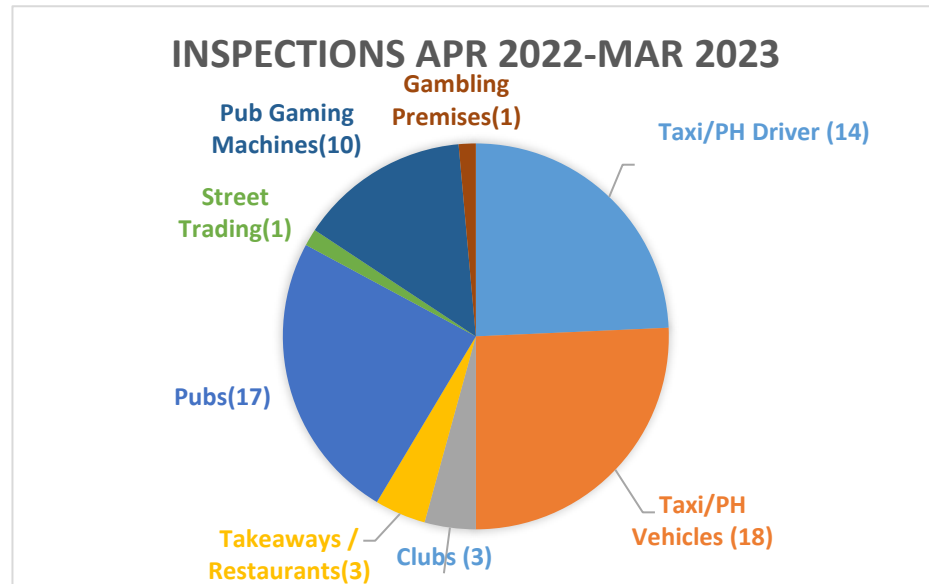
5.3.1 General

The Licensing team deals with a variety of licences, dealing with pubs, restaurants, off-licences and takeaways, taxis, street trading (e.g. burger vans), street/house to house collections, (e.g. charity collections in the street or bag drops at homes), gambling (e.g. betting shops, racecourse, one armed bandits in pubs/clubs, raffles etc.), scrap metal collectors and sites. The team are also authorised to deal with sex establishments, boats and hypnotism.

644 requests for service were processed by Licensing between April 2022 – March 2023. A breakdown of the 644 requests is shown below –



65 of the requests were complaints that range from all manner of things such as taxi drivers not using meters and charging more for the journey, allegation of unlicensed drivers offering lifts or drivers driving erratically, along with people parking illegally on taxi ranks. There were several allegations about an unlicensed ice cream seller, buskers causing a disturbance, together with complaints of pubs selling alcohol after hours and fights taking place in pubs. All complaints and service requests are investigated by the small Licensing team, (4.5 FTE's).



60 inspections took place (with an additional 10 inspections on pub gaming machines which was conducted whilst carrying out the pub alcohol and entertainment inspections). A breakdown of those inspections is shown here -

Inspections took place on pubs and clubs investigating licence conditions breaches, passing information to fire service if no risk assessment in place. Immigration and anti -slavery checks were carried out working closely with partner agencies. Vehicles had spot checks ensuring faults were rectified and suspensions of the licence being issued where appropriate, along with penalty points being issued to drivers. 1603 applications were processed in 2022/23, up by 88 on the previous year. This includes 373 Temporary Event Notices (TENs), a marked increase from 163 TENs in the previous year.

Other work carried out by Licensing during this period included:-

5.3.2 Pubs, Restaurants, Off-licences, Clubs and Takeaways

Night Time Economy and Joint Enforcement

Festivals and Event Safety

2 sites were jointly visited by Licensing, Environmental Health, and the Police during this period - a large festival near Usk and a food festival. Licensing advice was provided on how to prevent noise and secure public safety. Festivals are on the increase following lockdown and it remains essential to give the appropriate advice and training at the start of the summer season. Training on event safety is referred to below.

Pubs.Clubs and cafes/restaurants

Joint operations were conducted by Licensing and the Police at 6 different venues. One had a follow up visit after they failed a test purchase exercise and sold alcohol to underage persons. It was found their systems of monitoring such sales had improved. Others were giving advice on prevention of noise and licensing matters. A strong recommendation was given to ensure public safety and to prevent further action being taken to employ doorstaff at one venue as fights had taken place there, this was agreed by the licence holder. One venue was found to have no designated premises supervisor responsible for alcohol sales and this prevented them from selling alcohol. Another was visited for allegedly serving alcohol after their permitted hours and a warning letter was issued.

Licensing and Legal attended a public meeting after the issue of a licence, where concerned residents intended at that time to appeal a MCC decision to grant the licence. Advice given at this meeting on how the venue will be monitored by Licensing, the conditions the venue has to adhere to and how reviews can be conducted if management is found to be inadequate. This eased their concerns and prevented an appeal.

Immigration and anti-slavery

Multi Agency operations took place in 3 restaurants and 1 shop by Licensing, the Police Anti-Slavery team and Immigration. All had civil penalties issued against them by the Immigration team of the Home Office for employing persons who did not have the right to work in the UK. One venue was visited following a tip off by an EHO over concerns over the sleeping arrangements of staff there with a caravan set up on the site when she visited. A visit was arranged with the Police Anti-Slavery team and a young woman was found living in the caravan with no electricity or running water and claimed her wages were withheld. The lady was unwilling to make a complaint, advice was given by the Police and she refused to enter the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). She was safeguarded and has since moved away from the area. Immigration are building a case with a view to a possible review of the premises licences. Ongoing investigations continue with Licensing and Immigration.

Safeguarding

Further to a joint Licensing and Police visit to a hotel in Chepstow, it was found people could freely visit the resident area of the venue. Advice given to them on resetting fobs to prevent access to the residential area and on other safeguarding measures.

When bookings are made, proprietors need to consider aspects such as -

- Adult guests who appear secretive about their visit or trying to conceal that they are with a young person
- Adult guests refusing to leave a credit card imprint and paying cash
- Adult guests requesting a room that is isolated
- Numerous adults and young people coming to a hotel who do not appear to have a reason for being there or high levels of visitors to a guest room
- Guests who move in and out of the premises regularly at unusual hours
- Guests arriving and asking for specific rooms number without knowing the name of the person the room is booked under
- Adult guests who don't want their room cleaned.

5.3.3 Taxis

Two joint operations between Licensing, Passenger Transport Unit and DVSA at schools in Chepstow and Monmouth – 6 vehicles stopped, one of which the driver and vehicle owner were given penalty points for failing to wear their driver badge and having worn tyres.

5.3.4 Gambling

Licensing visited a newly opened Adult Gaming Centre. Prior to the visit the Gambling Commission and Licensing had required the venue to remove display material from the window of their premises which was deemed to attract children's attention. The visit gave advice on their risk assessment, signage that needs to be displayed and how they have to provide gambling information giving advice and help for problem gamblers. A follow up visit was carried out and the recommendations implemented.

5.4 Trading Standards & Animal Health

5.4.1 Feed

The Feed Programme was reinstated for 2022/23 but again based on an agreed achievable level subject to any further interruptions due to the pandemic. Following the permanent appointments of additional animal health resource this enabled a significant increase in the number of inspections able to be delivered, achieving 94% completion of the allocated programme for farm-based feed inspections but a further 30 inspections were able to be undertaken due to regional shortfalls. The higher risk programme was affected by long-term sickness and the retirement of a very experienced feed officer. Quarter 4 saw the

appointment of a new officer to support the high-risk feed work. Feed related advice and complaints were all responded to and dealt with in a timely manner.

5.4.2 Animal Health

The animal health function continues to be over 90% reactive but has seen significant improvement with the additional support that has now been made a permanent resource. The Trading Standards and Animal Health Manager is strategic lead nationally for animal health matters and continues to be heavily involved in working with WG, to develop and deliver the Partnership Delivery Plan with associated additional funding. This is based on a regional approach and mirrors the footprint of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Monmouthshire has approximately 50% of the critical control points and animal related premises within this region.

During a particularly hot spell in June/July 2022, unfortunately it saw the passing of one of our livestock keepers who whilst they had a main premises in Merthyr, most of the stock were in Monmouthshire. Initially no next of kin could be identified to take ownership of the livestock which required shearing in order to prevent further animal welfare problems. One hot Saturday in July saw over 350 ewes sheared and in total over 650 ewes and lambs treated thanks to the perseverance and dedication of the animal health officers.

The Trading Standards Wales (TSW) Local Authority Enforcement Project, being led by Monmouthshire, underpins the delivery of some of the Programme for Government commitments identified in the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales. During 2022/23 the team grew with 2 support officers and 2 animal welfare intelligence officers. These support the work of the animal licensing officers (8) based right across Wales who provide specialist support for all Local Authorities. Currently priorities are being determined to progress the commitments including the regulation of establishments not currently caught by legislation such as sanctuaries.

5.4.3 Fair Trading

Following the data sharing agreement for work linked with the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015, work continued on a Wales wide toolkit which will be launched during 2023/24. Work continues to identify non-compliant premises with advice and enforcement where necessary, to bring landlords of non-complying properties up to the minimum standards required. It remains a priority to look at non-domestic property when capacity allows.

Disposal Vapes have been a growing problem and recognising the issues concerning oversized/illegal products, proactive visits were conducted at those premises known to be selling vapes. Business advice was provided with non-compliant products being removed from sale.

Three separate intelligence-led test purchase operations were undertaken across the County focussing on independent small retailers:

- First operation late Spring - 5 premises visited, 1 failure, formal business advice given, passed on revisit.
- Second operation Summer/Early Autumn – 14 premises visited, 4 failures, dealt with via formal warning letters (separate premises failed to first exercise)
- Third operation Winter – 7 Premises visited, 0 failures. However, concerns remain with one premises and safeguarding concerns have been passed to relevant sections of MCC and Gwent Police.

2022/23 saw the conclusion of a significant rogue trader investigation that related to offences as far back as December 2020. Martin Evans was prosecuted for Fraud and Consumer Protection offences after complaints were received from 6 victims living in Monmouthshire, Caerphilly, Herefordshire and North Somerset. Complainants reported being charged significant amounts upfront for home improvement projects. Whilst work commenced it then slowed until the victims were left wondering if it would ever be completed. Work that was completed was done to a poor standard and required rework. After pleading guilty and following several court delays, on Friday 26th May 2023, Evans was sentenced to 45 months and 12 months (to run concurrently) so a total of three years and 9 months with at least 50% to be served in prison.

Responses to consultations on the future of single use plastics, that will undoubtedly fall to local authorities to enforce, has been contributed to as part of a wider Trading Standards Wales. One of our TSO's has also taken on a support lead officer role on environmental issues.

5.4.4 Consumer Protection

A priority for the service has been dealing with a variety of scams and bringing them to the attention of both the public and businesses whenever possible. All are potential victims and, by reaching out and working alongside adult safeguarding, vulnerable victims can be kept out of overburdened local care systems. The key focus continues to be working with vulnerable victims through priority referrals and ensuring they are given the advice and assistance required and/or referred as appropriate.

Work has begun on developing a partnership approach to protecting and educating as many Monmouthshire residents as possible. A multiagency approach should ensure most efficient use of resources and hopefully ensure anyone receives the necessary support. Initially this will focus on known victims and raising awareness with those involved with potential victims in their day-to-day work. 8 previous victims of an American based fraud were fortunate to receive money back after they were identified as having sent money at an earlier date, this varied from £18 to several hundred pounds.

A new Cold Calling Control Zone was established at a Monmouthshire Homes Senior Citizens Complex, TS performed home visits at each flat to explain purpose of zone and gain resident's agreement. This will empower those residents to exercise their right to say no and encourage them to report any incidents to the service.

Rogue Trader Day of Action saw participation in a multi-agency day of action in Abergavenny, working jointly with Gwent Police and DVSA, Cold Calling Advice Packs given out to multiple businesses stopped for business/vehicle checks.

Complaints of note

A Monmouthshire resident had signed up to a security system at their home following a home visit from a sales rep with full installation planned the next day. System and monitoring were costed at £6000. Following conversations with their family they realised it was unnecessary and attempted to cancel as per their statutory rights. Whilst the installation was cancelled the firm deducted £700 from the refund. TS attempted to resolve the matter firstly with the firm who failed to provide a promised refund. TS then supported the consumer with a home visit whilst contact with their bank was made after they'd initially been advised their complaint was out of time. Finally, TS provided the bank with an outline of their interaction with the firm and assisted in securing the refund of the £700 directly from the bank via the chargeback scheme.

A Monmouthshire household had been victim of a Rogue Trader making unsolicited calls for gardening work. Following receipt of this report a joint visit was undertaken at the household with the allocated Social Services Officer. Further preventative information was then provided to the wider social services team and the Communications Officer for a Press Release. TS also liaised with the MCC Passenger Transport Unit to put promotional posters on all buses within the Grass Routes Passenger Transport Network, warning users on how to avoid Rogue Traders and tips for choosing reputable home improvement firms.

Two households were Cold Called by a trader who had previously been convicted of Rogue Trader offences. As well as working with each household, TS liaised with local neighbourhood to put up posters and distribute information to other residents in the same area on Rogue Traders and how to choose reputable home improvement firms.

