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Dear Cynghorwyr,

CABINET

Gofynnir i chi fynychu cyfarfod **Cabinet** a gynhelir yn **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** ar **Dydd Mercher, 17eg Gorffennaf, 2024,** am **5.00 pm.**

AGENDA

1. Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb

2. Datganiadau o Fuddiant

3. Ystyried adroddiadau gan y Pwyllgorau Dethol (dim)   1 - 2

4. Diweddariad Ariannol   3 - 60

   Rhanbarthau/Wardiau yr effeithir arnynt: Pob un

   Diben: Darparu gwybodaeth i'r Cabinet ar ganlyniadau ariannol terfynol yr Awdurdod ar gyfer blwyddyn ariannol 2023/24 mewn perthynas â'r gyllideb refeniw, y rhaglen gyfalaf, a sefyllfa'r cronfeydd wrth gefn cysylltiedig.

   Diweddaru'r Cabinet ar y cynnydd dangosol cynnar yn erbyn cyllideb refeniw 2024/25.

   Awdur: Jonathan Davies, Pennaeth Cyllid (Dirprwy Swyddog S151)

   Manylion Cyswllt: jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk

5. Siarter Rhianta Corfforaethol   61 - 76

   Rhanbarthau/Wardiau yr effeithir arnynt: Pob un

   Diben: Cyflwyno argymhelliad o Banel Rhianta Corfforaethol y Cyngor ac mae'r Cabinet yn cymeradwyo mabwysiadu'r Siarter Rhianta Corfforaethol.

   Nodi egwyddorion y Siarter Rhianta Corfforaethol a lansiwyd gan Lywodraeth Cymru ym mis Medi 2023.

   Awdur: Jane Rodgers, Prif Swyddog, Gofal Cymdeithasol, Diogelu ac Iechyd

   Manylion Cyswllt: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

6. Datblygu Cartref Preswyl i Blant   77 - 112

Rhanbarthau/Wardiau yr effeithir arnynt: Pob un

Diben: Darparu manylion a cheisio cymeradwyaeth i ddatblygu cartref preswyl mewnol i blant mewn partneriaeth â Pobl.

Gofynnir am gymeradwyaeth yn seiliedig ar Achos Busnes sydd ynghlwm yn Atodiad 1.

Awdur: Jane Rodgers, Prif Swyddog, Gofal Cymdeithasol, Diogelu ac Iechyd

Manylion Cyswllt: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Rhanbarthau/Wardiau yr effeithir arnynt: Pob un

DIben: Cyflwyno'r materion sy'n gysylltiedig â sicrhau System Rheoli Achosion Gofal Cymdeithasol (SCCMS) addas i'r diben ar gyfer Sir Fynwy ac argymell y dull a ffefrir.

Nodi'r adnoddau a'r trefniadau cychwynnol sydd eu hangen i gefnogi gweithredu SCCMS yn lleol.

Awdur: Jane Rodgers - Prif Swyddog, Gofal Cymdeithasol, Diogelu ac Iechyd

Manylion Cyswllt: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Rhanbarthau/Wardiau yr effeithir arnynt: Pob un

Diben: Cyflwyno Strategaeth Ddigidol a Data'r Cyngor i'w chymeradwyo gan y Cabinet.

Mae'r strategaeth yn amlinellu sut y bydd ei defnydd o ddigidol a data yn trawsnewid a moderneiddio gwasanaethau, yn gwella effeithlonrwydd ac effeithiolrwydd, ac yn cefnogi'r gwaith o gyflawni'r Cynllun Cymunedol a Chorfforaethol ehangach.

Awdur: James Vale - Pennaeth Cwsmeriaid, TGCh a Digidol (CBS Torfaen)

Manylion Cyswllt: james.vale@torfaen.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

PORTFFOLIOS Y CABINET

Cynghorydd Sir	Maes Cyfrifoldeb	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	**Yr Arweinydd** Swyddogion Arweiniol - Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse Strategaeth a Chyfeiriad yr Awdurdod Cyfan Adolygu a gwerthuso perfformiad yr awdurdod cyfan Hyrwyddo lleoliaeth o fewn fframweithiau rhanbarthol a chenedlaethol Perthynas â Llywodraeth Cymru, Llywodraeth y DU a chymdeithasau llywodraeth leol Cysylltiadau Rhanbarthol â Rhanbarthau Dinesig a'r Bwrdd Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Caffael Strategol Cynhyrchu a defnydd bwyd lleol, a chaffael gan gynnwys amaethgoedwigaeth a garddwriaeth leol	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	**Aelod Cabinet dros Gynllunio a Datblygu Economaidd a'r Dirprwy Arweinydd** Swyddog Arweiniol - Frances O'Brien Strategaeth Economaidd Cynllun datblygu lleol a chynllun datblygu strategol gan gynnwys safleoedd tai strategol Digartrefedd, darpariaeth dai fforddiadwy a thai sector preifat (cartrefi gwag, cynllun prydlesu, benthyciadau gwella cartrefi, grantiau cyfleusterau i'r anabl a thechnoleg addasol) Cefnogi Canol Trefi gan gynnwys parcio ceir a gorfodi Rheoli Datblygu a Rheoli Adeiladu Sgiliau a Chyflogaeth Cysylltedd band eang Meysydd parcio a gorfodaeth sifil safonau masnach, iechyd yr amgylchedd, iechyd y cyhoedd, trwyddedu	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Ben Callard	**Aelod Cabinet dros Adnoddau** Prif Swyddogion – Peter Davies, Frances O'Brien, Matthew Phillips, Jane Rodgers Cyllid gan gynnwys CATC a'r cylch cyllideb blynyddol Buddion Technoleg a gwybodaeth ddigidol Adnoddau dynol, y gyflogres, iechyd a diogelwch Tir ac adeiladau Cynnal a chadw a rheoli eiddo Cynllunio brys	Llanfoist & Govilon

Martyn Groucutt	**Aelod Cabinet dros Addysg** Swyddogion Arweiniol - Will McLean, Ian Saunders Addysg Blynyddoedd Cynnar Addysg statudol pob oed Anghenion dysgu ychwanegol/cynhwysiant Addysg ôl-16 ac addysg oedolion Safonau a gwelliant ysgolion Dysgu Cymunedol Rhaglen cymunedau cynaliadwy ar gyfer dysgu Gwasanaethau Ieuenctid Cludiant ysgol	Lansdown
Ian Chandler	**Aelod Cabinet dros Ofal Cymdeithasol, Diogelu a Gwasanaethau Iechyd Hygyrch** Swyddog Arweiniol - Jane Rodgers Gwasanaethau Plant Maethu a mabwysiadu Gwasanaethau Troseddau Ieuenctid Gwasanaethau Oedolion Diogelu plant ac oedolion awdurdod cyfan Anableddau Iechyd meddwl a lles Perthynas â darparwyr iechyd a mynediad at ddarpariaeth iechyd	Park
Catrin Maby	**Aelod Cabinet dros Newid yn yr Hinsawdd a'r Amgylchedd** Swyddogion Arweiniol – Frances O'Brien, Ian Saunders Datgarboneiddio Cynllunio trafnidiaeth, trafnidiaeth gyhoeddus, priffyrdd a fflyd Cyngor Sir Fynwy Teithio llesol a hawliau tramwy Rheoli gwastraff, gofal stryd, sbwriel, mannau cyhoeddus a pharciau Palmentydd a lonydd cefn Lliniaru, rheoli ac adfer llifogydd Cefn gwlad, bioamrywiaeth ac iechyd afonydd	Drybridge
Angela Sandles	**Aelod Cabinet dros Gydraddoldeb ac Ymgysylltu** Swyddogion Arweiniol – Frances O'Brien,, Matthew Gatehouse, Jane Rodgers Anghydraddoldeb cymunedol a thlodi (iechyd, incwm, maeth, anfantais, gwahaniaethu, ynysu ac argyfwng costau byw) Ymgysylltu â dinasyddion a hyrwyddo democratiaeth gan gynnwys gweithio gyda sefydliadau gwirfoddol Profiad y dinesydd - canolfannau cymunedol, canolfan gyswllt, a gwasanaeth cwsmeriaid a chofrestryddion Canolfannau hamdden, chwarae a chwaraeon Datblygu Twristiaeth a'r Strategaeth Ddiwylliannol	Y Dref

| | Cyfleusterau cyhoeddus
Gwasanaethau Etholiadol ac adolygu'r cyfansoddiad
Cyfathrebu, cysylltiadau cyhoeddus a marchnata
Moeseg a safonau
Y Gymraeg | |

Nodau a Gwerthoedd Cyngor Sir Fynwy

Ein Pwrpas

- i ddod yn sir ddi-garbon, gan gefnogi lles, iechyd ac urddas i bawb ar bob cam o'u bywydau.

Amcanion rydym yn gweithio tuag atynt

- Lle teg i fyw lle mae effeithiau anghydraddoldeb a thlodi wedi'u lleihau;
- Lle gwyrdd i fyw a gweithio gyda llai o allyriadau carbon a gwneud cyfraniad cadarnhaol at fynd i'r afael â'r argyfwng yn yr hinsawdd a natur;
- Lle ffyniannus ac uchelgeisiol, lle mae canol trefi bywiog a lle gall busnesau dyfu a datblygu;
- Lle diogel i fyw lle mae gan bobl gartref maen nhw'n teimlo'n ddiogel ynddo;
- Lle cysylltiedig lle mae pobl yn teimlo'n rhan o gymuned ac yn cael eu gwerthfawrogi;
- Lle dysgu lle mae pawb yn cael cyfle i gyrraedd eu potensial.

