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County Hall
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Usk
NP15 1GA

Tuesday, 13 June 2023

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 21st June, 2023 at 10.00 am,
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK and Remote Attendance

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair	
2.	Appointment of Vice Chair	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Public Open Forum	
	Scrutiny Committee Public Open Forum ~ Guidance	
	<p>Our Scrutiny Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council website</p> <p>If you would like to share your thoughts on any proposals being discussed by Scrutiny Committees, you can submit your representation in advance via this form</p> <p>Please share your views by uploading a video or audio file (maximum of 4 minutes) or; Please submit a written representation (via Microsoft Word, maximum of 500 words)</p>	

You will need to register for a [My Monmouthshire account](#) in order to submit the representation or use your log in, if you have registered previously.

The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

If representations received exceed 30 minutes, a selection of these based on theme will be shared at the Scrutiny Committee meeting. All representations received will be made available to councillors prior to the meeting.

If you would like to attend one of our meetings to speak under the Public Open Forum at the meeting, you will need to give three working days' notice by contacting Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk.

The amount of time afforded to each member of the public to speak is at the chair's discretion, but to enable us to accommodate multiple speakers, we ask that contributions be no longer than 3 minutes.

If you would like to suggest future topics for scrutiny by one of our Scrutiny Committees, please do so by emailing Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk

5.	Public Protection 2022-23 Performance Report	1 - 28
	To review the performance of the service area.	
6.	2022/23 Budget monitoring - Outturn Report	To Follow
	To scrutinise the Revenue and Capital Outturn reports for 2022-2023.	
7.	Strategic Equality Plan Monitoring	29 - 50
	To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan.	
8.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List	51 - 56
9.	Cabinet and Council Work Plan	57 - 66
10.	To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2023	67 - 74
11.	Next Meeting: 17th July 2023	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

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 Meirion Howells, Llanbadoc & Usk;, Independent

Public Information

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Role of the Pre-meeting

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
 2. What is the Committee’s role and what outcome do Members want to achieve?
 3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
- Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
 - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? What consultation has been undertaken? Did the consultation process comply with the Gunning Principles? Do stakeholders believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the ‘taxpayer’ perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works? Does the policy relate to an area where there is a lack of published research or other evidence?
6. Does the policy relate to an area where there are known inequalities?
7. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan? Does it adhere to our Welsh Language Standards?

8. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications
9. been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
- 10.
11. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
- 12.
13. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated

General Questions:

Empowering Communities

- How are we involving local communities and empowering them to design and deliver services to suit local need?
- Do we have regular discussions with communities about service priorities and what level of service the council can afford to provide in the future?
- Is the service working with citizens to explain the role of different partners in delivering the service, and managing expectations?
- Is there a framework and proportionate process in place for collective performance assessment, including from a citizen's perspective, and do you have accountability arrangements to support this?
- Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? If so, can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with copies and a detailed explanation of the EQIA conducted in respect of these proposals?
- Can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers assure members that these proposals comply with Equality and Human Rights legislation? Do the proposals comply with the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan?

Service Demands

- How will policy and legislative change affect how the council operates?
- Have we considered the demographics of our council and how this will impact on service delivery and funding in the future?
- Have you identified and considered the long-term trends that might affect your service area, what impact these trends could have on your service/your service could have on these trends, and what is being done in response?

Financial Planning

- Do we have robust medium and long-term financial plans in place?
- Are we linking budgets to plans and outcomes and reporting effectively on these?

Making savings and generating income

- Do we have the right structures in place to ensure that our efficiency, improvement and transformational approaches are working together to maximise savings?

- How are we maximising income?
- Have we compared other council's policies to maximise income and fully considered the implications on service users?
- Do we have a workforce plan that takes into account capacity, costs, and skills of the actual versus desired workforce?

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

- Were the intended outcomes of the proposal achieved or were there other results?
- Were the impacts confined to the group you initially thought would be affected i.e. older people, or were others affected e.g. people with disabilities, parents with young children?
- Is the decision still the right decision or do adjustments need to be made?

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

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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:

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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.

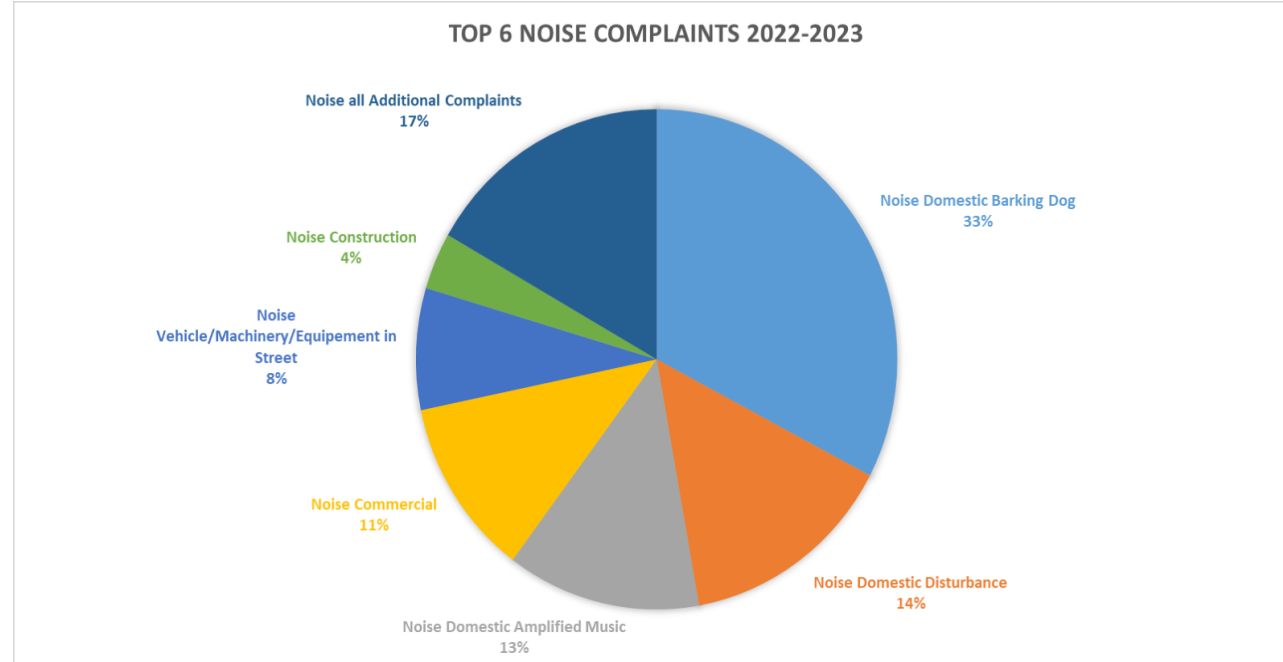
In the 42 dwellings inspected, 76 adults and 28 children were exposed to significant hazards. Officers engage with landlords, make clear their responsibilities under housing legislation and seek their cooperation to undertake the required works to remove the hazards identified. A range of enforcement 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.