5.4.5 Weights & Measures

There was a significant increase in the number of new business enquiries during the pandemic from individuals that were looking to new areas of work that required advice and this continued in 2022/23.

5.4.6 Product Safety

As mentioned above there has been increasing problems with the rise in sale of vapes and whilst this has included an increase of a few premises selling to underage children, it has also included non-compliant and potentially dangerous products entering the market. Waste product is also a concern as the huge rise in disposable vapes means that as well as increased littering issue, there is an increased risk of fires due to the product containing batteries which should be disposed of appropriately.

Construction product work continues to develop on the back of the Grenfell Enquiry with a National Lead Regulator being developed.

5.4.7 Income Generation

In 2022/23 feed work undertaken increased funding to approximately £28,000. Animal Health PDP regional co-ordination, and additional project work, brought in around £40,000.

5.5 Event Safety Advisory Group

A number of Public Protection staff are involved in Monmouthshire's Event Safety Advisory Group, (ESAG). This is a partnership designed to help organisers run safe and successful events. It is recognised a proactive advisory stance is preferable to reacting to problems after events have occurred. 118 events held in 22/23 received ESAG advice, a return to levels in the pre-pandemic years. Advice was sought and provided from all our typical organisers of music, sporting, agricultural, food events, etc.

A free seminar, through 'Teams', took place on 23rd June 2022 for event organisers throughout Gwent. The seminar aided the promotion of good practice at events and the need to use ESAG's. Speakers at the event were from the five ESAG's in Gwent and topics covered included safety, highways, licensing, Police Counter Terrorism/crowded places, together with event organisers from Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. The event organisers who spoke at the seminar gave valuable insight into the successful and safe running of events, which was beneficial to the less experienced organisers.

6 LESSONS LEARNT 2022/23

- 6.1 **Prioritisation** - The 22/23 period witnessed the typically continuing upward trend in service requests across the teams – the introduction to section 5 refers to an 18% increase in requests for service in four years. There is a clear need to meet this challenge in a way that focuses resources on matters that serve our purposes (outlined in section 2) most effectively. This needs to be balanced with activity that are statutory duties. Our four Business Plans for 23/26 will be informed by what's gone well, what's slipped, etc. up to the end of 22/23. Our capacity to deliver the range of services has been increased since 1st April 2022, so this will undoubtedly assist us in achieving our goals. Added to this, the teams will be moving to a new (cloud-based) software system that should provide benefits for both Officers and service users, eg. easier payments for licences, etc. Anything that releases Officer time for front-line delivery will be highly beneficial.
- 6.2 **Partnership working** – last year again demonstrated the benefits of strong partnership working. Regionally and nationally various consultation documents are considered centrally, hence avoiding duplication. The linkages made with PHW and ABUHB can be capitalised on to focus on key health improvement objectives, (better living conditions, improved animal welfare, etc.). After somewhat of a lull in traditional service delivery, for our proactive work, these can be reconsidered post-pandemic. As an example, the Gwent Licensing Forum is to be reformed to discuss and agree matters regionally. Working better with local businesses was

also a feature of 22/23 – the taxi trade liaised with Licensing regarding set tariffs, and consequently an increase was agreed by Cabinet last year.

- 6.3 **Flexibility** – in October 2022 it was apparent the EH Commercial team were not going to reach their inspection targets for 22/23. Budgets were considered at that time, and through additional income Trading Standards had generated, agreement made to transfer some budget from Trading Standards to EH. This enabled more capacity within EH to programme inspections for the remaining 4 or 5 months of 22/23. EH achieved their inspection targets and satisfied FSA (national) expectations.

7 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2022/23 year

- 7.1 All sections in Public Protection experienced some personnel changes so time was spent training up new members of staff to ensure consistency of approach. A £223,000 increase in the PP budget was secured from 1st April 2022, though there were some delays in getting Officers into post. This explains the underspend as referenced in section 3.2. All establishment positions are now filled, which ensures services can be delivered effectively and reduces work pressure on existing team members. The budget uplift allowed for the recruitment of an additional 2.4 FTE EHO's, 1.5 Fair Trading Officer's (Trading Standards) and 0.5 FTE Licensing Officer. For small teams with high service demand, this added capacity is considered essential and secures more sustainable services.
- 7.2 The year saw the start of a return to 'traditional' Public Protection services, for example food safety inspections, proactive trading standards and animal health visits. Programmed food safety visits achieved expected national targets. There remains a scaled down Covid response, to support particularly our care homes sector.
- 7.3 Service request levels across all teams remained high throughout 2022/23 – as per Figure One – with significant increases in Environmental Health (Public Health) and Trading Standards. Reactive work was prioritised over proactive activities in these two sectors.
- 7.4 Members can gain some assurance that performance is in line with other Authorities via regular monitoring by the external governing bodies.
- 7.5 Innovative working was progressed in the year – (i) the TSW Local Authority Enforcement national project (referred in 5.4.2) led by our Trading Standards team; and (ii) Special Procedures work, to be implemented under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. PP also continues to work changing our software system to be more user friendly to our various customers.

8 2023/24 AND BEYOND

- 8.1 Post-pandemic – the effects on performance are illustrated in Figure One - there is a welcome return to proactive inspections, most notably getting back to our food safety/standards inspection programme. Covid-19 in care homes remains a concern and EH has WG funding, secured to 31st March 2024, to continue to support that sector, eg. cluster management and supporting ABUHB with infection control advice.
- 8.2 Our 2023/26 Business Plans seek to better reflect our longer term vision and future planning. This tallies with the Well Being of Future Generations expectations, with Public Protection services contributing directly to a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. Digital solutions are being pursued to help capacity issues. 23/26 Plans will reflect the recently agreed Community & Corporate Plan 2022/28 and PP's contribution to those goals.
- 8.3 Collaborative opportunities are being pursued at regional and national level, and this Authority will play a part in developing future service models. A return to previous income generation opportunities will be pursued, eg through the ACCESS scheme (see 5.1.2), providing hygiene training and animal feed/welfare income (5.4.7). The national Local Authority Enforcement Project and Special Procedures work shows our desire to seek more effective ways of working. The collaborative working with PHW and ABUHB, in response to the pandemic, will continue to be built on to tackle public health priorities together. In Licensing, for example, protecting vulnerable people engaging in the night-time economy and checking controls on problem gamblers will be key priorities.
- 8.4 Our services, together with delivering statutory responsibilities, act on local intelligence and welcomes input from local Councillors, other stakeholders, etc. to improve outcomes for our citizens and local businesses. The services enjoy an excellent reputation, due to the commitment of the Officers, and will continue to contribute to the wider agendas and our core purposes, as provided in 2.1. The profile of our Public Protection services, both locally and nationally, and partly due to our key role in reducing the spread of Covid-19 for over two years, is high, so Officers are now positioned to capitalise on this momentum.
- 8.5 Trading Standards will be audited internally in 23/24, as part of MCC's audit plan. Any recommendations will be acted upon for the benefit of TS service users.
- 8.6 Officers are confident they can sustain our high-quality, well-respected services, and PP will continue to report progress to DMT's, Members via this scrutiny committee and our external Governing Bodies.

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| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| SUBJECT: | 2022/23 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN STATEMENT |
| MEETING: | PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| DATE: | 21st June 2023 |
| DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: | ALL |

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Committee members with information on the Authority's final financial results for the 2022/23 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.
- 1.2 This report is being considered for pre-decision scrutiny by the Performance and Overview Committee as part of their responsibility to:
- assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place;
 - monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with the agreed budget and policy framework;
 - challenge the reasonableness of variances to budget, and;
 - consider the progress in relation to mandated budget savings proposals for the year.
- 1.3 Feedback from this Committee will be considered by Cabinet when they receive this report at their meeting on the 5th July 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee perform pre-decision scrutiny on the Authority's financial results for the 2022/23 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.
- ii. That the Committee as part of their role assesses whether effective budget monitoring is in place; the extent to which budgets have been spent within the agreed budget and policy framework, including the reasonableness of the explanation for variances and; consider the achievement of progress in meeting mandated budget savings targets.

iii. That Committee feedback is provided to Cabinet who will receive this report at their meeting on the 5th July 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

2.1 That Cabinet recognises a net revenue budget deficit at outturn of £3,503,000 that requires a contribution from earmarked reserves to fund the additional expenditure incurred.

2.2 The primary drivers of this budget deficit are:

- Over spends within Adult's and Children's social care services of £367,000 and £4,147,000 respectively where increased demand, increased complexity of cases, and high cost placements have been a feature during the year;
- An over spend of £881,000 within Additional learning needs specifically in relation to placement costs in independent and out of county provision, alongside increased transport costs following a sustained period of inflation;
- Additional costs in relation to Homelessness of £1,352,000 where the Council is unable to claim full housing benefit subsidy for those housed within temporary accommodation, and;
- Where pay awards agreed during the year were £2,050,000 above budgeted levels.
- These have been significantly offset by the receipt of unbudgeted grant, improved income, significant staff vacancies across services, higher than budgeted investment and Council tax income, and lower costs in some non-pay service areas.

2.3 That Cabinet recognise that the deficit at outturn represents a significant improvement from the position forecast at month 9, with £2,557,000 less needing to be contributed from reserves. This is primarily as a result of £990,000 of additional eligible costs being financed from capital receipts under capitalisation direction; £1,300,000 of additional grant funding being received or allocated to core expenditure in relation to Adult social care costs, and; a net £1,738,000 improvement in service budget positions driven by budget recovery action enacted by services during the year, and significantly where additional income has been identified and staff vacancies have been held.

2.4 That Cabinet note the ongoing financial risk represented by the current volatile operating environment within Adult's and Children's services and require the respective Chief Officers and the Responsible Financial Officer to continue to closely monitor and manage operational and financial performance to ensure that all possible remedial action is taken to constrain cost, and that this is reported to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder regularly.

- 2.5 That Cabinet endorse the strategy to rationalise reserves as noted within paragraph 4.10 of this report, and task officers with considering a further rationalisation exercise once the medium-term financial strategy is developed that outlines the financial framework and alignment to the Council's approved Community & Corporate plan.
- 2.6 That Cabinet approve the use of capital receipts totalling £3,271,000 to fund the eligible revenue expenditure as outlined in **Appendix 3** under the Welsh Government's "flexible use of capital receipts" direction.
- 2.7 That Cabinet acknowledge the reduction in Schools balances during the year of £2,698,908 as outlined in **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 4**, significantly lower than the £4,653,000 that had been previously forecast. Five schools ended the year in a deficit balance with several schools continuing to carry structural budget deficits that will need to be addressed.
- 2.8 That Members note capital expenditure for the year of £43,693,000, with £33,098,000 of budget requested to be slipped into 2023/24. As a result of net under spends across various smaller schemes within the programme, £220,000 of capital receipts can be released back to reserve to support future investment.
- 2.9 That Cabinet approve the capital slippage requests of £33,098,000 as listed in **Appendix 5**, acknowledging the challenging operating conditions and external influences that have delayed schemes progressing during the year.
- 2.10 That Cabinet approve the capital budget revisions as outlined in **Appendix 6**, which are required following finalisation of grant funding awards for the financial year.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Table 1: Overall 2022/23 Revenue budget outturn

| Directorate | Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s) | % Variance to budget | Over spend | Under spend |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Social Care, Health & Safeguarding | 4,204 | 7.20% | Children's services £4.1m (complexity, reliance on independent providers, agency staff) | Staff savings in public protection and support services £270k |
| | | | Adults £367k (demand, complexity of cases) | |
| Children & Young People | 1,344 | 2.30% | ALN transport £633k (contract costs) | Central staff savings, increased income (£116k) |
| | | | ALN placements and recoupment costs £317k | |
| | | | Schools support budgets £578k (NI increase not recouped), teachers salary protections, Gwent music, post-16 transport) | |
| Communities & Place | (1,545) | -6.30% | Fleet Maintenance £185k (inflation) | Planning & Development Control £155k (LDP delay) |
| | | | Waste £133k (Inflation and reduced income) | Highways & Flooding £518k (Income & staff vacancies) |
| | | | Highways Ops £66k (inflation & winter maintenance) | Street Lighting £201k (energy reduction) |
| | | | Car Parks & parking enforcement £172k (income shortfall) | Grounds £123k (Income), |
| | | | | Building cleaning £118k (income) |
| | | | | Solar farm £175k (energy) |
| | | | | Schools catering £392k (FSM grant) |
| | | | | Passenger Transport £153k (income/grant) |
| | | | | Housing incl Homelessness £113k (grant) |
| | | | | Youth Enterprise £108k (Grant) |
| | Management support £59k (Staff) | | | |
| Monlife | (376) | -7.70% | | £237k system costs met from additional capitalisation direction |
| | | | | Outperformance of budgeted income levels - both Leisure & Outdoor due to re-engage programme £260k |

| Directorate | Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s) | % Variance to budget | Over spend | Under spend |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | | Additional grants received £73k |
| Chief Executive Unit | (291) | -15.80% | | Hub/Contact centre £83k (system savings and grant) Comm Ed £61k (grant), Policy/Partnerships £129k (grant, capitalisation directive) |
| People & Governance | (107) | -2.10% | Democratic services £76k (Additional staff costs, members mileage and remuneration) | HR £164k (Software costs met from additional capitalisation direction & staff savings) Training £33k (income) |
| Resources | 292 | 3.60% | Newport leisure park £109k (reduced income) Castlegate £160k (Service charge met centrally for vacant units) Housing benefits £1.34m (Homelessness impact on benefit subsidy) Markets £110k (income shortfall) | ICT £86k (lower activity) Finance/Audit £216k (staff vacancies) Charity Relief £217k (grant) Corporate H&S £55k (staff vacancy) Property Services £266k (covered from capital) Cemeteries £92k (income) Asset management £321k (Staff vacancies/Ukrainian funding) |
| Corporate | 981 | 4.20% | Pay award £2.05m above budgeted levels | Insurance £565k (reduced claim costs) Pension costs £235k (covered by capitalisation direction) Rate refunds £170k Other Corporate income £100k |

| Directorate | Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s) | % Variance to budget | Over spend | Under spend |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Treasury & Reserves | (663) | -9.30% | | Lower net borrowing costs reflective of a lower interest rate environment at the start of the year, and significant capital slippage at the end of 2021/22 |
| Financing | (336) | -0.20% | | Out-performance of budgeted Council tax collection |
| Year-end Deficit | 3,503 | | | |
| Transfer from Reserves | (3,503) | N/A | Amount required to finance year end deficit | |
| Total | 0 | | | |