Ein Gwerthoedd

Bod yn agored. Rydym yn agored ac yn onest. Mae pobl yn cael cyfle i gymryd rhan mewn penderfyniadau sy'n effeithio arnynt, dweud beth sy'n bwysig iddynt a gwneud pethau drostynt eu hunain/eu cymunedau. Os na allwn wneud rhywbeth i helpu, byddwn yn dweud hynny; os bydd yn cymryd peth amser i gael yr ateb, byddwn yn esbonio pam; os na allwn ateb yn syth, byddwn yn ceisio eich cysylltu gyda'r bobl a all helpu - mae adeiladu ymddiriedaeth ac ymgysylltu yn sylfaen allweddol.

Tegwch. Darparwn gyfleoedd teg, i helpu pobl a chymunedau i ffynnu. Os nad yw rhywbeth yn ymddangos yn deg, byddwn yn gwrando ac yn esbonio pam. Byddwn bob amser yn ceisio trin pawb yn deg ac yn gyson. Ni allwn wneud pawb yn hapus bob amser, ond byddwn yn ymrwymo i wrando ac esbonio pam y gwnaethom weithredu fel y gwnaethom.

Hyblygrwydd. Byddwn yn parhau i newid a bod yn hyblyg i alluogi cyflwyno'r gwasanaethau mwyaf effeithlon ac effeithiol. Mae hyn yn golygu ymrwymiad gwirioneddol i weithio gyda phawb i groesawu ffyrdd newydd o weithio.

Gwaith Tîm. Byddwn yn gweithio gyda chi a'n partneriaid i gefnogi ac ysbrydoli pawb i gymryd rhan fel y gallwn gyflawni pethau gwych gyda'n gilydd. Nid ydym yn gweld ein hunain fel 'trefnwyr' neu ddatryswyr problemau, ond gwnawn y gorau o syniadau, asedau ac adnoddau sydd ar gael i wneud yn siŵr ein bod yn gwneud y pethau sy'n cael yr effaith mwyaf cadarnhaol ar ein pobl a lleoedd.

Caredigrwydd – Byddwn yn dangos caredigrwydd i bawb yr ydym yn gweithio gyda nhw, gan roi pwysigrwydd perthnasoedd a'r cysylltiadau sydd gennym â'n gilydd wrth wraidd pob rhyngweithio.

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Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 18th June 2024

Report Item 6: Public Protection Performance 2023/24

Key points raised by the Committee Members:

The following points were raised by the Committee for consideration by the Cabinet Member:

- When equipment is seized in noise abatement cases, we need to ensure measures are in place to ensure the safety of officers.
- The PSPO dog exclusion zones came into force on 1st June, but signs aren't in place yet. Please can we ensure signs are erected prior to enforcement.
- There is a huge breadth of issues for the team to deal with, but there are only 8 officers, so the committee questioned whether services are sufficiently resourced.
- The Committee queried whether there a correlation between the new requirement to book slots at waste depots and flytipping and questioned whether the new method for reporting flytipping had affected the number of cases reported (reports have fallen).
- Members commented that where improvement is needed, it would be helpful to explore comparable information with similar counties.
- Members questioned what actions are being taken against businesses that sell non-compliant or illegal vapour or tobacco products, particularly to children and it was noted that the Public Services Scrutiny Committee intends to explore this topic as part of their forward work programme, acknowledging the link between organised crime and illegal vaping.

Officers present responded to all of the questions raised and the Committee was satisfied with the responses given.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair welcomed the report and thanked the officers for their excellent work and the improvements made, particularly concerning the recovery since Covid. Members also

thanked the team for their excellent work as part of Safety Advisory group events and dog control PSPOs.

ACTION:

For comparable evidence to be included in future reports, to further inform members and the public.

Report Item 7: Registration Services Annual Report 23/24

Key points raised by the Committee Members:

- Members requested that future reports offer more specific detail on statutory targets relative to other/comparable areas.
- In terms of new scrutiny procedures in relation to deaths and the need for additional documentation, questions were asked as to whether there would be resource implications.
- Acknowledging that births are no longer registered in Monmouthshire due to the closure of the maternity unit at Nevill Hall, the consequence for data gathering was highlighted as a potential issue for consideration.

The Committee was satisfied with the performance of the service and the answers given to questions asked.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked officers for their excellent performance, evidenced through the data presented in the report. Noting David Jones' retirement in September, the Chair and members thanked him for his years of experience and hard work, and particularly for his work during the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

ACTION:

For comparable evidence to be included in future reports, for the benefit of Members but also the public.

SUBJECT:	**FINANCIAL UPDATE REPORT**
MEETING:	**CABINET**
DATE:	**17th July 2024**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	

1.   PURPOSE:

1.1   To provide Cabinet with information on the Authority's final financial results for the 2023/24 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.

1.2   To update Cabinet on the early indicative progress against the 2024/25 revenue budget.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet recognises:

2.1   A net revenue budget surplus at outturn of £1,701,000 (0.8% of budget) that results in less needing to be drawn from reserves to support the budget than budgeted.

2.2   That the surplus achieved at outturn represents a significant improvement of just over £2m from the position forecast at month 9. The improvement is primarily as a result of an improvement in service budget positions driven by the budget recovery action enacted by services during the year including staff vacancy restrictions, coupled with improvement in the costs of capital financing as areas of the capital programme have experienced delays.

2.3   There remain significant areas of cost pressure within Adult social care, Children's additional learning needs, Waste, and Homelessness/Housing. These services recorded a cumulative over spend of £5m for the year, and whilst a significant aspect of these cost pressures were accommodated in the 2024/25 budget, this continues to present an ongoing area of financial risk for the Council in the new financial year.

2.4   Total capital expenditure for the year was £65,176,000, with no capital schemes reporting material over or under spends that require additional financing from the Council's own resources. Capital slippage requests totalled £28,606,000.

2.5   The significant reduction in Schools balances during the year of £5,161,000 as outlined in *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 3*, that takes cumulative school balances into deficit by £905,000. Thirteen schools ended the year with a deficit balance, with several schools continuing to carry structural budget deficits that will need to be addressed by way of budget recovery action.

2.6   The early indicative cost pressures of £873,000 highlighted by services against the 2024/25 revenue budget that require prompt mitigating action by services in order to deliver at least a balanced outturn position by year end.

That Cabinet approves:

➢   The strategy to replenish reserves as noted within section 6 of this report, including the earmarking of £1m as budget contingency for the 2024/25 budget. Consideration of a further rationalisation of reserves will be incorporated into the next MTFP update and once the medium-term financial strategy is approved that outlines the financial framework and alignment to the Council's approved Community & Corporate plan.

➢   The use of capital receipts totalling £3,621,000 to fund the eligible revenue expenditure as outlined in *Appendix 2* under the Welsh Government's "flexible use of capital receipts" direction.

➢   The capital slippage requests of £28,606,000 as listed in *Appendix 4*, acknowledging the challenging operating conditions and external influences that have delayed schemes progressing during the year.

➢   The capital budget revisions as outlined in *Appendix 5,* which are required following finalisation of grant funding awards for the financial year.

KEY ISSUES

3   **Context**

3.1 Councils across the UK continue to financial challenges on an unprecedented scale. It is widely acknowledged that local government funding over recent years has not kept pace with increased service demand, the additional responsibilities being transferred, and inflationary pressures.

3.2 The 2022/23 revenue budget culminated in an over spend of £3.5m which required funding from earmarked reserves to cover the additional expenditure incurred following acute pressures experienced within Adult's and Children's services, Homelessness, and Additional learning needs.

3.3 The 2023/24 budget set in March 2023 accommodated additional costs of delivering services of £26m or 14%. Whilst income and funding increased by 9% (£16m) to meet some of these costs, the Council needed to find savings of 5% (£10m) from services.

3.4 The budget when set highlighted a number of known budgetary risks that sat outside of the core budget, some of which have now materialised and have resulted in further pressures being reported.

3.5 During the year financial headwinds have continued to impact the service operating environment through higher inflation and interest rates, a shortage in some staff resources, supply chain issues, and higher demands as a result of the cost of living crisis and the wider and longer lasting impact of the pandemic on communities.

3.6 These ultimately result in a growing need for supportive Council services, a reduced demand for income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a continued high-cost operating environment.

3.7 Cabinet received an early financial update for the year at their July 2023 meeting which highlighted significant early pressure on the Council's budget of around £6m. As part of a package of measures to tackle this, Cabinet approved the use of £2.5m of useable revenue reserves to increase the Council's overall level of inflation contingency. This equated to the amount of reserves that were originally anticipated to be required to support the 2022/23 budget outturn position, but were not ultimately called upon. When set alongside a further unbudgeted grant assumption of £1m, this left a remaining forecast budget pressure of £2.6m.

3.8 Cabinet immediately instigated mitigating action to develop a structured approach to tackling the remaining forecast deficit through £2.1m of budget recovery proposals brought forward by services. This was overseen by the formation of a financial management board who focussed on the key financial risk areas.

3.9 The budget recovery proposals included a targeted vacancy freeze, maximising grants and income, bearing down on all non-essential spend, and identifying eligible capital related costs that could be met from capital funding.

3.10 At outturn, the Council has successfully mitigated the overall cost pressures through these targeted actions. This has culminated in a revenue budget surplus of £1,701,000 against a revised expenditure budget of £208,515,000, representing less than 1% variance.