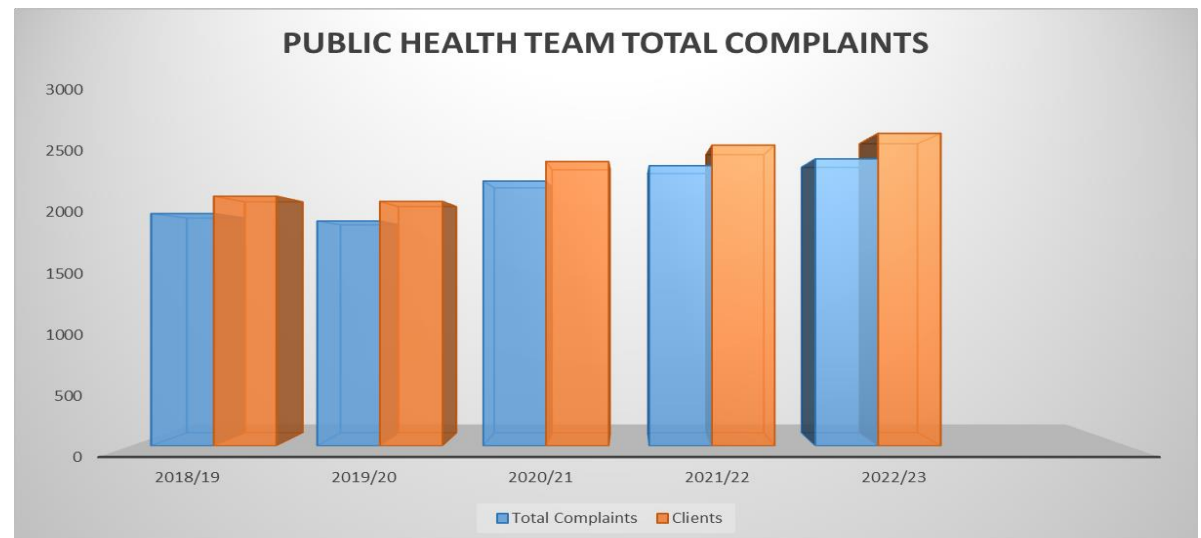
Monitoring continued of traffic related pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in our 4 major towns and advice given in meetings of the steering groups in the Chepstow and Usk Air Quality Management areas.

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

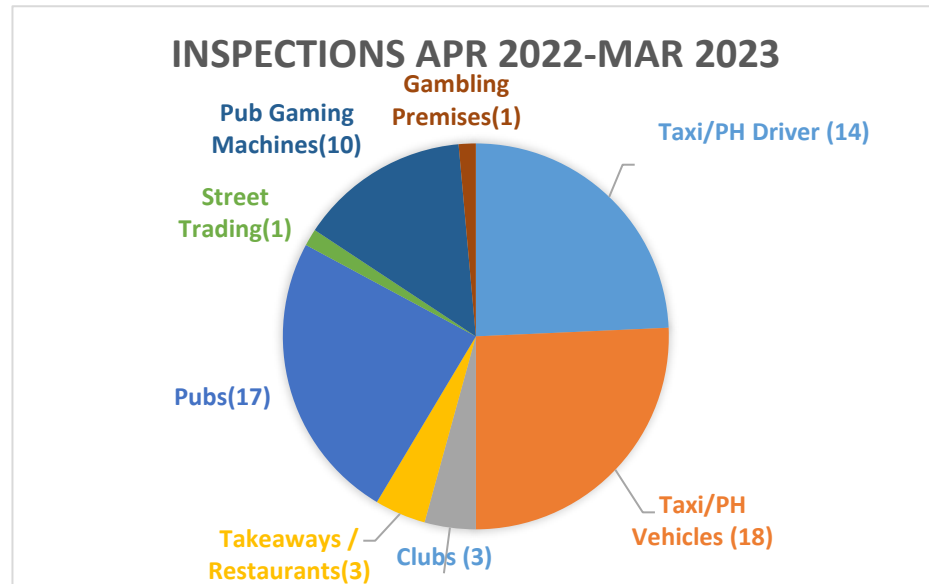
5.3.1 General

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: 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>

			<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>

			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

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>

			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.

<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

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/

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

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.

		Development Manager	
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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/placeofworkbylocalauthorityashetable7>

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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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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				

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**