Table 2: Reconciliation from Month 9 forecast

| | £000's | £000's |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| Month 9 Forecast overspend | 7,531 | |
| Extension of capitalisation direction | (990) | |
| Grant funding - Social Care | (1,300) | |
| Improvement in service budgets | (1,738) | |
| Sub-Total | | 3,503 |
| Contribution from earmarked reserves | | (3,503) |
| Balanced outturn | | 0 |

3.1 Headlines

3.2 A final year-end revenue budget deficit of £3,503,000, which has required a contribution from earmarked reserves to finance the additional expenditure incurred. This is a significant improvement of £2,557,000 from the forecast at month 9 where £6,060,000 of was forecast to be required from reserves.

3.3 The improvement of £2,557,000 since month 9 is due to three main factors:

- £990,000 of additional eligible costs have been financed from capital receipts under capitalisation direction;
- £1,300,000 of additional grant funding has been received or has been allocated to core expenditure towards the end of the year in relation to Adult social care costs. This relates to £700,000 Social care workforce sustainability grant, and £600,000 from the Regional Integration Fund;
- A net £1,738,000 improvement in service positions following budget recovery action being enacted during the year by all services, where additional income has been identified, or where staff vacancies have been held. This can be summarised as follows:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Communities & Place | (£746,000) | Increased income which was not forecast at Month 9 - Car parking, Highways & Flooding, Solar Farm, Schools Catering, Passenger transport |
| Insurances | (£425,000) | Savings in self-insured costs, premiums, and where the provision for settlement of outstanding claims has reduced year-on-year |
| Corporate | (£239,000) | Rate refunds and Corporate income have been notified at year end |
| Treasury & Council Tax | (£115,000) | Unbudgeted borrowing costs were recouped from services. Interest rates movements towards the end of the year increased investment returns generated. Offset by Council tax income forecast reducing since month 9. |
| Monlife | (£390,000) | Outperformance of the income levels forecast at Month 9 - both Leisure & Outdoor due to re-engage programme. Countryside grants notified late in year. |
| Social Care | (£319,000) | Continued staff vacancies throughout workforce |
| Children & Young People | £496,000 | ALN transport charges higher than forecast at Month 9. Late invoice for Gwent music charge where related income was recognised in previous year |
| Total | (1,738,000) | |

3.4 **Appendix 1** provides the detailed explanation of the reasons for the variance to budget, alongside a full assessment of the movement in School balances, and details of the progress of the Authority's Capital programme during the year.

- 3.5 **Budgeted service savings** – Service savings totalling £2,129,000 were required as part of the original revenue budget for 2022/23. These have been met in full during the year which is a pleasing result considering the ongoing challenges faced by services in current operating conditions. Full details of the savings can be found at **Appendix 2** to the report.
- 3.6 **Homes for Ukraine scheme** – a surplus of £1,340,000 was recorded at year-end, representing surplus grant received for 2022/23 compared to the costs incurred in operating the welcome centre and supporting Ukrainian people coming to Wales under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This surplus has been transferred to a specific reserve to finance future costs that will be incurred in supporting families.
- 3.7 **School balances** – schools drew upon £2,698,908 of their accumulated balances during the year, which was significantly lower than the £4,653,000 that had been forecast at month 9. This was primarily due to additional income EAS income, interest on school balances, Ukrainian funding not included in school forecasts, and a capital grant received by schools, as well as some schools not investing as planned.
- 3.8 Closing schools balances are £4,257,205 with five schools in deficit, compared to nine forecast to be in deficit at Month 9. Several schools continue to carry structural budget deficits which will need close monitoring as we move into a difficult budget year for schools in 2023/24.

Table 3: Movement in Schools balances

| 2022/23 School Balances | 1 st April 2022 | Draw upon Reserves | 31 st March 2023 |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Comprehensives | (2,253) | 994 | (1,259) |
| Primaries | (4,622) | 1,595 | (3,027) |
| Special | (82) | 110 | 29 |
| Total | (6,956) | 2,699 | (4,257) |

3.9 **Capital budget** – Capital expenditure totalled £43,693,000 for the year, with an under spend of £94,000 reported. After allowing for year-end capital financing adjustments this releases £220,000 of capital receipt funding back to reserves. The overall under spend is primarily due to:

| Capital Scheme | Over / (Under) Spend | Funding used or released |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Capitalisation direction | £621,000 | Increased capital receipts |
| Abergavenny Borough Theatre | £180,000 | Increased unsupported borrowing that will be recouped from service revenue budget |
| Property Maintenance | (£433,000) | Reduced capital receipts |
| Infrastructure | (£46,000) | Reduced capital receipts |
| Schools & Education | (£54,000) | Reduced capital receipts |
| Access for All schemes | (£208,000) | Reduced capital receipts |
| Other Schemes | (154,000) | Reduced capital receipts/Grant |

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3.10 **Capital slippage** – A total of 102 capital schemes require slippage into 2023/24 totalling £33,098,000, representing 42% of the total budget for the year. The current economic environment continues to have a significant impact on the overall capital programme with cost inflation and supply chain issues continuing to present a challenge to project delivery. Whilst the impact of these external influencing factors is clear, the large number of schemes requiring slippage along with the explanations for delay given by budget holders does point to more underlying issues in project planning, such as unrealistic profiling of budgets and a lack of resourcing to manage the volume of schemes being planned. Finance teams will continue to work with budget holders to assess if any further amendment to project delivery plans are required.

3.11 **Capital receipts** – £3,415,000 more capital receipts are forecast to be available over the medium term than forecast at Month 9, following under spends within the capital programme; additional grant being secured for existing schemes, or; where capital receipts forecast over the medium have increased. Whilst positive, there remains a need for caution over committing any further receipts to either capital investment or increasing the level of capitalisation direction given the level of unbanked receipts contained within the forward projections.

Table 4: Capital receipts balances

| Capital Receipts Outturn | Actual 31 st March 2023 | Forecast 31 st March 2024 | Forecast 31 st March 2025 | Forecast 31 st March 2026 | Forecast 31 st March 2027 |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Balance as at 1st April | 8,773 | 12,447 | 7,940 | 8,853 | 7,891 |
| Capital receipts used for financing | (857) | (3,853) | (1,158) | (1,058) | (1,058) |
| Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction | (3,271) | (3,008) | (508) | (508) | (508) |
| Capital receipts used for redundancies | 0 | (1,000) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Capital receipts received | 7,802 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Capital receipts forecast | 0 | 3,354 | 2,579 | 604 | 104 |
| Forecast Balance 31st March | 12,447 | 7,940 | 8,853 | 7,891 | 6,429 |
| Month 9 Forecast | 9,891 | 7,106 | 6,009 | 4,511 | 3,014 |
| Increase/Decrease since Month 9 | 2,556 | 834 | 2,844 | 3,380 | 3,415 |

RESERVES POSITION

Table 6: Summary Reserves position at outturn

| Reserve | 31st March 2022 Actual £000's | 31st March 2023 Actual £000's | 31st March 2024 Forecast £000's | 31st March 2025 Forecast £000's | 31st March 2026 Forecast £000's | 31st March 2027 Forecast £000's |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Council Fund | (10,527) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) |
| General Earmarked Reserves | (12,387) | (8,617) | (4,942) | (4,751) | (4,560) | (4,369) |
| Sub-Total – General reserves | (22,914) | (19,721) | (16,046) | (15,855) | (15,664) | (15,473) |
| Service Earmarked Reserves | (3,729) | (2,933) | (2,997) | (3,060) | (3,123) | (3,056) |
| School Balances | (6,955) | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) |
| Total Reserves | (33,598) | (26,910) | (23,299) | (23,171) | (22,043) | (22,785) |

4.1 **Reserves - Key considerations**

4.2 £3,503,000 of earmarked reserves have been drawn upon at year-end to finance the additional expenditure incurred on the revenue budget. The reserves utilised had been set aside to meet the pressures expected to materialise as services managed the recovery from the pandemic, and the additional demands this placed upon a variety of services across the Council.

4.3 £509,000 of the Rural development plan reserve balance can be released back to general reserves following finalisation of all costs involved in the process. Costs were either lower than expected or were covered by substantial grant funding. A further £67k is released from the Homeless prevention reserve upon review of the purpose of the reserve, which is not considered to be for a specific use.

4.4 **Inflationary risk/Pay award pressures** – these have traditionally been dealt with through the budget process via budget pressures and assumptions. However, given the difficult economic conditions continuing to present themselves as we move into 2023/24, consideration should be given to increasing specific cover.

4.5 **Redundancy & pension reserve** –£1m of capital receipts have been earmarked in 2023/24 to cover the anticipated level of redundancy and strain cost resulting from the impact of budget saving mandates. The reserve is therefore deemed at an adequate level at the current time.

4.6 **Insurance reserve** – An actuarial review was undertaken in Autumn 2022 which confirmed the existing level of reserve is within a prudent range.

4.7 **Invest to save/Priority investment reserves** – these reserves are forecast to be extinguished by the end of 2023/24. In effect service redesign is being currently being financed through capitalisation direction.

4.8 **Council fund level** – the recommended prudent level is between 4-6% of the Council's net revenue budget (£189.6m for 2023/24). The current level of Council fund is 10.53m or 5.5% of net revenue budget.

4.9 **Support for wider administration priorities** – The Community & Corporate plan sets out the Cabinet's priorities such as tackling the climate and nature emergency, reducing inequality and poverty, and improving opportunities for both residents and businesses. The upcoming medium term financial strategy will look to link these priorities with the financial resources available to the Council over the medium term.

4.10 Proposed reserves rationalisation:

- That the £576,000 released from the Rural development plan reserve and the Homeless prevention reserve is transferred to the Council fund to increase overall resilience to 5.85% of the Council's net revenue budget during a period of economic turbulence, increasing cost pressures and below inflation funding settlements;
- That the remaining Covid reserve balance of £1,316,000 is released and instead earmarked for future Pay inflation pressures;
- That any further rationalisation is deferred until the medium-term financial strategy is developed that will outline the financial framework and alignment to the Council's Community & Corporate plan.