3.11 There are however a number of significant service variances both positive and negative that sit within this, as follows:

Table 1: 2023/24 Revenue budget outturn

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	**2,945**	**4.6%**	**Children's services** £181k (complexity of cases, reliance on independent providers & agency staff)	**Support services** £239k
			Adults services £2,999k (Provider fee inflation, increased demand & complexity of cases)	
Children & Young People	**280**	**0.4%**	**ALN transport** £732k (contract costs)	**Support services** £370k - grants, vacancies, and increased income
			ALN placements and recoupment costs £545k	**ALN out of County and Independent** £656k - reduced placements
Communities & Place	**747**	**3%**	**Fleet Maintenance** £396k (Inflation, supply chain impact)	**Business Growth & Enterprise** £194k (grant)
			Waste £1.129m (Recyclate contract volatility, polypropylene roll-out delay)	**Highways & Flooding** £196k (Income & staff vacancies)
			Housing £442k (B&B costs, maintenance increase for leased accommodation)	**Highways Ops & Swtra** £209k (income)
			Building Control £93k (fee income reduction, increase in regulatory requirements)	**Grounds** £93k (Income),
				Building cleaning £116k (income)
				Solar farm £92k (energy)
				Schools catering £251k (Grant)
				Passenger Transport £83k (income/grant)
				Regeneration £62k (grant)
				Community & Pship Development £61k (Grant)

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
Monlife	**(209)**	-2.5%	**Borough Theatre** £175k – reduced income	
			Attractions £67k – reduced income	**Leisure, Youth & Outdoor** £265k – increased memberships and grants
			Contact centres & Hubs £90k – staffing and inflation	**Countryside and Culture** £108k - grants
				Finance & business development £168k – staff vacancies & income
Chief Executive Unit	**(186)**	-6.1%		**Corporate** £25k (grant)
				Corporate Training £27k (income)
				Policy/Partnerships £127k (staff savings, grant & capitalisation directive)
Law & Governance	**108**	4.1%	**Democratic services** £136k (members remuneration, software cost)	**Legal & Land Charges** £28k (staff savings)
Resources	**(380)**	-4.5%	**Newport leisure park** £91k (service charge met centrally for vacant units)	**Revenues** £53k (grant)
			Castlegate £109k (Service charge met centrally for vacant units)	**Finance/Audit** £223k (staff vacancies)
			Property Services £69k (cleaning & maintenance increases)	**Systems & Exchequer** £46k (staff vacancy, income/grant)
				Cemeteries £42k (income)
				Asset management £261k (income/staff vacancies/Ukrainian funding)
Corporate costs	**(478)**	-1.7%	**Coroner service** £104k – additional staffing & premises costs	**Business rate refunds** £233k

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
				Pension costs £331k - covered by capitalisation direction
Capital financing costs	**(1,591)**	-19.5%		**Lower net borrowing costs** reflective of higher than anticipated cash balances, and significant capital slippage at the end of 2022/23
Council tax	**(196)**	-0.1%		**Council tax reduction scheme** cases have tracked slightly lower than budgeted for the year
Inflation contingency budget	**(2,741)**	N/A		Unallocated reserve funded budgets that are mitigating cost pressures within the Authority
Year-end surplus	**1,701**	0.8%		

3.12   The final budget outturn position is a significant improvement of £2,013,000 since the forecast at month 9 where a budget deficit of £314,000 was anticipated.

3.13   The improvement has been experienced across all service areas and is due to five main factors:

➢   Additional grant funding being secured, or services maximising core revenue costs being met from both revenue and capital grant funding;

➢   Staff vacancies continuing to be held as part of budget recovery action;

➢   Increased external income from rents, fees and memberships;

➢   Identifying additional costs eligible to be met from capitalisation direction to maximise its use;

➢   Net borrowing costs remained lower than expected as cash balances remained higher for longer than expected, and interest rates peaked at slightly lower rates than anticipated.

3.14 Service savings of £10,150,000 were required as part of the original revenue budget for 2023/24. A further £2,146,000 were required as a result of the in-year budget recovery action. 83.3% of these have been met during the year.

Table 2: Service savings delivered

Directorate	Total Saving / Budget recovery	Achieved	Variance to Budget	% met
		£000	£000	
Social Care & Health	(3,495)	(2,440)	1,055	69.8%
Children & Young People	(2,241)	(2,081)	160	92.9%
Communities & Place	(3,396)	(3,013)	383	88.7%
Monlife	(1,292)	(1,201)	91	93.0%
Chief Executives Unit	(104)	(104)	0	99.7%
Law & Governance	(157)	(137)	20	87.3%
Resources	(1,178)	(837)	341	71.0%
Corporate Costs & Levies	(433)	(433)	0	100.0%
Totals	**(12,296)**	**(10,430)**	**2,050**	**83.3%**

3.15 Eligible revenue costs of £3,621,000 have been met from capital receipts reserve funding through capitalisation direction. These costs are principally in the areas of service change and reform, digital approach to service delivery, and collaboration with other public sector bodies. A summary of these costs is shown at *Appendix 2*.

3.16 The 2024/25 budget includes the further use of capitalisation direction of £3,744,000, with the current medium term financial plan modelling a tapering down of this support which is budgeted to end in 2028/29.

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

Table 3: Budget forecasting at formal reporting periods

2023/24 Budget forecast in £000's	Total Deficit / (Surplus)	SCH	CYP	C&P	Monlife	RES	CEO	L&G	Other
Month 2	**2,617**	3,001	687	1,513	0	85	105	16	(2,790)
Month 4	**124**	2,830	331	959	(18)	(196)	(52)	120	(3,850)
Month 6	**284**	3,190	340	896	8	(178)	(49)	120	(4,043)
Month 9	**314**	3,631	411	1,001	8	(144)	(47)	151	(4,698)
Outturn	**(1,701)**	2,945	280	747	(209)	(380)	(186)	108	(5,006)

There has been far less variation in forecasting during 2023/24 compared to 2022/23, but there has still seen notable improvement in service positions during the year in all but one service. It has however been another difficult year to obtain any budget forecasting certainty:

➢ Unbudgeted grant notifications continue, but not to the same levels as previous years;
➢ £10.1m of budget savings being delivered upon;
➢ Services asked to engage in additional budget recovery action part way through the year;
➢ High inflationary environment prevalent throughout the year;
➢ Pay awards significantly above budget

4 School Balances

4.1 The 2023/24 financial year has culminated in a £5,161,000 draw on school's balances, resulting in the return to a cumulative deficit balance of £905,000 and with thirteen of thirty-three schools now holding deficit balances.

4.2 Schools continue to face significant budget pressures, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased the overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards have also impacted upon budgets.

4.3 The Authority continues to work closely with those schools of concern to aid in the return to a more sustainable budget plan over the medium term without impacting on educational standards. This will be informed by a wider review of school's budgets which will focus on the key financial issues impacting individual schools, and that will be considered as part of the next review and update of the MTFP.

4.4 Budget recovery plans are required to be put in place by all schools that move into deficit, and these will be closely monitored by officers and Cabinet.

Table 4: Movement in Schools balances

School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit	1st April 2023	Draw upon Reserves	31st March 2024
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Comprehensives	(1,259)	2,235	976
Middle	0	329	329
Primaries	(3,027)	1,885	(1,142)
Pupil referral service	31	711	742
Total	**(4,256)**	**5,161**	**905**

5 Capital budget

5.1 Capital expenditure totalled £65,176,000 for the year, with a net over spend of £485,000 reported. This is primarily due to calling upon the full in-built contingency within the revenue budget of £1,000,000 whereby additional eligible costs have been met under capitalisation direction. This has been offset by a lower than anticipated volume of vehicle replacement of £500,000.

5.2 All other variances totalled an under spend of £15,000.

5.3 **Capital slippage –** Capital schemes by nature are usually multi-year, and some slippage is to be expected as expenditure profiles change based on flex in project circumstances. A total of 107 capital schemes require slippage into 2024/25 totalling £28,605,000, representing 30% of the total budget for the year.

5.4 The economic environment during 2023/24 continued to have a significant impact on the overall capital programme with cost inflation and supply chain issues continuing to present a challenge to project delivery. The large number of schemes requiring slippage does however still point to more underlying issues in project planning, unrealistic profiling of budgets, and a lack of resourcing to manage the volume of schemes being planned.

5.5 Finance teams will need to continue to work with budget holders to assess if any further amendment to project delivery plans are required given the impact that capital expenditure progress can have on the profiling of capital financing costs.

5.6 **Capital receipts** – The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. Whilst the current balance is healthy, there remains a need for caution over committing any further receipts to either capital investment or increasing the level of capitalisation direction given the level of currently unbanked receipts contained within the forward projections.

Table 5: Capital receipts balances

Capital receipt balances	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	12,446	9,984	7,840	5,034	2,669	1,304
Capital receipts used for financing	(2,851)	(1,792)	(460)	(460)	(460)	(460)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,008)	(3,358)	(3,008)	(2,008)	(1,008)	0
Capital receipts to meet redundancy costs	(613)	(387)				
Capital receipts Received	4,010					
Capital receipts Forecast	0	3,393	663	103	103	103
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	**9,984**	**7,840**	**5,034**	**2,669**	**1,304**	**947**

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

6   RESERVES POSITION

6.1   Key considerations

6.2 The original budget for 2023/24 was supported by £3,000,000 of reserve funding to mitigate the inflationary pressures being experienced, coupled with the related risk that pay awards would be higher than budgeted.

6.3 During the financial year Cabinet approved the use of a further £2,500,000 of reserves to mitigate the further unbudgeted cost pressures that were developing within services during the financial year.

6.4 The final outturn position has resulted in a reduced draw of £1,701,000 on this additional in-year approval, and can therefore be used to replenish reserves.

6.5 **Proposed reserves replenishment:**

> ➢ That £466,000 is added to the Council Fund to maintain the level at 5% of net revenue budget.

> ➢ That the remaining £1,235,000 is added to the invest to redesign reserve, of which £1,000,000 will be set aside as budget contingency for the 2024/25 budget.

> ➢ That any further reallocation of reserves is deferred until the medium-term financial strategy is adopted and that will outline the future financial framework and alignment to the Council's Community & Corporate plan.