Table 7: Detailed Reserves position at outturn including the above rationalisation proposal

| Useable revenue reserve balances | Actual 31st March 2022 | Actual usage in 2022/23 | Actual 31st March 2023 | Forecast 31st March 2024 | Forecast 31st March 2025 | Forecast 31st March 2026 | Forecast 31st March 2027 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Council Fund | (10,527) | (577) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) | (11,104) |
| General Earmarked Reserves | | | | | | | |
| Invest to Redesign Reserve | (1,456) | 29 | (1,427) | 73 | 73 | 73 | 73 |
| IT Transformation Reserve | (931) | 185 | (746) | (564) | (461) | (358) | (255) |
| Insurances & Risk Management Reserve | (925) | 0 | (925) | (925) | (925) | (925) | (925) |
| Capital Receipt Generation Reserve | (365) | 51 | (314) | (314) | (314) | (314) | (314) |
| Treasury Equalisation Reserve | (590) | 0 | (590) | (590) | (590) | (590) | (590) |
| Redundancy and Pensions Reserve | (769) | 0 | (769) | (681) | (593) | (505) | (417) |
| Capital Investment Reserve | (627) | 2 | (625) | (625) | (625) | (625) | (625) |
| Priority Investment Reserve | (1,905) | 0 | (1,905) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Covid19 Reset Reserve | (4,000) | 4,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Covid19 Hardship Fund Equalisation | (819) | 819 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pay inflation | 0 | (1,316) | (1,316) | (1,316) | (1,316) | (1,316) | (1,316) |
| Sub-total General Reserves | (22,914) | 3,193 | (19,721) | (16,046) | (15,855) | (15,664) | (15,473) |
| Service Reserves | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Museums Acquisitions Reserve | (53) | 17 | (36) | (36) | (36) | (36) | (36) |
| Elections Reserve | (245) | 119 | (126) | (161) | (196) | (231) | (136) |
| Grass Routes Buses Reserve | (166) | (5) | (171) | (176) | (181) | (186) | (191) |
| Youth Offending Team | (150) | 0 | (150) | (150) | (150) | (150) | (150) |
| Building Control trading reserve | 5 | (2) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| CYP maternity | (196) | (101) | (297) | (298) | (298) | (298) | (298) |
| Plant & Equipment reserve (Highways) | (189) | 47 | (142) | (142) | (142) | (142) | (142) |
| Homeless Prevention Reserve Fund | (68) | 68 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Solar Farm Maintenance & Community Fund | (240) | 82 | (158) | (181) | (204) | (227) | (250) |
| Newport Leisure Park Reserve | (365) | 188 | (177) | (177) | (177) | (177) | (177) |
| Castlegate Reserve | (437) | 312 | (125) | (125) | (125) | (125) | (125) |
| Local Resilience Forum Reserve (Gwent PCC) | (154) | 25 | (129) | (129) | (129) | (129) | (129) |
| Sustainability - PV Invertor Replacement | (65) | 0 | (65) | (65) | (65) | (65) | (65) |
| Cost of Living Discretionary | (499) | 499 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SCH Electric Vehicle & Driving Lessons | (214) | 214 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ukrainian Support Reserve | 0 | (1,341) | (1,341) | (1,341) | (1,341) | (1,341) | (1,341) |
| Rural Development Plan Reserve | (693) | 674 | (19) | (19) | (19) | (19) | (19) |
| Sub-total Service Earmarked Reserves | (3,729) | 796 | (2,933) | (2,997) | (3,060) | (3,123) | (3,056) |
| School Balances | (6,955) | 2,699 | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) | (4,256) |
| Total Reserves | (33,598) | 6,688 | (26,910) | (23,299) | (23,171) | (23,043) | (22,785) |

5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE OUTTURN POSITION

- 5.1 £2,557,000 more reserves have been carried forward into 2023/24 than previously forecast, which provides a greater level of financial resilience leading into a difficult budget year in 2023/24.
- 5.2 There are however only £15.47m of General revenue reserves (those that are not specific to services or schools) available over the medium term to support the Council through a period of increasing service demands and costs, and a continuing uncertain economic environment. ***It will be important that any future use of reserves is made wisely and prudently if the benefits of investment are to be maximised.***

5.3 Capitalisation direction has benefited the revenue budget during 2022/23 by £3,271,000, with a further £3,008,000 budgeted to be used in 2023/24 before reducing to £508,000 per annum thereafter. Capitalisation direction has effectively been used as a tool to aid in service redesign since being first used in 2019/20 and through a difficult budgetary period. Historically service redesign would have been achieved through calling upon general earmarked reserves, with each investment requiring a robust business case prior to being approved. ***As an Authority, we need to ensure we are explicitly identifying and monitoring the service benefits and efficiencies that are resulting from capitalisation direction, so that these are clearly captured within future service operating models.***

5.4 **Recurrent pressures impacting 2023/24** - Eight (non-corporate) service areas returned a budget deficit at outturn totalling £6,800,000. However, 99% of this concentrated itself in just five main service areas: Adults services, Children’s services, Homelessness, Additional learning needs, and central CYP costs. The majority of these pressures will be re-current in 2023/24, and whilst these will have been accommodated for during the 2023/24 budget process, they will continue to require close monitoring to ensure such trends are not repeated.

5.5 **Recurrent savings impacting 2023/24** - The remaining non-corporate service divisions returned a combined surplus at outturn totalling £3,120,000. A number of these were re-current from 2021/22 and therefore finance teams will need to reassure themselves whether accuracy of budgeting is an issue in these areas as we move into 2023/24.

5.6 **Robustness of budget forecasting during the year:**

Table 5: Budget forecasting at formal reporting periods

| (Surplus) / Deficit forecast in £000's at: | Overall | SCH | CYP | C&P | Monlife | RES | CEO | P&G | Other |
|---|----------------|------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Month 2 | 8,317 | 5,560 | 581 | 1,586 | 426 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 105 |
| Month 4 | 8,800 | 5,056 | 741 | 616 | 479 | 757 | 0 | 0 | 1,151 |
| Month 6 | 9,155 | 5,711 | 732 | 759 | 462 | 609 | (288) | 28 | 1,142 |
| Month 9 | 7,531 | 5,823 | 927 | (607) | 251 | 290 | (225) | 79 | 993 |
| Outturn | 3,503 | 4,204 | 1,344 | (1,545) | (376) | 292 | (291) | (107) | (18) |

There were significant variations in forecasting as the year progressed, however it has been another difficult year to obtain any budget certainty due to:

- Significant unbudgeted grant being notified during the year – Homelessness £1,000,000, Social Care £2,300,000;
- Use of unbudgeted capitalisation direction of £990,000;
- Services were asked to engage in £2,000,000 of budget recovery action part way through the year;
- The high inflationary environment remained for the whole year;
- Pay awards were significantly above initial projections obtained from external data;
- Grant administration continues to draw significant finance resources away from supporting services

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The report itself covers the resource implications of the entirety of the revenue and capital budget activity during the year. There are no further resource implications as a result of the recommendation in this report.

7 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

7.1 This report provides Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality of future generations' implications directly arising from this report.

7.2 Any such impacts will be fully considered subsequently when Council receives further budget proposals.

CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team
Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Revenue and capital outturn report including school balances

Appendix 2 – Progress made against mandated savings

- Appendix 3** – Capitalisation directive schedule
- Appendix 4** – Movement in individual school balances
- Appendix 5** – Capital slippage schedule
- Appendix 6** – Capital budget revisions requiring Cabinet approval

AUTHORS:

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SUBJECT: Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2022-23

MEETING: Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21st June 2023

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan during the period to March 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members scrutinise the progress report and recommend any refinements that could be made prior to its publication as the organisation's Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011 and within its specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the council's performance against its commitments made in its Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.2 The third Strategic Equality Plan covers the period 2020 – 2024 setting out objectives for the key areas that the authority has committed to addressing and accompanying actions. The monitoring report assesses progress made during this period with a particular focus on the year ending March 2023.
- 3.3 The objectives are:
- Give children the best possible start in life overcoming barriers to attainment and opportunity
 - Overcome inequalities in access to economic prosperity
 - Create cohesive communities
 - Provide services that are accessible to our public and support our workforce.
 - Create a diverse and inclusive workforce
 - Reduce the gender pay gap.

3.4 A detailed progress report is attached as appendix 1 highlighting progress against the actions contained in the strategic equality plan.

4. REASONS:

4.1 To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and that the residents of Monmouthshire with protected characteristics are protected from discrimination and their needs are fully considered in the services that we as a council provide.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no resource implications within the monitoring report.

6 WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

6.1 The Equality Objectives and the accompanying action plan and the Strategic Equality Plan within which they sit will have positive implications for all the protected characteristics. As this is a monitoring report rather than a policy decision, no assessment is required

8. CONSULTEES:

The scrutiny undertaken by the committee will help shape the final version of this report prior to publication.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024

10. AUTHOR:

Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644397

Introduction and Policy Context

This annual monitoring report covers progress during the year ending March 2023. It reports progress on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan which was approved by Council on the 5th of March 2020. You can access the latest Strategic Equality Plan on the Council's website at: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Links to strategies

This is not a standalone plan and has close links to a number of other key council, partnership and national strategies, plans and policies. Some of these are specifically focussed on equality and others have included equality as one of the key themes. Examples being:

- Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Cymraeg 2050 (1 million Welsh speakers by 2050)
- Strategaeth Mwy na geiriau/More than words strategy
- Monmouthshire Local Development Plan 2011-21
- Strategy for Older People Wales
- Well Being of Future Generations Act 1st April 2016
- Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Equality Act 2010 not only requires the Council to comply with its general and specific duties highlighted below, but also provides an opportunity for it to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of equality which have been a feature of its functions prior to the implementation of the Act.

Monmouthshire's strategic equality objectives 2020-2024

The strategic objectives that have been agreed in the new Strategic Equality Plan are:

- Give children the best possible start in life overcoming barriers to attainment and opportunity
- Overcome inequalities in access to economic prosperity
- Create cohesive communities
- Provide services that are accessible to our public and support our workforce.
- Create a diverse and inclusive workforce
- Reduce the gender pay gap

This report provides an update on progress against these objectives. It also contains links to other documents like the gender pay report.

Legislative Context

The General Duty of the Equality Act 2010

In exercising its functions the Council must have due regard to:

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Specific Duties in Wales

The broad purpose of the specific duties is to help public bodies, such as this Council, in their performance of the general duty, and to aid transparency. In Wales the specific duties are set by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

The following are the specific duties:

- Setting equality objectives and publishing strategic equality plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment information, pay differences and staff training
- Procurement
- Reporting and publishing

Objective 1: Give children the best possible start in life overcoming barriers to attainment and opportunity.

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | x | Religion or belief | |
| Disability | x | Sex | |
| Gender reassignment | | Sexual orientation | |
| Marriage or civil partnership | | Welsh Language | |
| Pregnancy or maternity | | Poverty | x |
| Race | | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|---|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being | Develop an integrated early intervention and prevention pathway to support children and families at the earliest opportunity and reduce the need for statutory intervention to keep people safe in particular those with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). | Head of Children's Services | <p>We have set up a multi-agency panel to receive and discuss children where concerns have arisen about their wellbeing or potential family vulnerabilities. The panel members include services provided by the council (such as social care, education and youth services); health services (including CAMHS) and a range of third sector and voluntary organisations (such as Action for Children). The panel approach has resulted in a coordinated response to referrals which helps to ensure that the family receive the right help, first time from the service that is best placed to provide it.</p> <p>We have developed the Building Stronger Families Team to work with families in a voluntary capacity around family goals and</p> |

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| | | | <p>outcomes. This has resulted in children and families receiving preventative support in situations where initial concerns have been identified, helping to divert the need for statutory intervention.</p> <p>We have also commenced a Welsh Government funded pilot - Early Years Integrated Transformation Programme. The pilot is a county wide programme for children aged 0 to 7 including prenatal support. This partnership pilot aims to devise a new early years system that removes the geographical and age barriers currently in place for Flying Start. It also embraces the Marmot approach of proportionate universalism for families with young children ensuring that support is provided by the right person, at the right time by using a “what matters” approach.</p> |
| Children attain their full potential | Map the current provision to support pupils eligible for Free School Meal (eFSM) through the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and Monmouthshire; identify any gaps and work with the EAS and wider partners to develop a cohesive strategy to raise the attainment of FSM pupils and close the gap between FSM and non FSM pupils. | Head of Achievement and Attainment. | <p>Since before the Estyn inspection in 2020 there has been a relentless focus on the standard of provision for these learners who experience disadvantage. Unfortunately, the pandemic constrained the authority’s ability to report the outcomes of learners compared to the past.</p> <p>However, this remains a key focus in individual evaluative conversations with schools and featured in our thematic work with the EAS during the autumn term 2022. Many recent Estyn reports indicate that learners eligible for free school meals are making good progress in their learning.</p> |
| Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being | Develop an effective 0 - 25 Partnership for Children and Young People; | Strategic Partnership Manager | <p>Work is underway to review the current Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership, in light of the new Gwent Well-Being plan and priorities and ensure the board has solid representation from key partners.</p> <p>The partnership is in the process of developing a framework, aligned to the Welsh Government Children & Young Peoples Plan (Mar 2022), with the aim of overseeing and quality assuring delivery of services for children, young people and families across the county.</p> |

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| | | | The framework will seek to support the partnership to identify gaps, maximise the use of funding & resources, and adjust practice where required |
| Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being (narrowing the gap outcome) | Develop the Community Focussed School Scheme | Tackling Poverty and Inequality Lead | <p>A Community Focussed Schools Coordinator is in post. Current projects in development include:</p> <p>Working with schools and the 'Grub Club' to develop cookery skills to help during the cost-of-living crisis and as a lifelong skill;</p> <p>Fun Family Fitness program to support families learning about moving and how to be more active together;</p> <p>Intergenerational enjoyment of food and eating program, to encourage older people and younger people to spend time together while enjoying food;</p> <p>Supporting schools with writing funding applications to improve their community focus as a school;</p> <p>Continuing to build relationships/links with local churches, community groups, businesses, third sector groups and individuals to work together in making schools more community focused;</p> <p>Supporting schools with achieving a Heart in the Community Award by discussing together a plan of action to achieve steps along the way;</p> <p>Signposting schools to what organisations or sessions are available outside of the school to support families during the cost-of-living crisis and with mental health support.</p> |
| Children & young people have sufficient opportunity to participate in play and physical activity | Carry out an annual Play sufficiency assessment. | Community Infrastructure Officer | The latest annual Play sufficiency assessment was carried out in June 2022 and is available at on the Council's website . |
| Children & young people have sufficient opportunity to | Deliver the playmaker leadership programme to year 5 and 6 pupils to | Youth Support and Active Travel Manager | We have delivered a continual roll out of the Sports Leaders UK playmaker programme to all year 5 pupils on an annual basis for the last 6 year period. This has resulted in circa 6,000 young |

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| participate in play and physical activity | support confidence, motivation, well-being and promote active citizenship | | people being given the opportunity to attend the workshop and support health and wellbeing provision across primary education before transitioning to secondary education and our associated leadership academy pathway to post 16 employment. |
| Children & young people have sufficient opportunity to participate in play and physical activity | Reduce the inequalities in physical activity rates between males and females with the Girls Can and Ladies Stronger Together programmes | Youth Support and Active Travel Manager | We have delivered a targeted series of programmes focused on participation for underrepresented groups. This has seen an increase in participation, membership update and direct pathways to support physical activity. |
| Children and young people are supported to improve their well-being Children with disabilities are able to access sporting activities | Put an action plan in place to achieve the Disability Sports Gold Award | Disability Sports Officer. | Disability Sport Wales has moved to a regional delivery model from 23/24 – based on this we are currently seeing clarity as to whether the insport accreditation process will now continue as a specific accreditation with DSW. Our commitment to fully inclusive provision remains and we have seen significant progress in fully inclusive schemes, such as the Action For Children Playschemes, to support this ongoing priority. |
| Young people who are threatened with homelessness have improved access to accommodation and support | Establish a positive pathway to identify potential homelessness at an early stage. Review services through Housing Support Grant | Housing and Communities Manager Flexible Funding Manager | A new homeless strategy for the authority was approved in 2022. It has established a number of actions to identify those at risk of homelessness earlier and provide timely interventions to prevent homelessness occurring. 50% of applicants are prevented from becoming homeless. An improvement to 68% has been targeted within the Community and Corporate plan |

Objective 2: Overcome inequalities in access to economic prosperity

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | x | Religion or belief | |
| Disability | x | Sex | x |
| Gender reassignment | | Sexual orientation | |
| Marriage or civil partnership | | Welsh Language | |
| Pregnancy or maternity | x | Poverty | x |
| Race | | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|---|--|--|---|
| More people have access to high speed broadband | Increase the availability and take up of broadband across the county to address digital exclusion. | Head of Enterprise and Community Animation | <p>The ability to access broadband is an imperative for many citizens, particularly in terms reducing travel costs and carbon impact or to access online services to address the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>This latest Open Market Review data reveals a much-improved situation in Monmouthshire, with further improvements to be made over the next three years.</p> <p>From 2010, UK Government policy focused on the roll-out of ‘superfast’ broadband – usually defined as broadband with download speeds of 30 Megabits per second</p> <p>In 2019 2,494 or 5.1% of all premises in Monmouthshire (our ‘digital deprivation rate’) did not have access to broadband at over 30 Mbps. By 2021 this has improved to 1,238 or 2.5% of households. This is around half of the Wales average which stood at 5.1% in 2021.</p> <p>Several broadband providers, including BT, Sky and Virgin Media, offer cheaper longterm tariffs²⁰ for those receiving benefits such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit.</p> |

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| | | | A full update on this was provided to Place Scrutiny Committee on 12 th January 2023. |
| People have the opportunity to raise their household income | Work as part of the Cardiff Capital Region to attract high skill, high wage jobs | Chief Officer, Communities and Place | The Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership has reviewed regional skills provision, worked with employers to understand their needs and advised Welsh Government on future prioritisation – with the goal of stimulating innovative approaches to maximising the impact of future skills activity and funding. Gross weekly pay for Monmouthshire residents was £714.80 in 2022 compared to £645.20 in 2020, an increase of 10.7%. However, the rise was more pronounced for male workers indicating more progress is needed to redress this balance. The increase for Wales as a whole was 10.2%. |
| People have the opportunity to raise their household income | Deliver the communities for work programme to reduce the number of people in, or at risk of, poverty | Youth Enterprise Manager | The scheme continues to operate and enables participants to gain a number of qualifications, develop new skills and provide meaningful work placements, whilst offering mentoring that suits individual need to develop confidence, further learning and employability skills. Local authority staff support an average of 100 people into work each year. |
| Household are able to maximise their incomes and minimise their outgoings | Continue to develop a tackling poverty plan for the county aligned to the aspirations of the Social Justice Strategy | Head of Enterprise and Community Animation | On-going programme of work |
| A reduction in the number of people not in education, training or employment | Provide learning, training and employability opportunities for 11 to 24 year olds | Youth Enterprise Manager | 2% of school leavers are not in education, training or employment. National Data shows that people with a disability are around four times more likely to be in this group than those without a disability. |
| More people with disabilities and care leavers in employment | Provide access to the labour market for people with disabilities and care leavers | Apprentice Graduate and Intern Co-ordinator. | We have introduced a guaranteed interview scheme for Monmouthshire care leavers, as long as they meet the basic criteria of the person specification. |

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| <p>Overcoming the barriers to accessing transport in rural areas</p> | <p>Work with technology companies to develop digital solutions for rural transport in Monmouthshire using funding from the Cabinet Office GovTech Catalyst Programme.</p> | <p>Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny</p> | <p>Following investment from the Cabinet Office a private sector technology company was awarded a contract to conduct research and development to develop a digital solution. This included an integrated transport planner, a booking system for demand responsive community transport and a ride-share scheme.</p> <p>The work was disrupted by the pandemic and, in a separate decision the UK Government discontinued the programme. However the research identified useful lessons which can be applied to future projects.</p> |
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Objective 3: Create cohesive communities

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | x | Religion or belief | x |
| Disability | x | Sex | x |
| Gender reassignment | x | Sexual orientation | x |
| Marriage or civil partnership | x | Welsh Language | x |
| Pregnancy or maternity | x | Poverty | x |
| Race | x | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|---|---|--|--|
| Better data is available about hate-based bullying | Improve recording of incidents of hate-based bullying and piloting appropriate interventions. | Healthy Schools and Bullying Inclusion Group | We have reconvened the 'Challenging Bullying Group' which has a range of school based and local authority professionals. This cross-agency working group has resulted in the development of an updated action plan and the instigation of new methods of recording bullying incidents using SIMS and PowerBI software. We are now rolling out training and support to all schools. |
| Increased awareness of the effect of hate-based bullying amongst young children in school | Hold awareness sessions in the Chepstow cluster initially. Then arrange for the sessions across the county. | As above with Connected Communities Manager / Community Cohesion Officer | |
| Increased awareness of the consequences of hate and | Hold an annual Holocaust Memorial Commemorative event in Community Hubs | Community Hub Officers | Holocaust Memorial Day has continued to be commemorated annually in Monmouthshire with presentations and guest speakers. It was held online during the pandemic. The most recent event, hosted by Friends of Caldicot Library, was held on Thursday |

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| discrimination in society | | | 26th of January, ahead of the annual commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 27th of January. |
| Increased awareness amongst children of the dangers of bullying in all of its forms | Promote Anti-Bullying Week on an annual basis | Communication and Engagement Team. Children and Young People Directorate | We have delivered/ offered a greater focus on positive, relationship based inclusive practices and challenge of any non-inclusive or discriminatory practices. As a result, many schools are developing values-based school policies and approaches. |
| A reduction in the effects of loneliness and isolation | To deliver the outcomes under the Connected Monmouthshire Plan. | Communities and Partnership Development Leads | An on-going programme of work is being delivered through Community Well Being Links Officers. |

Objective 4: To provide services that are accessible to our public and support our workforce.

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | x | Religion or belief | x |
| Disability | x | Sex | x |
| Gender reassignment | x | Sexual orientation | x |
| Marriage or civil partnership | x | Welsh Language | x |
| Pregnancy or maternity | x | Poverty | x |
| Race | x | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ensure that we consider our diverse audience when we communicate as a council. | Continually adhere to the National Principles of Public Engagement | Communications and Engagement Team. | The Council has developed a draft public participation strategy in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This includes adhering to and embedding the national principles. |
| A fully accessible website providing information about council services | Refresh the council's website to ensure it meets the latest web content accessibility guidelines | Digital Marketing Officer | Significant progress has been made improving the accessibility of the council's website. This means that it can be navigated using speech recognition software and the content can be accessed using a screen reader. There are still some problems with the site and these are published at https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/accessibility/ |

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| More services are available digitally thereby improving accessibility | Continue to make more services available digitally through the council's app and the Chatbot | Digital Programme Office Manager, | <p>More services have been made available via the My Monmouthshire app and usage has remained high, albeit users have expressed some frustrations with the design of forms. A review of customer service is taking place to identify steps that can be taken to improve experience. The Council's chatbot has around 1600 unique users each month but the range of questions that can be answered by the Artificial Intelligence so there remains a reliance on agent 'takeovers'.</p> <p>The authority continues to promote and resource access to services through community hubs and its telephone contact centre</p> |
| New and improved face-to-face access to council services | Open a new Community Hub in Abergavenny with significantly improved access | Head of Commercial and Landlord Services | The new Community Hub opened in the refurbished Abergavenny Town Hall in the autumn of 2022 offering improved access to an integrated service offer in the heart of Abergavenny. |
| Residents of Monmouthshire have access to independent advice | <p>Continue to fund Monmouthshire Citizens Advice Bureau</p> <p>Work closely with the Disability Advice Project to access advice from the Big Lottery funded project</p> | Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny. Equality and Welsh Language Officer. | The authority continues to provide grant funding to Citizens Advice Monmouthshire. Their latest impact report shows that the service increased incomes by £473,924 in the third quarter of 2022-23. The project assisted 759 people, 60% were female and 40% male. 6% of those assisted had a disability |
| Improved services for dealing with mental health in Monmouthshire | <p>Continue to work with MIND on delivering the rural mental health project.</p> <p>Improve the support for workforce mental health</p> | <p>Strategic Partnerships Manager</p> <p>Human Resources Manager</p> | <p>Mind Monmouthshire was successful in receiving winning a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund for an innovative Rural Workers Project. The project supports those in the farming community and allied industries in a wide range of issues.</p> <p>An increased range of support is available for staff including counselling, the 'Go-To' group of staff who offer peer-to-peer support and a self-directed resources such as https://www.melo.cymru/</p> |
| Support for women suffering from post-natal depression | Deliver the Flying Start – 1000 days project. | Flying Start Manager | We continue to fund 0.2 whole time equivalent Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy staff through our Children and Communities Grant with peri-natal infant and maternal mental health being a priority. This funding is being increased via the Early Years Integration and Transformation Programme (EYITP) budget |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>on a regional basis ensuring equity of support across the whole local authority, not just within Flying Start areas. Flying Start and the EYITP are also supporting established community groups across the county to ensure sustainability and evidence-based advice when required. This includes breastfeeding/bottle feeding and baby massage support. We are also utilising funding provided by MCC's Direct Food Grant to maintain a supply of infant formula in line with UNICEF's Baby Friendly Guidance for Local Authorities. This crisis supply will ensure that babies receive nutrition during times of financial crisis for families unable to benefit from Healthy Start.</p> <p>Through the EYITP, we are now co-delivering a new Early Years Core Programme which includes support for mothers in the prenatal and perinatal period. Midwives and Health Visitors can refer in for support, but mothers are also able to request support themselves. There is no geographical restriction on this support as it is within the EYITP.</p> |
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Objective 5: Create a diverse and inclusive workforce

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | x | Religion or belief | x |
| Disability | x | Sex | x |
| Gender reassignment | x | Sexual orientation | x |
| Marriage or civil partnership | x | Welsh Language | x |
| Pregnancy or maternity | x | Poverty | x |
| Race | x | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|--|--|---|---|
| Those working in key sectors such as home care are less likely to experience in-work poverty | Continue to pay the living wage to all council employees | Chief Officer, Resources / Chief Officer Social Care, Health and Safeguarding | Monmouthshire County Council introduced the real Living Wage in April 2014 and continues to ensure that its lowest paid employees still earn at least this amount |
| More people with disabilities are applying to work for the county council | Deliver the action plan to attain Disability Confident Employer status | Equality and Welsh Language Officer | Disability Confident Employer status was attained in 2022 and runs through to 2025. Officers are presently developing an action plan to achieve level 2 status |
| People are able to access more services fully using | Proactively target new job opportunities at Welsh speakers | Equality and Welsh Language Officer. | 99.8% of posts advertised were at least Welsh language desirable in 2022-23. Key front line posts, and those which are Welsh language essential are advertised in Welsh language publications |

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| the Welsh language | | | and we have seen an increased number of applications from Welsh speakers where vacancies are targeted in this way. |
| A more diverse workforce | Introduce more graduate and intern and cadetship opportunities to increase workforce diversity | Apprentice Graduate and Intern Co-ordinator. | We introduced the Apprentice Graduate and Intern Strategy (AGI) to support and increase the number of opportunities across the council. Work continues on this as an integral part of strategic workforce planning. At present there are 14 AGI's across the council with several more opportunities currently being worked up. |

Objective 6: Reduce the gender pay gap in Monmouthshire County Council

Why This Matters/Evidence

- Gender stereo-typing in employment is still prevalent and leads to a gender pay gap.
- There is inequality between female and male wage levelsⁱ
- Scarcity of public transport and the high cost of running a car can be a barrier to females maximising their earning potential.