Table 6: Summary Reserves projection based on 2023/24 outturn and the latest financial modelling

Date	Earmarked Reserves £000's	Council fund £000's	Total £000's
01-Apr-23	11,549	11,104	22,653
01-Apr-24	9,360	10,388	19,748
01-Apr-25	7,631	10,643	18,274
01-Apr-26	8,051	10,911	18,962
01-Apr-27	8,335	11,191	19,526
01-Apr-28	8,835	11,471	20,306

7 **2024/25 revenue budget – early update**

7.1 The first three months of 2024/25 has seen continuation of some of the financial headwinds which are having an impact upon the service operating environment:

> ➢ The cost of living challenges continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential need for additional Council services, and impact upon income generating services;

- Whilst headline inflation has fallen, some discrete areas of Council services continue to experience cost pressures on supplies and services, alongside supply chain issues.

- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates remain resolutely high, with revised forecasts suggesting that they will remain higher for longer than anticipated at the time of setting the budget;

- The Council continues to deal with a shortage of staff resources in some areas;

- The wider and longer lasting impact of the pandemic, both economically and socially, continues to impact the Council, particularly in the areas of Homelessness, Children's services, Adult social care and Children's additional learning needs.

7.2   Services are reporting early cost pressures of £873,000 in the following areas:

Service Area	Early budget pressure £000's	Explanation of variance
Waste	335	The 24/25 budget was based on the assumption that our polypropylene service would be fully operational from April. Due to the delays in vehicle delivery this has been put back until the early Autumn so our early year disposal costs will be higher than originally projected.
Homelessness	100	Shortfall in meeting the budget saving expected to be generated by using Severn View as homeless accommodation due to part year delay in occupation.
Decarbonisation	100	Corporate Mileage – Amendments are required to the current corporate travel and disbursement policy before savings plans can be fully implemented. Until these are made then there will be delays in the roll-out of the Pool car scheme and other initiatives.
Adults social care	338	The budget for 2024/25 was set at the number of care home placements as at the end of December 2023. We have since seen an increase of 10. This forecast comes with a high degree of uncertainty at this stage with numbers and the complexity of need regularly changing, however the general trend is currently upward.
Total	873	

7.3   Alongside the above early indications, there remain key specific budgetary risks that have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2024/25:

- **Pay award** – The current national employers pay offer of a flat rate increase of £1,290 would be largely in line with the budgeted increase for 2024/25. However the offer is currently under consultation with unions with the risk that any consequential increase in offer takes the award over budgeted levels.

- **Teacher's pension** - Formal confirmation is still awaited from UK Government to confirm its full funding of the planned increase in the employer pension contribution rates for the centrally administered Teacher's pension scheme. To the extent that it is not fully funded, or allocation of funding does not meet full costs, presents a current budget risk.

- The **deliverability risk** of budget savings, especially where these involve the income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models or have implications for service design involving community or other partners. If the long-term average delivery rate of 85% is repeated, this would represent a further pressure of £1.4m.

- The trend of **reducing debt recovery**, particularly within Council tax where there is a significant increase in the number of discounts and exemptions awarded which has a negative impact on overall income. There is also a slowing down in collection rates as households continue to struggle with the cost of living crisis.

- **Schools reserves** – schools have budgeted for a further draw on reserves for 2024/25 of £5m. If this materialises it will take further number of schools into deficit and increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit being carried on the Council's balance sheet. This consequently impacts upon the Council's financial resilience and increases it risk exposure by reducing available balance sheet resources.

7.4 Cabinet were clear in their budget planning framework for 2024/25 that there is a need to progress the Council on a path towards financial sustainability including conserving an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience, of which the Council's reserves are a key component. As a consequence, the final revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 did not include any use of reserves to meet recurrent revenue expenditure.

7.5 The delivery of a balanced budget position for 2024/25, alongside substantial budget recovery action within schools will be fundamental in maintaining financial stability. It is therefore essential that services maintain the same financial discipline that saw significant budget recovery in the second half of 2023/24.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

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

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

CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team
Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Revenue and capital outturn report including school budgets
Appendix 2 – Capitalisation directive schedule
Appendix 3 – Movement in individual school balances
Appendix 4 – Capital slippage schedule
Appendix 5 – Capital budget revisions requiring Cabinet approval

AUTHORS:

Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 officer)

CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: (01633) 644114
E-mail: jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2023/24 Revenue budget outturn summary statement

Service Area	Original Budget	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Budget	Actual Expenditure / (Income)	(Under) / Over Spend @ Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Month 9	Variance Month 9 to Outturn
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	63,735	340	64,075	67,020	**2,945**	3,631	(686)
Children & Young People	62,420	37	62,456	62,736	**280**	411	(131)
Communities & Place	26,427	(1,208)	25,218	25,965	**747**	1,001	(254)
MonLife	8,188	88	8,276	8,067	**(209)**	8	(216)
Chief Executives Unit	3,068	(18)	3,050	2,865	**(186)**	(47)	(139)
Law & Governance	2,656	11	2,667	2,775	**108**	151	(43)
Resources	7,017	1,483	8,500	8,120	**(380)**	(144)	(235)
Corporate Costs & Levies	29,344	1,012	30,356	27,136	**(3,220)**	(3,231)	11
Net Cost of Services	**202,854**	**1,745**	**204,599**	**204,685**	**86**	**1,781**	**(1,693)**
Treasury & Reserves	5,661	(1,744)	3,916	2,326	**(1,591)**	(1,118)	(473)
Expenditure to be Financed	**208,514**	**0**	**208,515**	**207,011**	**(1,504)**	**663**	**(2,166)**
Financing	(208,515)	0	(208,515)	(208,712)	**(196)**	(350)	154
(Surplus) / Deficit	**0**	**0**	**0**	**(1,701)**	**(1,701)**	**314**	**(2,013)**

Table 2: 2023/24 Revenue budget outturn detailed statement

Service Area	Original Budget	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Budget	Actual Expenditure / (Income)	(Under) / Over Spend @ Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Month 9	Variance Month 9 to Outturn
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	38,246	98	38,344	41,343	**2,999**	3,104	(104)
Children Services	22,209	(34)	22,175	22,356	**181**	600	(420)
Public Protection	1,790	1	1,791	1,795	**4**	63	(59)
SCH Support	1,489	276	1,765	1,526	**(239)**	(136)	(103)
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	**63,735**	**340**	**64,075**	**67,020**	**2,945**	**3,631**	**(686)**
Emergency Planning	170	12	182	179	**(3)**	(1)	(2)
Individual Schools Budget	50,423	73	50,496	50,582	**85**	224	(139)
Resources	1,140	(49)	1,090	720	**(370)**	(409)	38
Standards	10,686	1	10,687	11,255	**567**	596	(29)
Children & Young People	**62,420**	**37**	**62,456**	**62,736**	**280**	**411**	**(131)**
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	4,564	(1,084)	3,481	3,674	**194**	376	(182)
Facilities & Fleet Management	10,805	236	11,041	10,845	**(196)**	67	(264)
Neighbourhood Services	9,306	19	9,326	10,245	**919**	782	137
Placemaking, Highways & Flood	1,752	(381)	1,371	1,202	**(169)**	(225)	55
Communities & Place	**26,427**	**(1,208)**	**25,218**	**25,965**	**747**	**1,001**	**(254)**
Communications	203	2	205	188	**(17)**	(21)	5
Countryside & Culture	1,157	17	1,175	1,066	**(108)**	(83)	(25)
Finance & Business Development	4,170	43	4,213	4,394	**181**	220	(39)
Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure	2,658	25	2,683	2,418	**(265)**	(108)	(157)
MonLife	**8,188**	**88**	**8,276**	**8,067**	**(209)**	**8**	**(216)**
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,236	(41)	1,195	1,034	**(161)**	(11)	(149)

People	1,832	23	1,855	1,830	(25)	(35)	10
Chief Executives	**3,068**	**(18)**	**3,049**	**2,865**	**(186)**	(47)	(139)
Democratic Services	1,634	6	1,640	1,775	**136**	137	(1)
Legal and Land Charges	1,022	5	1,028	1,000	**(28)**	14	(42)
Law & Governance	**2,656**	**11**	**2,667**	**2,775**	**108**	151	(43)
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	1,597	141	1,738	1,692	**(45)**	85	(130)
Corporate Health & Safety	77	11	88	79	**(10)**	(6)	(4)
Finance	2,505	1,153	3,659	3,337	**(322)**	(200)	(122)
Information Communication Technology	2,837	178	3,015	3,013	**(3)**	(23)	21
Resources	**7,017**	**1,483**	**8,501**	**8,120**	**(380)**	**(144)**	**(235)**
Precepts & Levies	24,578	0	24,578	24,578	**0**	0	0
Coroner's	171	0	171	275	**104**	104	0
Archives	213	0	213	213	**0**	0	0
Corporate Management	355	0	355	122	**(233)**	(138)	(95)
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	757	(88)	669	338	**(331)**	(382)	51
Strategic Initiatives	1,642	1,100	2,742	0	**(2,742)**	(2,815)	73
Insurance	1,628	0	1,628	1,609	**(19)**	(0)	(19)
Corporate Costs & Levies	**29,344**	**1,012**	**30,356**	**27,136**	**(3,220)**	**(3,231)**	**11**
Net Cost of Services	**202,854**	**1,745**	**204,599**	**204,685**	**86**	**1,781**	**(1,693)**
Interest & Investment Income	(925)	0	(925)	(1,762)	**(836)**	(576)	(261)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	6,953	0	6,953	6,622	**(331)**	(352)	21
Charges Required under Regulation	6,800	(1,007)	5,793	6,006	**213**	206	7
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(49)	**(49)**	(42)	(7)
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,658)	0	(3,658)	(4,244)	**(586)**	(353)	(233)
Contributions to Reserves	63	1,514	1,577	1,577	**(0)**	0	(0)

Contributions from reserves	(3,572)	(1,067)	(4,639)	(4,640)	(1)	(0)	(0)
Contribution from Council Fund	0	(1,184)	(1,184)	(1,184)	0	0	0
Treasury & Reserves	**5,661**	**(1,744)**	**3,916**	**2,326**	**(1,591)**	**(1,118)**	**(473)**
Expenditure to be Financed	**208,514**	**1**	**208,515**	**207,011**	**(1,504)**	**663**	**(2,166)**
General Government Grants	(91,451)	0	(91,451)	(91,451)	0	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	(31,224)	0	(31,224)	(31,224)	0	0	0
Council tax	(93,642)	0	(93,642)	(93,440)	202	0	202
Council Tax Benefit Support	7,802	0	7,802	7,403	(398)	(350)	(48)
Financing	**(208,515)**	**0**	**(208,515)**	**(208,712)**	**(196)**	**(350)**	**154**
(Surplus) / Deficit	**0**	**0**	**0**	**(1,701)**	**(1,701)**	**314**	**(2,013)**

Section 2 - Directorate – Service Variance Comments

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	2,830	3,190	3,631	2,945

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

During the course of the financial year, the Social Care directorate made in-roads into its identified savings targets; however, a number of key areas, particularly within adults' services, remained a challenge. The service continued to deal with high demand and complexity of people's needs making the balance between reducing costs and ensuring that people have their basic needs met a challenging one. We continue to experience demand led pressures following hospital discharge including new care home placements and high levels of care in the community (including in excess of 50 double-handed calls). There is increased oversight across the system to support practice and decision-making regarding the care and support we provide, which is helping us to ensure that we allocate care in a consistent way according to individual needs and circumstances using the principles of the SSWBA.

Within adults' services effective negotiations with care providers have allowed costs associated with fees and charges to be controlled. However, we have been unable to mitigate entirely the additional cost of care this year which has created a significant pressure.

It is pleasing to note that the work within children's services placement planning delivered good outcomes, and that the overall numbers of children coming into care continues to remain stable with a slight downward trend being maintained over the last 3 years. There are a number of key risks within the service which have an impact on cost including the insufficiency of children's placements, and the complexity of the needs of some our children. It is good news that Children's Services improved its position compared to the month 9 forecast to reduce its overspend to just £180K, through effective utilisation of grant and external funding opportunities as they arose.

The service is benefitting from a number of Welsh Government grants some of which are known to be short-term and others of which remain uncertain with regards to how long they might be available. Services supported by grants are deeply integrated into the core delivery of the service and contribute heavily to managing demand and supporting the delivery of savings.

ADULT SERVICES				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	2,618	3,009	3,104	2,999

There is a £2.999m overspend in Adult Services.

Progress against savings mandates remains challenging particularly regarding safely reducing care at home hours; equally it has not been possible to reduce the number of care home placements which over the year has seen a 16% increase (41 placements).

Following an initial review pilot process in the central area, the final annual savings associated with the reduction of care packages was £38k (part year effect). The work to review packages with individuals is well underway across all of the teams. To monitor this, we are tracking the

total number of people in receipt of care at home against the total number of care hours delivered.

It is also positive to note that the numbers of unmet need care at home hours have continued to show overall reductions (in approximate terms from weekly 850 hours of unmet need to 300).

We continue to show a deficit against saving mandates associated with Continuing Health Care. Some recent cases have been successfully pursued with ABuHB which has allowed us to generate £171k of
savings against a target of £550k. Part of the difficulty in achieving savings against CHC, is that ABuHB are equally reviewing their caseloads and vigorously challenging any reviews we put forward to them.

The main pressures are down to the £1.5M provider fees. At the beginning of the year this was calculated at £2M pressure; however, after extensive fair fee negotiations with provider agencies we were able to reduce this by £0.5M.

During the year an additional 41 care home placements have been commissioned, resulting in a pressure overspend of £1.5M together with an increase in the average cost of care home placements. A gatekeeping panel was established to provide oversight to all requests for high-cost care packages including residential placements. Residential placements are now used more frequently in situations where the cost of care at home would exceed the cost of a residential placement, contributing to the continued rise in residential placements.

The non-residential care budgets also overspent by £1.5M and the Regional Integration Fund was insufficient to meet the costs associated resulting in a £0.4M pressure that added to the core Adults budget overspend.

As a region the GWICES pool fund is overspending, of which £179K is attributable to this Authority. External funding has been granted of £500K plus additional slippage at year end being provided to us, leaving at this juncture a net £79K overspend.

The overspend has been assisted by £1M under spends within MDML and Care at Home vacancies, and the £1.1M Social Care Workforce and Sustainability Grant, leading to the true underlying overspend more in the region of £5M.

Debt for care charges still running high at £2.2M, with over 463 clients owing us debt for unpaid care charges which is now a target area for improvement within the service, alongside tyring to secure a full time debt recovery officer.

CHILDREN SERVICES				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	211	207	600	181

Children's services have been able to capitalise on their progression planning activity with individual children, bringing children into placements that are closer to home and more in keeping with their care and support needs and longer-term personal outcomes. This has including supporting some children to return home, or, for older children, into more independent

settings. Additional family support services have been put in place to support this endeavour – with the service benefitting from Welsh Government grants to achieve this.

The outturn position is a pleasing one and cements all the hard work undertaken by the service and finance, along with taking the opportunities that arose in the last quarter of the financial year to utilise grant and external funding.

The service continues to have an over-reliance on agency staff working in critical areas of the service particularly child-protection. The service is reviewing all agency assignments and accelerating agency exit plans wherever possible to contribute to budget recovery measures. The service is working in accordance with the All Wales pledge to control the costs associated with agency-worker fees.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	63	63	63	4

The deficit results from the staff restructuring saving mandate not being delivered, as a consequence of the Head of Public Protection post being retained. A vacant EHO post has been deleted, along with utilisation of grant funding with Trading Standards to offset core staff costs has mainly mitigated this budget pressure.

SCH SUPPORT

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(62)	(89)	(136)	(239)

Due to vacancy savings within the directorate finance team coupled with increased Deputyship fee income.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	331	340	411	280

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

The Directorate's outturn position is an overspend of £280k, which is a decrease of £131k on the Month 9 forecast. The overspend is due to increased ALN Transport costs, which have been mitigated by savings in other areas.

We have been able to offset a large proportion of our overspend by successfully developing our in county ALN provision, which has resulted in a reduction of the number of ALN pupils attending Out of County or Independent placements. Further savings have been made by using grant income to offset staff costs and by holding vacancies across the Directorate.

Emergency Planning

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(1)	(1)	(1)	(3)

The division is reporting to budget				

Individual Schools Budget

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / **(Surplus)** £'000s	134	176	224	85

The month 9 overspend included an increase in transport costs, which has since reduced, as we did not incur costs for Post-16 Transport (£56k).

The outturn overspend is due to the following:

- £46k due to the 2022-23 Pay Award, which has caused the SRS costs to increase for all schools. This pressure was not known at the time of agreeing the Service Level Agreements (SLA's) and so it could not be passed onto the schools

- £38.6k Prudential Borrowing Charge

- £67k ILW costs

- £17.7k Mounton House costs

However, we have been able to partly offset the costs above with additional grant income received.

Resources

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / **(Surplus)** £'000s	(388)	(400)	(409)	(370)

The under spend of £370,321 is due to the following:

- £225k – releasing reserve and in year income from the Photovoltaic Recharges cost centre (solar panel income). The month 9 saving had been forecast as £270k, but the recharges were not as much as previously forecast.

- £45k – staff cost savings through vacancies

- £45k – grant offsetting staff costs

- £25k - savings on ICT, as budgeted costs for SIMS Centralisation costs not incurred and Address Cleaning will now take place in 24-25

- £14k – grant offsetting ALN licencing costs

- £10k - releasing remainder of 22-23 accrual for unspent School Essentials grant, as we have now paid this back to WG

- £6k - did not incur Missing Persons charge

Standards

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	585	566	596	567

The overspend of £567,046 is due to the following:

- £732k ALN Transport – a slight saving of £5k on the month 9 forecast of £737k

- £496k reduction in ALN Recoupment – with the recent changes in ALN formula for schools, all out of county recoupment for mainstream schools will be delegated to support pupils. An increase of £45k on the month 9 forecast

- £98k Breakfast clubs – increase in catering and staff costs and reduction in income

- £14k - ALN Administration Service – Deri View SRB costs and unable to currently make the employee related savings. A reduction of £15k on the month 9 forecast due to savings on staff costs/vacancy

- £20k ALN Management – unexpected pension costs, as a member of staff was automatically opted in and has not re-claimed their pension payments, after opting out again. An increase in staff costs and unable to make the employee related savings

- £15k ALN Equipment Budget – not able to capitalise as much as we had thought

  Offset by:

- -£587k saving on ALN Out of County – reduction in number of pupils in out of county schools has resulted in a saving. An increase of £129k on the month 9 forecast, as we disputed increased charges, which we had not previously agreed

- -£69k saving in independent schools – reduction in the number of pupils requiring places. A reduction of £82k on the month 9 forecast due to recharges from the PRU being higher than expected

- -£10k saving in Education Psychology – due to staff savings and additional income received. A reduction of £17k on the month 9 forecast due to the Soulbury Pay Awards for 22-23 and 23-24 being more than expected

- -£118k grants used to offset staff costs. An increase of £20k on month 9

- -£23k saving on Expansion of Early Years grant due to the take up of early education funding being less than anticipated

COMMUNITIES & PLACE DIRECTORATE	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	959	896	1,001	747
COMMUNITIES & PLACE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:				

The Communities and Place Directorate outturn position is £747k deficit at year end. Whilst this remains a significant deficit for the Directorate, this is an improved position since Month 9 and the details of these changes are provided within the next sections of this report. The pressures and demand within Housing and Homelessness continued to have a significant impact throughout 2023/24 and changes in service delivery in 2024/25 should help to mitigate this pressure going forward.