Protected Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Age | | Religion or belief | |
| Disability | | Sex | x |
| Gender reassignment | | Sexual orientation | |
| Marriage or civil partnership | | Welsh Language | |
| Pregnancy or maternity | x | Poverty | x |
| Race | | | |

Actions

| Outcome | Action | Responsibility | Progress |
|--|---|--|---|
| Contribution towards breaking the cycle of Gender Stereo-typing that exists in society and has a negative impact on gender pay equality. | <p>Publish an annual Gender Pay Report</p> <p>Look at alternative ways of recruiting staff to break down the barriers of gender stereotyping.</p> | <p>Human Resources Manager</p> <p>Equality and Welsh Language Officer.</p> <p>Communication, Marketing and Engagement Manager / Human Resources Manager.</p> | <p>The gender pay report is published annually and reported to Council, based on a snapshot on 31st March each year. Mean earnings for males were £14.60 compared to £13.65 for females, a gap of 95 pence.</p> <p>The pay gap is strongly affected by the make-up of the Council's workforce and its distribution. The majority of the Council's employees are in the lower grades. This is particularly evident across social care, cleaning and catering service areas which have a large female workforce who in general terms work more part time hours, as opposed to roles dominated by males in areas such as Highways, Waste and Grounds as an example, who tend to work full time hours. Therefore, the Gender Pay Gap is as much a societal gap as a pure pay gap.</p> <p>There is now a gender balances amongst elected councillors which acts as a positive signal to potential recruits.</p> |
| Understand Gender pay differences in our organisation | Gather and analyse gender data | Human Resources Manager / Organisational Development Manager | The publication of the annual gender pay report provides a better understanding of pay differences. The full report is available at https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/pay-policy-and-pay-multipliers/ |
| Equal pay for work of equal value | Revise the People Strategy ensuring gender pay gap data is used to inform the strategy. | Organisational Development Manager | The People Strategy is currently being revised following the adoption of the new Community and Corporate Plan by Council in April 2023. The gender pay report will be a key part of the evidence base. |
| Reduced gender pay difference in the County | Measures added to the Corporate Plan | Human Resources Manager / Organisational | A new Community and Corporate Plan was approved by Council in April 2023. It contains measures covering the gender pay gap and a commitment to disaggregate more data to identify differences in the experiences of, and services provided to groups of people who possesses different protected characteristics. |

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| | | Development Manager | |
|--|--|------------------------|--|

ⁱ Earnings by place of work – Male 563.6, Female 562. ONS annual survey of hours and earnings – October 2019
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofworkbylocalauthorityshetable7>

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

| Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|------------------------|
| Meeting Date | Subject | Purpose of Scrutiny | Responsibility | Type of Scrutiny |
| 21 st June 2023 | Public Protection 2022-23 Performance Report | To review the performance of the service area. | David Jones Paul Griffiths | Performance Monitoring |
| | 2022/23 Budget monitoring – Outturn Report | To scrutinise the Revenue and Capital Outturn reports for 2022-2023. | Jonathan Davies Rachel Garrick | Budget Monitoring |
| | Strategic Equality Plan Monitoring | To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan. | Matthew Gatehouse Angela Sandles | Performance Monitoring |
| 17 th July 2023 | Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report 2022-23 | To scrutinise the Council's performance in complying with Welsh Language Standards. | Matthew Gatehouse Nia Roberts Angela Sandles | Performance Monitoring |
| | Self-Assessment Process | To scrutinise the self-assessment process to inform members' understanding of the Council's arrangements and identify areas for further scrutiny. | Richard Jones Hannah Carter Councillor Brocklesby(?) | Performance Monitoring |
| | Month 2 report and budget recovery plan | To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit at Month 2 | Jonathan Davies Councillor Garrick | Budget Monitoring |

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

| Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Meeting Date | Subject | Purpose of Scrutiny | Responsibility | Type of Scrutiny |
| 20 th September 2023 | Month 4 Budget Monitoring | To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit at Month 4 | Jonathan Davies Councillor Garrick | Budget Monitoring |
| 24 th October 2023 | LDP Annual Monitoring Report | To scrutinise prior to Cabinet Member sign off for dispatch to Welsh Government. | Mark Hand | Pre-decision Scrutiny |
| | Planning Annual Performance Report | Scrutiny of the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government. | Mark Hand | Pre-decision Scrutiny |
| 14 th November 2023 | Safeguarding Performance Report | To scrutinise the performance of the service area. | Jane Rodgers | Performance Monitoring |
| | Chief Officer for Social Care and Health: Annual Report | To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the report and scrutinise the performance of the service area. | Jane Rodgers | Pre-decision Scrutiny/Performance Monitoring |
| 22 nd November 2023 | Month 6 Budget Monitoring | To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit at Month 6 | Jonathan Davies Councillor Garrick | Budget Monitoring |
| To be confirmed | Chief Officer for Social Care and Health: Annual Report | To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the report and scrutinise the performance of the service area. | Jane Rodgers | Pre-decision Scrutiny/Performance Monitoring |
| | Registration Services Annual Report 21/22 | To review the performance of the service area. | David Jones Catherine Fookes/Angela Sandles | Performance Monitoring |

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

| Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|------------------|
| Meeting Date | Subject | Purpose of Scrutiny | Responsibility | Type of Scrutiny |
| 20 th February 2024 | Scrutiny of the Budget Proposals | Scrutiny of the budget mandates relating to the committee's remit. | Peter Davies Jonathan Davies Councillor Garrick | Budget Scrutiny |
| 26 th March 2024 | | | | |
| 21 st June 2024 | | | | |
| To be confirmed | Recruitment and retention | Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver. | | |
| To be confirmed | Council and community resilience | To discuss learning following the impact of the pandemic and how we prepare for a future one. | | |
| To be confirmed | Use of Reserves | Future proofing and resilience planning as well as supporting long-term strategic priorities. | | |
| To be confirmed | Asset Management Strategy | Long-term strategy for assets where there may be a change of service provision. To seek some assurances on the focus of the asset management strategy and discuss the concept of selling or retaining assets ~ this could feed into early work on the Asset Management Strategy. | Peter Davies | Workshop |

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

| Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| Meeting Date | Subject | Purpose of Scrutiny | Responsibility | Type of Scrutiny |
| To be confirmed | Procurement Performance Review | Review of the joint working arrangements and benefits realised to date. | Scott James Steve Robinson Rachel Garrick | Performance Monitoring |
| To be confirmed | Welsh Education Strategic Plan | To scrutinise performance against the action plan. | Sharon Randall Smith Will Mclean | Performance Monitoring |
| To be confirmed | Strategic Risk Register | To agree any future risks for scrutiny. | Matthew Gatehouse | Work Programming |

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Action List

27th February 2023

| Minute Item: | Subject | Officer / Member | Outcome |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 4 | To respond after the meeting if there are any further considerations relating to possible flaws in the WG guidance and potential negative impacts – Section 12A, paragraph 16 | Rachel Garrick, Ruth Donovan | Response given by Councillor Garrick in Council on 9 th March: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Rq2U5U0sXA&list=PLLMqn4nAaFJDSWhaClo4FpWTMdpExkW0&t=3h28m50s |
| 5 | To inform members when the Month 11 or Year End budget outturns will come to committee, and to then update the Forward Work Programme | Jonathan Davies, Robert McGowan | 21 st June 2023 |

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| Committee / Decision Maker | Meeting date / Decision due | Report Title | Responsible Cabinet Member | Purpose | Author | Date item added to the planner |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Council | 01-Jul-25 | RLDP for Adoption | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the RLDP following receipt of the Inspector's report, making it the County's Development Plan as defined by S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 23-Aug-22 |
| Council | 01-Sep-24 | RLDP submission for examination | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To endorse the submission of the Deposit RLDP to the Welsh Government for examination by an independent Inspector. By agreeing, Council will be saying it wants this document to be the adopted RLDP for Monmouthshire. | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 23-Aug-22 |
| Council | 18-Apr-24 | RLDP Deposit Plan endorsement for consultation | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To endorse the Deposit RLDP for public consultation and engagement. | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 5-Jan-23 |
| ICMD | 17-Apr-24 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4 held on 7th March 2024 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Dave Jarrett | 30-Mar-23 |
| Cabinet | 10-Apr-24 | Adoption of Abergavenny Placemaking Plan | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the Abergavenny Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Abergavenny Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 3-Oct-22 |
| | 06-Mar-24 | 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 9 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Jon Davies | 27-Apr-23 |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-24 | Adoption of Magor Placemaking Plan | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the Magor with Undy Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Magor with Undy Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 3-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-24 | Adoption of Monmouth Placemaking Plan | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the Monmouth Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Monmouth Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 3-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 10-Jan-24 | Monmouthshire Destination Management Plan | | | Matthew Lewis | 10-Feb-22 |
| ICMD | 03-Jan-24 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3 held on 7th December 2023 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Dave Jarrett | 30-Mar-23 |

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|---------|-----------|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| Cabinet | 13-Dec-23 | Local Flood Strategy | Catrin Maby | To adopt the Local Flood Strategy Plan | Mark Hand / Ross Price | 4-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 13-Dec-23 | 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 6 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Jon Davies | 27-Apr-23 |
| Cabinet | 13-Dec-23 | Pavement Café Policy | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences | Mark Hand / Paul Keeble | 4-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 13-Dec-23 | Road Safety Strategy | Catrin Maby | To adopt the Road Safety Strategy | Mark Hand / Paul Keeble | 4-Oct-22 |
| Council | 26-Oct-23 | Appointment of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum | | To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum for its next 3 year period. | Matthew Lewis | 18-Jan-23 |
| ICMD | 25-Oct-23 | LDP Annual Monitoring Report | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To endorse the LDP Annual Monitoring Report for submission to WG | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 16-Jan-23 |
| ICMD | 25-Oct-23 | Planning Annual Performance Report | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To endorse the Planning Department Annual Performance Report for submission to WG | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 16-Jan-23 |
| Council | 23-Oct-23 | Appointment of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum | | To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum for its next 3 year period. | Matthew Lewis | 18-Jan-23 |
| Council | 23-Oct-23 | RLDP Preferred Strategy consultation report | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To endorse the RLDP Preferred Strategy including any proposed changes arising from the public consultation. | Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis | 3-Oct-22 |
| ICMD | 11-Oct-23 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 2 held on 14th September 2023 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Dave Jarrett | 30-Mar-23 |

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|---------|-----------|---|---|--|---|-----------|
| Cabinet | 11-Oct-23 | Local Transport Plan | Catrin Maby | To adopt the Local Transport Plan | Debra Hill-Howells / Christian Schmidt | 4-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 11-Oct-23 | Economic Development Strategy | | REFRESHING THE MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESS GROWTH & ENTERPRISE STRATEGY and action plan in setting the economic ambition for the county and providing a strategic framework that guides future economic | Hannah Jones | 9-Jan-23 |
| Cabinet | 04-Oct-23 | Economic Development Strategy | | | Deb Hill Howells | 16-May-23 |
| Cabinet | 04-Oct-23 | 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 4 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Jon Davies | 27-Apr-23 |
| Cabinet | 06-Sep-23 | Proposal to establish a Welsh medium seedling school in Monmouth | | Cabinet to consider objection report and make final determination on how to proceed. | Debbie Graves | 27-Mar-23 |
| ICMD | 02-Aug-23 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 1 held on 22nd June 2023 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Dave Jarrett | |
| ICMD | 02-Aug-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 11 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - parking/waiting restrictions at Justins Hill and Wyesham Avenue, Wyesham; Main Road and Castle Way, Portskewett; Loading Restriction, DYLs | Mark Hand | 28-Mar-23 |
| ICMD | 02-Aug-23 | 'Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 12 | | 'Agreement to make the traffic order - parking/waiting restrictions at Justins Hill and Wyesham Avenue, Wyesham; Main Road and Castle Way, Portskewett; lane leading to Sugarloaf Llanwenarth car park; and Wonastow | Mark Hand | 24-May-23 |
| ICMD | 02-Aug-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 10 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - Exception Orders to identify those restricted roads that will remain 30mph in September 2023 instead of defaulting to 20mph | Mark Hand | 3-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 26-Jul-23 | The Review of Respite Services For People With Learning Disabilities | | | Ceri York | 14-Mar-23 |

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|---------|-----------|--|--|--|------------------|-----------|
| Cabinet | 26-Jul-23 | Month 2 report and budget recovery plan | | | Jon Davies | 8-Jun-23 |
| Cabinet | 26-Jul-23 | S016 Funding Castle Park and Arch Bishop Rowan Williams Schools. | | | Cath Saunders | 13-Jun-23 |
| Cabinet | 26-Jul-23 | Respite Opportunities for People with Learning Disabilities | Tudor Thomas - Social Care & Safeguarding | To provide an overview of the Review of Respite Services for people with learning disabilities and seek approval for implementation of the report's recommendations | Ceri York | 9-Dec-22 |
| Council | 20-Jul-23 | Gifts & Hospitality Report | | | Matt Phillips | 12-Jun-23 |
| Council | 20-Jul-23 | Freedom of the Borough Presentation | | | Joe Skidmore | 5-May-23 |
| Council | 20-Jul-23 | Standards Committee Annual Report | | This report is the first annual report from the Standards Committee to Council as required by the change in law set out in the Local Government and Elections Act 2021. It has to report on the discharge of the Committee's functions for the | Matt Phillips | 10-Oct-22 |
| ICMD | 12-Jul-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 10 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - prohibition of driving Pwll Du, Llanelly Hill | Mark Hand | 19-May-23 |
| ICMD | 12-Jul-23 | transfer the school balances for both Deri View and King Henry VIII School to the new King Henry VIII 3 – 19 School. | Rachel Garrick - Resources | Both King Henry VIII school and Deri View Primary school are closing on 31 st August 2023 and the new King Henry VIII 3 – 19 School will open on 1 st September 2023, under a statutory closure of schools the financial balances transfer to the Local Authority, | Nikki Wellington | 4-Apr-23 |
| Cabinet | 05-Jul-23 | RESERVATION OF GRAVE PLOTS | | To seek cabinet approval to cease the provision of reserving grave spaces (not incl cremated remains plots) in Llanfoist Cemetery | Rhian Jackson | 7-Nov-22 |
| Cabinet | 05-Jul-23 | 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Outturn Report | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Jon Davies | 27-Apr-23 |

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|---------|-----------|---|--|---|-------------------------|-----------|
| ICMD | 28-Jun-23 | Highway Traffic Regulation Order | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - making permanent the part-time prohibition of driving on Cross Street and Market Street Abergavenny | Mark Hand | 6-Jun-23 |
| Council | 22-Jun-23 | Gwent Public Services Board Well-being plan | | To approve the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan that sets out the steps being taken collaboratively by public services to improve wellbeing in Gwent ahead of approval by the Gwent Public Services Board. | Richard Jones | 20-Jan-23 |
| Council | 22-Jun-23 | Chief Officer Children and Young People's Report 2023 | | | Will McLean | 14-Feb-23 |
| Cabinet | 07-Jun-23 | Adoption of Transforming Chepstow Masterplan | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To adopt the Transforming Chepstow Masterplan, co-produced with Chepstow Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 3-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 07-Jun-23 | Transforming Towns Strategic Grant regeneration priorities and LUF3 bid | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To agree the priority projects for bids for WG Strategic grant funding to 24/25 and the submission for round 3 of Levelling Up Funding | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 3-Oct-22 |
| Cabinet | 07-Jun-23 | Proposal to establish a Welsh medium seedling school in Monmouth | | Cabinet to consider the results of the consultation, recommendations and decide whether to publish statutory notices. | Debbie Graves | 27-Mar-23 |
| Cabinet | 07-Jun-23 | Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy | Rachel Garrick - Resources | To endorse the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy | Scott James | 22-Aug-22 |
| ICMD | 24-May-23 | Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 9 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - including Llantrisant 20mph village lane, 40mph through road, possibly Llantrisant (Usk to Wentwood) 50mph; 20mph Gilwern and surrounding villages | Mark Hand | 14-Apr-23 |
| Council | 18-May-23 | Political Balance Report | | The Council is required to review at, or as soon as practicable after, the Council's annual meeting, the representation of different political groups on the bodies to which the Council makes appointments. | Matt Phillips | 2-Feb-23 |
| Council | 18-May-23 | Outside Bodies Report | | To appoint representatives to serve on outside | Matt Phillips | 2-Feb-23 |

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|---------|-----------|--|---|--|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Council | 18-May-23 | Appointments to Committees | | To appoint committees together with their membership and terms of reference in accordance with the Council's Constitution. | Nicola Perry | 2-Feb-23 |
| Council | 18-May-23 | Constitution update | | For the Monitoring Officer to bring proposed amendments and highlight changes made over the previous 12 months | Matt Phillips | 2-Feb-23 |
| Council | 18-May-23 | Corporate Parenting Strategy | | | Diane Corrister | 24-Aug-22 |
| Cabinet | 17-May-23 | Review of Home to School Transport Policy 24/25. | Martyn Groucutt - Education | The purpose: Is to seek approval to commence consultation on proposed amendments to the Home to School Transport Policy for the academic year 2024/25. | Deb Hill Howells | 12-Apr-23 |
| Cabinet | 17-May-23 | Monnow Street public realm improvements | Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy | To agree how we proceed with proposals for Monnow Street public realm following consultation | Mark Hand / Dan Fordham | 6-Mar-23 |
| ICMD | 10-May-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 9 MOVED TO 24TH MAY | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - including Llantrisant 20mph village lane, 40mph through road, possibly Llantrisant (Usk to Wentwood) 50mph; 20mph Gilwern and surrounding villages | Mark Hand | 3-Oct-22 |
| Council | 20-Apr-23 | Motion for the Rivers and Oceans update | | Deferred - new date to be advised | Hazel Clatworthy | 10-Jan-23 |
| Council | 20-Apr-23 | Community and Corporate Plan | | To seek approval of a new Community and Corporate Plan that sets the direction for the council and county of Monmouthshire, articulating the authority's purpose and priorities alongside the steps we will take to deliver these, the | Matt Gatehouse | 6-Feb-23 |
| ICMD | 12-Apr-23 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4 held on 9th March 2023 | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Dave Jarrett | |
| Cabinet | 05-Apr-23 | Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan | Sara Burch - Inclusive and Active Communities | To agree a plan to transition the delivery of homelessness that minimises the use of and the time homeless applicants spend in temporary accommodation | Rebecca Cresswell / Ian Bakewell | 24-Jan-23 |

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| ICMD | 22-Mar-23 | Non Domestic Rates application for Hardship Relief - RESTRICTED | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Ruth Donovan | |
| ICMD | 22-Mar-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 8 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - including Monmouth Road, Raglan no right turn onto A40; resi permit parking at Exmouth Place, Chepstow and Ross Road, Abergavenny; 3T weight restriction on Old Wye Bridge Chepstow; waiting | Mark Hand | |
| Council | 09-Mar-23 | Pay Policy | | To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act." | Sally Thomas | 1-Feb-23 |
| Council | 09-Mar-23 | Council Tax Premiums | | | Peter Davies | 18-Jan-23 |
| Council | 09-Mar-23 | Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy | | | Jon Davies | 17-May-22 |
| Council | 09-Mar-23 | Youth Council | | | Jade Atkins | 7-Dec-22 |
| ICMD | 08-Mar-23 | Proposed amendment to primary school catchment area – Llandenny Village | Martyn Groucutt - Education | | Debbie Graves | 10-Jan-23 |
| ICMD | 08-Mar-23 | Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 8 DEFERRED TO 22 MARCH | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order - including Monmouth Road, Raglan no right turn onto A40; resi permit parking at Exmouth Place, Chepstow and Ross Road, Abergavenny; 3T weight restriction on Old Wye Bridge Chepstow; waiting | Mark Hand | |
| Council | 02-Mar-23 | Final Budget Sign Off including Council Tax Resolution | | | Jon Davies | |
| Cabinet | 01-Mar-23 | 2023/4 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals | | | Jon Davies | 17-May-22 |

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|---------|-----------|---|--|--|-----------------|-----------|
| Cabinet | 01-Mar-23 | 2023/4 WCF/Trust Treasury Fund Investments | | | Dave Jarrett | 17-May-22 |
| Cabinet | 01-Mar-23 | Month 9 budget monitoring report | | | Jon Davies | 6-Feb-23 |
| Cabinet | 01-Mar-23 | Monmouthshire ECO Flex 'Joint Statement of Intent' and Memorandum of Understanding" | | | Steve Griffiths | 16-Nov-22 |
| Cabinet | 01-Feb-23 | Tudor Street | | | | 9-Jan-23 |
| ICMD | 25-Jan-23 | Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 7 | Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment | Agreement to make the traffic order | Mark Hand | 15-Dec-22 |
| ICMD | 25-Jan-23 | Community Council and Police Precepts - final | Rachel Garrick - Resources | | Jon Davies | 17-May-22 |
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | 'To determine the name for the new 3-19 School in Abergavenny | | 'To determine the name for the new 3-19 School in Abergavenny | Cath Saunders | 28-Nov-22 |
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | Council Diary | | To confirm the Council Diary 23/24 | John Pearson | 14-Dec-22 |
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | Appointments | | A report for Council to appoint or ratify a number of appointments to bodies and positions | Matt Phillips | |
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | Community and Corporate Plan | | | | |

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|---------|-----------|---|---|---|---------------|-----------|
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | Tudor Road Call-In | | | Nicola Perry | 3-Jan-23 |
| Council | 19-Jan-23 | Council Tax Reduction Scheme | | | Ruth Donovan | 31-May-22 |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-23 | Garden Waste | | | Carl Touhig | 21-Dec-22 |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-23 | Draft Revenue & Capital Proposals | | | Jon Davies | |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-23 | Council Tax Premiums Consultation - Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes | | | Ruth Donovan | |
| Cabinet | 18-Jan-23 | Proposal to establish a Welsh Medium Seedling school in Monmouth | | To seek cabinet approval to commence statutory consultation processes to establish a Welsh Medium seedling provision in Monmouth. | Debbie Graves | 23-Sep-22 |
| ICMD | 11-Jan-23 | Clydach Ironworks Enhancement | Sara Burch - Inclusive and Active Communities | To seek approval for the transfer of land associated with the Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme | Matthew Lewis | 8-Dec-23 |
| ICMD | 11-Jan-23 | Welsh Church Fund Working Group | | | Dave Jarrett | 17-May-22 |
| Cabinet | | | | | | |

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with remote attendance on Monday, 27th February, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill, (Chairman)
County Councillor Tony Kear, (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Ian Chandler, Peter Strong, Laura Wright, Sue Riley, Phil Murphy substituting for Paul Pavia and Louise Brown substituting for Ann Webb

Also in attendance County Councillors: Rachel Garrick, Cabinet Member for Resources

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Resources
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Matt Phillips, Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance
Ruth Donovan, Assistant Head of Finance
Ian Saunders, Chief Operating Officer, MonLife
Stacey Jones, Senior Accountant
Tyrone Stokes, Accountant
Nikki Wellington, Finance Manager

APOLOGIES: County Councillors Paul Pavia and Ann Webb

1. Declarations of Interest.

None.

2. Public Open Forum.

No submissions were received.

3. Pre-decision scrutiny of the Council Tax Premiums Consultation: Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes - To consider the findings of the public consultation exercise on introducing council tax premiums from 1st April 2024 (report to follow).

Cabinet Member Rachel Garrick presented the report and answered the members' questions with Ruth Donovan and Matthew Gatehouse.

Challenge:

Can the list of exceptions be reconsidered, particularly regarding empty homes which are listed buildings, given that renovations can take a long time?

Council Tax legislation and guidance must be followed, which is specific about a 12-month allowance for properties being empty before a premium can be charged. A property exempt from council tax isn't liable for the premium. A 6-month exemption can be granted if substantial renovations are required, and that can be extended to 12 months. The exemptions can also apply to properties for sale, etc. – there is a list of other categories for exemptions.

Is it correct that those who already on the database as owning second homes voted for an increase?

It was an open, public consultation. There are 400 properties on the database classed as empty, and 190 registered as a second home. We wrote to those property owners advising that we were considering a premium and asking for their views in the consultation; we opened it up to the wider public subsequently. We therefore have a mixture of responses from those directly affected and the wider public.

The consultation was only available online?

Some without access contacted us and we took them through the consultation in the contact centres/hubs.

But if someone wasn't online, they wouldn't have known about it in the first place?

There was also a press release, so it wasn't just on the website, and we encouraged people to contact us if they couldn't complete the form online.

What is the relevance Q.s 11-15 here – are they not an infringement of privacy? Are they generic when a questionnaire is sent out?

Certain questions have to be asked in any public consultation, such as the potential impact on the Welsh language, for example, and others are good practice to be asked when policy changes are being considered, especially if there is a potential disproportionate impact on a particular group, even though they might not be legally required. And these questions are only optional.

Have colleagues in other authorities with high second homes rates found that there are means by which the legislation can be avoided?

No, we haven't seen or heard of any. Previously, it was legitimate for council tax properties to move into business rates around the thresholds for self-catering, which meant a reduction in the council tax base – other authorities reported a significant shift in this regard, as a result of the premiums. The rules around self-catering have changed since then: businesses have to be available to let commercially for at least 252 days per year (previously 140), and must be let in the previous 12 months for 182 days (previously 70 days). We anticipate a number of properties will come back into the council tax list, as a result of this threshold changing.

What counts as a 'derelict' home, and what potential is there for a long-term empty property owner to declare it derelict to avoid council tax? How do we assess that?

We would need to refer to the Revenues team for a definitive answer. For any property to be removed from a council tax list, it would have to be reviewed and assessed by the valuation office agency which advises the local authority of the council tax band or rateable value of a property – they decide if it is rated or not. If the building is derelict, it would have to meet criteria in order to be removed from a list e.g. if it were completely uninhabitable. So, the owner would need to contact the VOA and ask that the property be removed from the list.

Is there any potential to have a sliding scale in terms of second home occupancy?