The impact of inflation can be seen across a number of service areas and in particular within Fleet Management and within these areas that are sensitive to inflationary pressures for example Waste Services adverse variances continue to present.

Across all Services, all eligible additional costs and income losses have been claimed against any funding that has been made available. In addition, service areas have been successful in securing grant funding which has enabled us to passport core costs to grant funding activity. Since month 9 a number of service areas have been able to report a significantly improved position as income has been higher than anticipated, grant funding has increased or has been provided beyond what was anticipated and costs have been managed where possible.

Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	524	264	376	194

Enterprise & Community Animation has returned a £194k overspend in 23-24, this is mainly due to: -

- **Enterprise Mgt -** £20k over spent – our partner contribution towards City Deal has increased over and above available budget by £13k, on top of this senior management costs have exceeded budget due to the inability to make vacancy factor savings and an over spend in subscription and software costs. This is a £15k improvement from M9 as a result of a senior staff vacancy that was not known in December.
- **Community & Partnership Development -** £61k underspent – savings generated from being able to pay for core staff costs through grant funding.
- **Housing -** £422k over spent, this can be broken down into these main areas: -

    - **Homelessness** – £75k over spent – final spend on B&B accommodation for 23-24 was £2.144m with a further £686k on ancillary spend including security, storage and damage repairs. These costs have been covered by Housing Prevention grant of £495k, Housing Benefit of £1.557m and WG discretionary Housing grant of £237k to leave an underspend against budget of £252k. This underspend within Housing has been offset by an overspend in our Benefits service relating to B&B placements due to a funding subsidy gap between what has been paid in Housing benefit and what can be claimed back from the DWP, at year end this shortfall was £328k over available budget. When you add this against the underspend in Housing the overall authority overspend relating to Homelessness is £75k.

- o **Shared Housing & Private Leasing** - £263k over spent – operating costs and in particular damage repair & maintenance have increased over available budgets across our hostels and leased accommodation, it has impacted more in 23-24 as we did not receive as much additional HPG grant as in previous years so were unable to call on it to offset overspend.
  - o **Strategic Services** – £40k over spent – mainly due to the costs incurred in relation to the Gypsy & Romany Traveller surveys.

- **Business Growth & Enterprise** – £194k under spent – due to managed staff savings through the funding of core staff costs in Economic development (£154k) by grant to aid in year budget recovery and part year vacancy savings in the Strategic Operations Team due to the implementation of a new structure (£40k).

Facilities & Fleet Management				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	220	190	66	(196)

Facilities, Fleet & De-carbonisation has under spent by £196k, due to-

- **Schools Catering** – £251k underspend – The outturn position has greatly improved since Month 9 and can be attributed to the following :-
  - o This year the service has transitioned from a budget model that relied on the authority to subsidise the shortfall between the cost of producing the meal and the price we charged the parents to a cost recovery model that assumed all our costs would be met by the £3.20 rate provided by WG. Due to the phased implementation of the UFSM policy it was difficult to predict in the early part of the year the impact it would have on our meal numbers and the subsequent effect on our operating costs, this meant we were unable to identify if the £3.20 per meal would be sufficient to cover all our outgoings until the end of the financial year. Now we have a complete picture of income and expenditure for the year it is apparent that we did not require all of our base budget subsidy which has resulted in an underspend against budget.
  - o There was a switch in year to the use of packet mixes for things such as cake and pizza bases to save money as part of the in-year budget recovery plan, this has helped towards the 23-24 saving. Note, this was a temporary measure and has now been reversed in 24-25.
  - o As mentioned at Month 9 we were awaiting news of our share of a £3.3m additional grant, this has since been confirmed as £111k and has helped offset any one-off set-up costs that had been incurred during the year.

- **Passenger Transport** – £83k under spent – Improved private hire income, savings from staff vacancies and additional bus operator support grant funding has helped offset an overspend in external commissioning due to increased pupil numbers.

- **Regional Transport Team** - £51k under spent – Underspend due to staff being funded 50% from capitalisation directive and core costs being funded from transport grants.

- **Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme** – £45k over spent – £14k adverse swing from M9, member numbers continue to drop resulting in savings falling £45k below budgeted levels.

- **Fleet maintenance** - £396k over spent – We have seen the cost of running and maintaining our vehicle fleet increase significantly in 23-24. The overspend can be attributed to these main issues :-
    - The effect of inflation has driven up the cost of vehicle parts, external repair costs and fuel.
    - Supply chain issues have impacted the budget in 2 ways, 1) the non-availability of spare parts in-house has meant that we have to send vehicles to external repair shops rather than repair in house to guarantee the vehicle is back in use as soon as possible 2) in some instances the wait for parts has resulted in a vehicle being off the road for a number of months, this means we have to hire in a replacement which increases our hire costs over available budget.
    - Borrowing costs – prices of new (and in particular EV) vehicles have increased considerably in the last few years, where we are now looking to replace old stock we are finding that our borrowing budget is insufficient to cover these increased costs.

  Officers are continually reviewing our vehicle portfolio, a Fleet Management Board has been set-up with the objective not only to rationalise and reduce costs but to ensure that our fleet is sufficient to meet the operational needs of the authority.

- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences** - £116k under spent – improvement of £28k since Month 9 mainly down to part year staff vacancy savings, improved income from an increase in customers and the managed reduction in non-essential spend.

- **Solar Farm & Sustainability** - £92k under spent – improved income mainly from our PV installations due to the increased market rates for energy.

- **De-Carbonisation Team** - £44k under spent – we have seen significant staff savings (£190k) in 23-24 as a result of 4 vacancies within the team (posts are currently advertised to be filled in May/June) and we have also received grant funding of £26k which helped offset core costs. These underspends have been offset by a £172k shortfall in our corporate savings targets where we were unable to make any of the £100k mileage saving and failed to find £72k of the £532k corporate energy target, although in December we were projecting a shortfall of £177k on corporate energy so we have seen an improvement in position since M9 and is the reason for the swing to outturn.

Neighbourhood Services				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn

Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	500	667	782	919

Neighbourhood Services has over spent by £919k in 23-24, this is due to-

- **Streetlighting** – £21k over spent – Position has changed since Month 9 where we were projecting a £50k under spend, this is due to maintenance costs exceeding original projections due to contract inflation and increased demand, the extent of which was not known at Month 9.

- **Highways Operations & SWTRA** – £209k under spent – this is due to savings driven by the rationalisation of our sweeping function as agreed in the authority's budget recovery plan, improved income from external client and capital programme work and staff vacancy savings within office services. The work undertaken for SWTRA (South Wales Trunk Road Agency) has come in on budget.

- **Waste Services** - £1.129m over spent – The volatility of the recycling market continued to impact negatively over the last quarter. The implementation of Workplace Recycling Regulations and increased receptacle costs will not play through in income until 2024/25. Delays in transition to new fleet and depot improvements delayed roll-out of polypropylene sacks incurring additional costs on single use bags.

- **Grounds Maintenance** – £93k under spent - Additional external contractual work and playgrounds installation boosted income significantly. A reduction in shelf stock and auction sales of refurbished plant machinery created one-off income opportunity.

Placemaking, Highways & Flood

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(286)	(224)	(225)	(169)

Placemaking, Highways & Flood has under spent by £169k, this is as a result of -

- **Building Control** – £93k over spent – this can be attributed to 2 main areas 1) applications have reduced significantly in 23-24 due to the uncertainty around the economy, this has had an adverse impact on fee income resulting in a shortfall against budget. 2) the increased statutory requirements brought in with the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 has meant an increase in the amount of non-chargeable work the service has to undertake impacting on staff and income budgets.

- **Planning & Development Control** - £38k over spent **–** we have seen a reduction in application income in 23-24, in particular the fees generated from the large development sites. Income levels are influenced by the amount of potential development opportunities and the adoption of the Replacement Local Development Plan will address this current deficit in land availability. Councils are also currently lobbying WG to increase planning fees given that they have not risen with inflation and have remained fixed since 2020. WG are currently reviewing this matter.

- **Planning Policy & LDP** – On budget.

- **Car Parks & Civil Parking Enforcement** - £41k under spent – a positive swing of £50k since month 9 and can be attributed to an improvement in Pay & Display income received in the last 3 months of the year that has helped offset a shortfall in PCN income of £27k, in addition the outturn has been helped by a rates refund on one of our car parks and employee savings due to part year vacancies.

- **Highways management & flooding -** £196k under spent – mainly due to income exceeding budgets in road closure fees and SABs fees. In addition, we have seen an employee underspend as vacant posts were frozen as part of the in-year recruitment freeze. This is a £165k adverse swing from what we reported in December and is due to a delay in the receipt of developer fees that we originally anticipated to come in before March but will now come into the authority in 24/25.

- **Regeneration** - £62k under spent – Employee underspend as we have been able to passport core staff costs to grant funding, the extent of which was not known in December and is the reason for the £62k improvement since month 9.

MONLIFE DIRECTORATE	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	344	8	8	(209)

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

The directorate has underspent by £209k. The primary areas of pressure within the directorate remain, with the Borough Theatre, Attractions, Contact Centre and Hubs overspending. Inflation rises, market instability and a post-covid environment has continued to impact on the cost of delivering these key services. The Borough Theatre has only re-opened this year and is still recovering from the impact of the covid pandemic; this year's adverse weather has been detrimental to income delivery at our attractions; and, the Contact Centre and Hubs remain under pressure due to increased demands and increased essential software costs.

We continue to see improvements and increased usage of our outdoor adventure facilities and membership numbers continue to grow within our leisure sites, we continue to monitor these services closely due to the significant income targets.

The significant improvement from month 9 to outturn is mainly due to additional grant opportunities, with the section utilising grants to offset core staffing costs which has reduced the forecast costs of delivering these services. We have seen improved income at our attractions due to opening earlier this season to take advantage of the timing of the Easter Holidays and improved usage at our outdoor adventure facilities which continue to provide a multi-use facility for the authority.

(Monlife) Countryside & Culture				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(83)	(83)	(108)

Countryside and Culture have under spent by £108k due to higher than anticipated grant income, which has supported core staffing costs.

(MonLife) Communications				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	5	(25)	(21)	(17)

Central communications have under spend by £17k due to the secondment of the Central Communications Manager.

(Monlife) Finance & Business Development				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	339	250	220	181

Finance and Business Development have overspent by £181k, the primary areas of significant pressure are:

- **Borough Theatre** has overspent by £175k due to lower than anticipated income levels. The section is still recovering and full growth is not expected for another 12 months. Service improvement relates to utilisation of grants to fund core staff as agreed in the budget recovery plan.

- **Attractions** have overspent by £67k due to lower than expected income. Visitor numbers to all our attractions have been significantly impacted by the adverse weather conditions. The improvement from month 9 relates to increased income from grants which have supported core staffing costs and opening our attractions earlier to take advantage of the timing of the Easter holidays.

- **Contact Centre and hubs** have overspent by £90k due to higher than anticipated staffing levels to cover long term sick, delays in implementing the restructure which has impacted on the forecast savings, and failure to meet employee related savings along with inflation on existing essential contracts.

- These pressures are offset by; a £30k under spend within museums which includes one off additional income from grants which has offset core staffing costs as per the budget recovery plan; £70k reduction in service management which aligns with delay in non-essential spend; and, £40k saving in community education due to the freezing of the lead tutor post as agreed in the budget recovery plan along with £11k underspend in Markets due to additional income.

The improvement from month 9 to outturn mainly relates to additional income within our attractions and Markets along with additional grant income which has supported core staffing costs.

(Monlife) Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(134)	(108)	(265)

Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure have under spent by £265k, with the variance from month 9 to outturn relating to improved positions in both outdoor adventure and youth service where additional income has offset previously predicted overspends, and higher than budgeted grant income in sports development.

We continue to see improvements in this area with continued growth in our leisure memberships and improved usage of our outdoor facilities, however, continued close monitoring will be required in 24-25 due to the significant income targets.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UNIT DIRECTORATE	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(52)	(45)	(46)	(186)

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

Chief Executives has returned a £186k under spend in 23-24. This has been achieved primarily by holding a number of posts vacant to assist with the in-year recovery position. This has not been without cost. Existing staff have picked up additional work and progress in some areas has been delayed as a result. We've also seen a growth in income and grant funding on some areas. However, the positive bottom-line masks overspends in some areas such as Welsh language translation and fees paid to third parties.

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Experience				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(11)	(11)	(11)	(161)

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Experience is forecasting to under spend by £161k, the outturn position is made up of a number of under and over spends across the division with the main variances being :-

- **Corporate** - £25k under spent – originally reporting an over spend due to staff cost pressures but we have now been able to fund an element of senior staff costs via the Ukraine grant which has pushed the budget into an underspend as has resulted in a £70k improvement since month 9.
- **Scrutiny** - £6k over spent – staff costs have exceeded budget mainly due the inability to make vacancy factor savings.
- **Customer Relations** - £14k under spent – mainly due to an under spend against professional fees.
- **Policy & Partnerships** – £127k under spent – mainly because of staff savings across the section due to the delay in filling the Equality and Welsh Language Manager post, where we have held posts vacant within the Community Safety & CCTV teams to aid the in-year budget recovery and underspends in the GIS team as we have been able to passport core staff costs to capital. These have been offset by a £20k over spend on membership subscriptions to external bodies such as the WLGA and LGA and a £108k over spend on Welsh translation due to both volume and price increases driving costs up over available budget.

People (CEO)				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(41)	(34)	(35)	(25)

People Services is forecasting to under spend by £25k, the main variances are as follows:

- **Payroll & HR** - £18k under spent – Since month 9 there has been a realignment of budgets within the department and the majority of the surplus budget (£94k) reported within Corporate Training has now been moved to Payroll & HR which has helped offset the reported system and staffing pressures.
- **Corporate Training** - £27k under spent – as per above, budgets have been moved which explains the swing from Month 9 projection, in addition we have seen an improvement in training income between month 9 and outturn.
- **Occupational Health** – £13k over spent – £13k adverse variance from Month 9 as demand for services have exceeded original month 9 projections.

LAW & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE (PG)	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	119	115	151	108

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

The £110k overspend in Democratic Services relates to increased pressure on the budget allocated for members. This is primarily due to increase in members salaries, superannuation and an increase in co-opted members.

The underspend in Legal is a result of vacancies in the team which are in the process of being filled. As a result, these savings will not be on-going.

In relation to Land Charges, the £7k overspend relates to a drop in income which correlates directly with the activity in the housing market. As the housing market has become more buoyant, we have seen an increase in fee income more recently which is in excess of monthly projections.

Democratic Services				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	137	137	137	136

Democratic Services has over spent by £136k in 23-24, this is due to:
- **Members** - £110k overspend – an improvement since Month 9 of £14k. As reported previously the cost of our elected members has increased over available budget in 23-24. We have seen the main pressure fall against pay where the members pay award was

agreed at 4.75% for 23-24 against a budget provision of 4.25%, we have seen a higher uptake in members joining the Superannuation scheme than in previous years and the service has been unable to meet it's vacancy factor savings. In addition the number of co-opted members has gone up increasing allowances although this is not as high as we though t at M9 and is the reason for the improvement in over spend at outturn.

- **Democratic Services** - £26k over spent – An increase from Month 9 of £13k – this is mainly due to an increase in the cost of our ModGov support package within our committee section and an overspend in Elections due to a shortfall in expected grant funding, this was not anticipated at Month 9 and is the main reason for the variance.

Legal and Land Charges

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(22)	(22)	14	(28)

Legal and Land charges has under spent by £28k :

- **Legal** - £34k under spent – this is due a net staff saving caused by the delay in recruiting into the Head of Governance post, the decision not to fill a paralegal post in line with the recruitment freeze offset by additional honoraria payments to staff covering the deputy monitoring role. We have seen an improvement in court fees and income since January and this is the main reason for the £31k improvement from what we reported at month 9.
- **Land Charges** - £7k over spent – Search fees have been impacted by the downturn in the housing market resulting in a budget pressure in income, this has been part offset by a saving in staffing due to a vacant post and an underspend in supplies & services. The final income figures exceeded our projections at Month 9 and is the reason for the £10k improvement in position at outturn.

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(196)	(178)	(144)	(380)

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

The Directorate, along with the wider organisation, has maintained a focus to not only manage within budget for the year but also contribute to the wider budget recovery efforts and to deliver an under spend and to support the overall Council objective of ensuring a balanced budget position is achieved or out performed by year-end. The directorate has forecast an under spend throughout the year and this has increased further at outturn, with a £380k under spend being delivered against budget. It is pleasing to see that the continued efforts of leadership and staff has led to this positive outcome.

The positive movement on the under spend from month 9 to outturn is £236k. Finance saw a positive movement of £122k and through the ability to recharge additional eligible staff costs against grants and external bodies, along with a provision in place for additional postage and

printing costs not being required. Landlord Services also had a positive movement of £130k, principally and significantly as a result of negotiations being positively concluded with regards to the Cattle Market lease, offset by over spends with corporate building maintenance and cleaning costs, as well as reductions from month 9 in income and rentals across cemeteries, county farms, industrial units and commercial investments. A late swing and additional pressure resulted within ICT and resulting from an increase in the SRS contribution caused by increased PSBA line costs and a reduction in SLA income.

The outturn position will inform, and to the extent that it provides further insights beyond that captured in the 2024/25 budget, in-year forecasting and in ensuring that the increased budgetary discipline introduced in the current year continues into 2024/25.

Finance				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(243)	(242)	(200)	(322)

Finance has returned a £322k underspend, this is mainly due to -

- **Revenues** - £53k under spent - due to :-

  - **Benefits** - £2k over spent – due to extra annual software costs for the Revenues & Benefits system, although these were part offset by one off grant income received from the DWP.
  - **Council Tax & NNDR** - £18k under spent – A number of factors contribute to the net under spend of £18k. Firstly there are budget pressures totalling £53k. These are made up of a £24k shortfall in summons income received, a £16k residual budget pressure from the Finance restructure and a £13k top up of the bad debt provision for court costs, reflecting the debt position at year end. These pressures have however been offset this year by £27k one off administration grant income from Welsh Government and £44k of savings against the non pay budget. This saving is largely attributable to a provision for post and printing services that has been carried over for the last couple of years which are now unlikely to be incurred. The £60k swing since month 9 is largely due to this post and printing provision, plus an adjustment to the bad debt provision and a lower than expected contribution to the non pay costs incurred by the Revenues Shared Service.
  - **Debtors & Charity relief** – £37k under spent – due to one off burden funding for administering the Energy schemes on behalf of UK Govt, savings from a part year vacancy and a managed underspend in supplies and services.

- **Finance** - £214k under spent – staff savings due to vacant posts within the team, these will now be filled in the coming months as the finance structure has been approved. In addition income has increased due to the ability to recharge staff time to grants and external bodies as part of an admin/project mgt fee, the extent of which was not known at month 9 and is the reason for the £56k improvement in position.

- **Audit** – £9k under spent due to staff savings from vacant posts.