That would be difficult to administer – how we would know that the property was being used every weekend, for example. We wouldn't be able to build that into our processes. We are clear that the intention is to review the impact on the local economy, in the coming year.

There are concerns about the questionnaire: the protected characteristics listed aren't in the Equality Act. Not everyone was allowed to say what the premium was – only those who said 'yes' to there being a premium were asked what the percentage should be, and there was no '0%' option.

The questionnaire is very clear and simple: if an individual has stated that they do not agree with the level of council tax, they have expressed a preference for 0%. They aren't asked to reiterate that because they don't need to.

If an elderly person has a home in one area they might need to get a small warden-assisted place somewhere else, to be near to relatives for help with their care. They might be selling their other house or they are in a warden-assisted property which is difficult to sell due to the large service charges. Should there not be exceptions in those circumstances? What about probate?

When a premium is awarded, it is down to whether there is already a council tax exemption on the property, or if it is in one of the 7 classes detailed in the guidance. In the case of someone going into a residential home, for example, if it is a permanent arrangement then there is an exemption in place for their property, under current legislation. A property is exempt for 6 months if it is empty because of probate, and can be exempted for up to 1 year because it is linked into the restriction for sale. Under the 7 classes, if the property is being marketed for sale, it is exempt for 1 year. So, there is scope in the legislation to allow for some of these circumstances.

If a property is listed and an alteration is requested before it is let, planning can take a year – is there not a danger of some of these actions falling prey to the law of unintended consequences? Do the recommendations not need a third, discretionary category? What if something is not covered by the timescales allowed for by the list of exceptions?

The discretionary category is something that we will need to consider as we go into the 12-month period before charging residents will begin (assuming it is approved now), and an entire infrastructure dealing with how this is administered will need to be created. We know from other councils already operating a premium that they have lots of contacts, questions and appeals from residents – we need to be ready for that, and learn from other councils about these sorts of queries. Guidance will then be put together for the Revenues team to follow, along with an appeals process. We therefore don't have all of the answers yet but will look to develop things in the coming months. We will reflect on what level of discretion can be applied.

Is it possible to have back-to-back exemptions?

Yes, a property can have back-to-back exemptions, for different reasons.

If the IIA is completed first – it should inform the questionnaire – so maybe questions around employed status/ income, would be more relevant. Also, if the other questions are optional, and differing numbers of respondents replied to each question, then are they helpful?

It's very important that we strive to complete the IIAs as early as possible in any process – the earlier we do so, the more likely that we can use the responses to inform the policy proposal.

There used to be an appeals panel – what happened to that?

We aren't aware of this taking place, currently, nor having done in the last 7 years. We might need to put it in place, given the level of queries once the premium is implemented.

The consultation was in fact clear that there was an option to say there shouldn't be an increase, i.e. 0%. Regarding equal opportunities, it's important to collect that data, as we want to ensure that questionnaires reach a good cross-section. The equal opportunities data showed that greatest number of respondents were over-65, so in fact the elderly were included.

Yes, it is essential that we use the equal opportunities information to ensure that we are reaching all sections of our community.

Section 12, paragraph 16 of the legal guidance states that a dwelling being occupied for one or more periods of 6 weeks or less during the year will not alter the status of a long-term empty building. This means that, for example, if an individual were in a property for 12 4-week periods, the building would still be classed as long-term empty? What is the practicality of that?

This is seen particularly in business rates: furniture, for example, is moved into an 'empty' space for a period of time, to attract an exemption from paying business rates, and this is also seen with council tax. This is a particular point that the guidance is trying to address.

But what about actual occupation of the dwelling by an individual?

It is specific guidance from Welsh Government, to address someone, for example, moving in a token piece of furniture, to try to avoid the charges.

Has there been an estimate of the exceptions that would apply to the 190 second homes? What sort of costs would there be, or have already been, such that we could see what the net financial position would be as a result of this policy?

Figures have been calculated based on the number of second homes (190) and empty properties (400) listed on our database. Currently, we don't know the extra resources that we might need to implement this. We will need to purchase an extra module on the system used for revenues and benefits. Anecdotally, other councils have had to engage extra resources within their revenues teams to deal with the numbers of correspondence and appeals. We will need to do detailed financial modelling nearer to the time to feed into the 24/25 financial plan, when we have a clearer picture of the exact number of properties and the amount of resource needed to deliver this safely.

Chair's Summary:

Areas for follow-up include exceptions that appear not to be identified currently, and the potential therefore for a discretionary class for exceptions, and for appeals to be clarified as part of the plan. Also, if there is a flaw in the Welsh Government guidance it could unwind the policy if people spotted it, leading to judicial reviews, wasting time and money – so Section 12A, paragraph 16 should be considered, as it seems to be flawed. A response outside the meeting would be welcomed – **ACTION**

4. Month 9 Budget Outturn Report - Budget monitoring report for monthly scrutiny.

Cabinet Member Rachel Garrick and Jonathan Davies presented the report and answered the members' questions with Peter Davies, Will Mclean, Frances O'Brien and Ian Saunders.

Ahead of the questions the Chair noted that it is understood that the picture is a complicated one regarding reserves and the council's underlying picture but residents will want to know what the financial position is that are identified in the report, as one which by the end of the financial year might not be financially sustainable. It would be reasonable to want to understand the

impact on the representation of our position being improved by the additional drawdown of reserves, which can't go on in perpetuity, and the impact of grants that might never be repeated.

Challenge:

Committee members should note that it is unusual to read some things in the report e.g. 3.19, which refers to the potential difficulty in reducing costs and “more extreme measures”. 3.2.0 is also very unusual in stating that measures will be “vital to ensuring that the Council ends the year in a financially sustainable position”. 3.2.1 states that certain savings “will not necessarily bring any further benefit to future years’ budget” – are we cutting out one-off issues that might result in the deterioration of services?

This wording highlights that there has been a need to strike a balance between our ability to instigate very hard measures in-year, while putting plans together for next year at the same time. The package of measures introduced in the current year has responded to a situation that has evolved very quickly. The point about financial sustainability concerns ensuring that we are instigating the necessary level of cost control now; the further deterioration at Month 9 is disappointing. We need to ensure that we are taking steps for there not to be further deterioration, putting us on a sustainable path to work through next year and beyond.

The contradiction between positive spin on one end and negative at the other is a concern, particularly as related to approaching a critical level of reserves. Do we need to examine the reserves position more closely, and the effect on budgeting in future years?

The increased use of reserves is due to examination of the intent to use capital receipts to cover some of those additional realisations of risk. It has become clear that not all of the areas that we had intended in fact qualify under the capitalisation directive and, therefore, we are having to turn to reserves on that particular piece. In terms of usage, we, as an administration, are concerned about the level of available reserves: the Council hasn't replenished them over the last few years to any discernible level, apart from the point where we had additional funding for Covid. We have the third lowest reserves in Wales. So, we are also paying extreme attention to where our reserves are, and what can be done about that.

But in terms of drawing on reserves to subsidise our revenue expenditure of £6m, £1m more than anticipated, that is separate from the capital receipts directive?

Table 3 is clear: it is a combination of items that goes towards making up the net increase of £1.06m. There's a shortfall in being able to apply all of the costs that we hoped to at Month 6 to capitalisation – it drops by approx. £500k – and there is the shortfall within the proposals that services came up with at Month 6. There are paragraphs later on about reserve levels, in terms of additional use; note the papers going to Cabinet and Council this week about the robustness of our reserve levels, and their usage for this year and next.

What would the position have been if reserves weren't drawn down, and/or if there hadn't been a one-off grant? What is the underlying picture, for us to know the Council's true position?

It is difficult to unpick, as we have received a number of one-off grants and additional income throughout the year. The bottom line is that our revenue reserves usage is increasing by £1.06m. Effectively, that item, along with the capitalisation directive, are the tools for us to meet the unexpected costs that have arisen. The point is taken, though. For a straight summary of how it has affected our outturn position, the answer is there in Table 3: there has been the increased use of revenue reserves to meet the additional costs that have come through between Month 6 and Month 9, offset by additional funding but not to the full extent. Reserves

are at a lower level than we would want, and our budgetary discipline therefore needs to be very firm – we can't rely on reserves in the medium-term to bail out the council for unforeseen overspends.

The problem is driven largely by increases in social care costs. What is the comparison with other councils? Are they experiencing similar costs pressures in this area?

We were also concerned by the increase in costs of young people's placements and curious as to how we are faring compared to other councils, with a concern that we are above-average in that area. Our Chief Financial Officer is currently working on that research and information-gathering – the headline from that is that we are around average in our expenditure in this area. It is currently affecting all councils: Wrexham, for example, has seen a 100% increase over the last 5 years in the cost of children's placements, whereas our increase has been around 50%.

Regarding the "danger of a further 9 schools going into deficit", what is our approach and what would be the impact on children's education?

We have moved from 8 to 9 schools in a deficit. Two are at a very low level (less than £10k), so we expect them to recover quickly. One school has had a substantial deficit for a period of time, but working with the Cabinet Members we are looking to provide additional support to smooth its recovery over an extended period of time. The level of the other schools is one that can be recovered over the next 2 years. We will work closely with them to ensure that they have a proper plan in place. The balances coming into the year were artificially inflated due to significant Welsh Government grants, particularly to support learners in their recovery post-pandemic, and that money had to be spent on very specific things in the timeframe. There was also the effect of the schools needing to meet the 2% pay award in-year, which was another £1m. In terms of the impact on learners, we intend to work with schools so that there isn't any – that the schools recover carefully and consider over time if there are changes to non-pay or pay-based costs that can be made to minimise any potential impact on learners.

Are we getting any indication that there will be a further call on reserves?

We think that we have reached a level of certainty now, so there shouldn't be. We received some late notification about social care grants, which we were able to put into the forecast, and gives us a level of certainty. The main concern is still the social care position moving towards the end of the year; we will continue looking at cost restraint and value for money considerations.

Is there any scope for more flexibility regarding the capital receipts being used for revenue?

Capitalisation has been used extensively in recent years, where appropriate. We hoped to use it more fully, regarding budget recovery but the feeling is that we are beyond the scope of where we should be in its utilisation. We are in frequent contact with Welsh Government and the Treasurers Association on that, and we believe we are sound in our interpretation. The table in 3.46 notes the forecast in capital receipts balances: £3m projected to the end of 26/27, so we must be mindful that the pot of capital receipts is limited. Therefore, while we could look at further flexibilities, and approach officials about additional usages, we must remember that they are one-off, and utilising them for this purpose limits the ability to draw on them for their traditional purpose to support capital expenditure and the wider capital programme. It comes back to balance, but we acknowledge the suggestion to explore flexibilities, where possible.

What's the normal percentage of the revenue budget that should be in reserves? What was it in 19/20, 20/21?

It's not entirely useful to compare where we are with 20/21, due to the additional Covid funding. We are lower than where we would like to be in those areas, at this moment. A chart in 3.31 illustrates the history of our reserve levels as a percentage of net budget over time. It's important to distinguish between council fund cover, which we have traditionally kept between 4-6%; even with the current year and budgeted use for the next financial year, it remains 4.9%. In terms of earmarked reserves, we must be mindful that they are for specific use and set up to cover certain transformational objectives and specific risks such as insurance, treasury risk, redundancies, etc. We would expect a level of usage of reserves over time for them to be drawn on for those specific purposes e.g. if we invest in service transformation, we will call on the reserves to drive efficiencies and lower long-term costs.

Given the Social Care overspend, what are the realistic prospects of turning the rising trajectory of those costs to one that sees them coming down?

As we are discussing Month 9 today, we would not go into the overall budget at this juncture.

Could you give more detail about the reduction of £424k in Highways?

That underspend is due to increased income that we are receiving for things like road closures and sustainable urban drainage. We have also received a Welsh Government flooding grant that are covering core service costs.

The Leisure budget has moved through the year from £1m to £1.4m to a forecast outturn of £1.7m – can that be further explained?

This is due to the familiar story of cost-of-living and increasing energy costs. The team has done excellent recent work on promotions to bring income back into the sites. Through this particular period there was huge uncertainty about the cost of living and energy, and issues around whether people would continue their memberships. We have been prudent in what we've suggested through the year and are very pleased with the latest upswing. Trying to predict customer numbers in this period has been very challenging.

Chair's Summary:

We recognise that these are extremely challenging positions. We have scrutinised the report and are satisfied that the responses have been made to the questions raised.

5. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List.

Councillor Chandler noted that there are no Month 11 or Year End budget outturns on the Forward Work Programme, asking when they will come to the committee. Jonathan Davies will check with Democratic Services and update members – **ACTION**

6. Cabinet and Council Work Planner.

7. To confirm the following minutes:

Ordinary Meeting - Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 17th January 2023.

The minutes were confirmed and signed as an accurate record, but the Chair noted a correction: the statement that numerous councils across the country are in bankruptcy because of the current economic crisis is inaccurate – there is one bankrupt council but that is due to

poor long-term investments. The Chair reminded Cabinet Members and officers that such matters must not be misrepresented, or committee members and the public misinformed.

Special Meeting - Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 25th January 2023.

The minutes were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

8. Next Meeting: Thursday 27th April 2023 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **12.01 pm**