- **Systems & Exchequer** – £46k under spent – a net under spend within the section due to a staff vacancy in Cashiers that was not filled in line with the 23-24 recruitment freeze and a reduction in software costs as system development was paused to help in-year budget recovery and to help fund increasing system contract costs. In addition, extra income was received from school recharges, Ukraine funding and capitalisation.

Corporate Health & Safety				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	(6)	(10)

Corporate Health & Safety is forecasting a £6k under spend for 23-24, this is down to a managed saving within Supplies & Services.

Information, Communication & Technology				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(4)	(4)	(23)	(3)

- **ICT** - £3k under spent at outturn, this is due to :-
  - **Digital Programme Office** - £25k under spent - mainly due to savings in materials and equipment purchases.
  - **SRS Contribution** - £39k over spent – We indicated at month 9 that our contribution to SRS would exceed our available budget and this has now been confirmed by SRS as a £27k increase for 23-24 mainly due to an increase in PSBA line costs and reduced SLA income. In addition to this there has been additional spending on a CUCM system upgrade of £2k and a £10k contribution for Information Security support that did not have budget and was not factored in at Month 9.
  - **Digital Design & Innovation** - £18.5k underspent - staff vacancy savings.
  - **Cyber Security Team** - £3.6k underspent - due to a managed reduction in non-essential spend as per authority budget recovery plan.
  - **Telephony** - £5k over spent - A reduction in telephone call charges have been offset by a small overspend in mobile phones relating to the costs of mobile internet hubs that could not be recharged to services.

Commercial & Corporate Landlord				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	51	67	85	(45)

Commercial & Corporate Landlord services has under spent by £45k, due to :-

- **Investment Properties** - £201k over spent, due to –
  - **Newport Leisure Park** - £91k over spent – NLP is expected to generate a £29k surplus after loan repayments, however this falls short of the £120k budget target

for 23-24. The £91K shortfall relates to unbudgeted rates on vacant units and rent-free periods for new tenants reducing turnover in 23-24. The variance from month 9 to outturn relates to additional fees associated with new lettings. In 24-25 we will see these unexpected expenses reduce and income increase as the rent-free period ends reduce and income increase as the rent-free period ends.

- o **Castlegate Business Park** - £109k over spent – Castlegate has overspent by £109k, this relates to the unbudgeted premises costs associated with our vacant units, the section continues to work on improving the vacancy rate. The variance from month 9 to outturn relates to higher than anticipated fees associated with new lettings, a number of flexible leases have been agreed but due to rent free periods the associated benefits will be seen in 2024-25.
- **Landlord Services** - £261k under spent – since month 9 we have had confirmation of an agreement being reached with Raglan cattle market for outstanding rent owing. Even though we had included estimated figures within the accounts the final rental figure agreed was more than projected providing an in-year benefit of £317k. This is the main reason for the £327k improvement in position from Month 9. The 23-24 budget included a £215k saving from the rationalisation of our property portfolio but we have struggled to find any of this in 23-24, this shortfall has been part offset by improved rental income, salary savings due to the freezing of a vacant post and a one-off grant to cover the Ukrainian welcome centre.
- **Shared Accommodation** - £9k under spent – mainly due to the receipt of grant funding to cover works undertaken at Hanbury House that were not factored in at Month 9 and is the main reason for the improvement in outturn position.
- **County Farms & Industrial Units** - net £4k over spent – rental income for the year has come in below projections due to a number of vacant properties, it was assumed in our forecast at month 9 that some of these would be filled and is the main reason for the £57k adverse swing at outturn.
- **Cemeteries** - £42k under spent – mainly due to burial income exceeding budget.
- **Property Services** - £69k over spent – this is an adverse swing of £79k since Month 9 and is mainly due to overspends in our Corporate Building maintenance and Accommodation budgets where maintenance and cleaning costs have exceeded projections, this has been part offset by vacancy savings and increased fee income within Resources.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / **(Surplus)** £'000s	(2,139)	(2,146)	(3,231)	(3,220)
Coroners Services				
Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / **(Surplus)** £'000s	18	18	104	104

The Coroner Service has over spent due to the urgent restructuring of the service as required by the Chief Coroner of England and Wales.

Corporate Management

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(116)	(116)	(138)	(233)

Increased income due to favourable rateable value adjustments on Council owned properties.

Non-Distributed Costs

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	(382)	(331)

Pension strain costs relating to the costs of reorganisation are being met from capitalisation direction.

Strategic Initiatives

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(2,040)	(2,040)	(2,815)	(2,742)

Unallocated reserve funded budgets that are mitigating cost pressures within the Authority.

Insurance

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(7)	0	(19)

The Council has been out to tender for its insurance cover which resulted in premiums payable for 2023/24 being slightly less than anticipated and reflective of a very competitive insurance market.

TREASURY & RESERVES	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(251)	(730)	(1,118)	(1,591)

Interest & Investment Income

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(111)	(550)	(576)	(836)

The performance of investments in money market funds and DMO deposits continued to improve with rising interest rates. Since Month 9 there has been further improvement as invested balances have been higher than anticipated.

Interest Payable & Similar Charges

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	12	(8)	(352)	(331)

The interest payable position has improved due to lower-than-expected temporary loan requirements combined with forward starting loans locking into beneficial rates. Interest rates available have reduced from their peak lowering the costs of borrowing even further.

Charges Required Under Regulation

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	124	223	206	213

This budget covers the statutory amount the Council is obliged to set aside to fund future loan repayments (Minimum revenue provision – MRP) and is slightly higher than the £6.7m budget due to higher spend than anticipated in the 2022/23 capital programme that was funded from borrowing (MRP costs start the year after the corresponding expenditure). Additional charges have been made for vehicles disposed/written off. This movement is matched by and under spend in Borrowing Cost Recoupment.

Other Investment Income

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(24)	(42)	(42)	(49)

Unexpected income related to discharge of SRS business capital advance and interest relating to the late payment on the balance of Hilston Park disposal.

Borrowing Cost Recoupment

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(252)	(353)	(353)	(586)

This budget represents a technical accounting adjustment where borrowing costs relating to the purchase of capital assets is repatriated from service budgets to ensure that the full life cost of assets is borne by the end user. The variance to budget relates to vehicles purchased at the end of 2022/23 which were originally anticipated to be financed through a sale and leaseback arrangement. However, following an options appraisal it was more cost effective to be purchased outright and financed from borrowing.

FINANCING	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(460)	(430)	(350)	(196)

Council Tax Benefit Support

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(260)	(280)	(350)	(398)

Case load for the scheme appears to be stabilising. As a result an under spend has been made against this budget.

Council Tax

Outturn Forecast	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(200)	(150)	0	202

Generally the tax base remains strong. We continue to see the base grow as new properties come into the council tax list. However at the same time we are also seeing an increase in the number of discounts and exemptions awarded which has both a negative impact on the tax base and on the outturn position. We are also seeing a slowing down in collection rates as households struggle with the cost of living crisis. Combined, this has eroded any anticipated

surplus this year and by year end income collected has failed to meet the budget set for the year.

General Government Grants				
Outturn Forecast	**Month 5**	**Month 6**	**Month 9**	**Outturn**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0

Income received to budget.

2. **Section 3 – School Balances**

2.1. A Board of Governors, who are responsible for managing the school's finances, directly governs each of the Authority's Schools. However, the Authority also holds a key responsibility for monitoring the overall financial performance of schools. Below is a table showing the Schools' Outturn position for 2023-24 for each Educational Cluster.

School Balances Summary outturn position	(A) Opening Reserves (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2023/24	(B) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 5	(C) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 6	(D) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 9	(E) Draw/ (Contribution) to Reserves at Outturn	(A+E) 2023/24 Reserves at Outturn
	£000's	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cluster						
Abergavenny	**(1,598)**	1,059	**1,119**	**1,776**	**1,742**	**143**

Caldicot	**(1,151)**	915	**991**	**1,559**	**1,064**	**(87)**
Chepstow	**(112)**	180	**159**	**383**	**770**	**658**
Monmouth	**(1,425)**	1,032	**1,016**	**1,317**	**873**	**(552)**
Special	**29**	478	**478**	**572**	**711**	**741**
Total	**(4,257)**	**3,663**	**3,763**	**5,607**	**5,161**	**904**

2.2. Collective School Balances at the beginning of the Financial Year amounted to £4,257,000 surplus. At month 9, schools were forecasting a draw on reserves of £5,607,000, resulting in a forecast deficit balance of £1,350,000 by year end. At outturn, the actual draw on reserves has reduced slightly resulting in an outturn position of £904,000 deficit. The improved position since Month 9 was due to schools receiving a Revenue Maintenance Grant of £244k and interest on School Balances of £227k.

2.3. Grants awarded to schools at 2020/21 and 2021/22 year-ends resulted in a large increase in overall school balances and schools developed grant investment plans in line with the terms and conditions of these grants, hence the large draw on reserves during 2022/23 and 2023/24.

2.4. The movement of individual schools in deficit at the end of the year is shown below:

| Start of year	Month 5	Month 6	Month 9	End of year
Total: 5	**Total: 11**	**Total: 15**	**Total: 16**	**Total: 13**
Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive
Llandogo	Llandogo	Llandogo	Llandogo	
Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service
The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	The Dell
Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)		Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)
	Deri View	Deri View	Deri View	*Balance amalgamated into King Henry V111 3-19 School
	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni
	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School
	Archbishop Rowan Williams	Archbishop Rowan Williams	Archbishop Rowan Williams	
	Ysgol Y Ffin	Ysgol Y Ffin	Ysgol Y Ffin	Ysgol Y Ffin

	Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston
	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow
		Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern
		Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet
		Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell
			King Henry V111 3-19 School	King Henry V111 3-19 School

2.5. There is a significant movement in cumulative School balances for the year, moving from a surplus of £4.25m to a deficit of £904k at year-end. Fourteen schools are now in deficit.

2.6. There isn't a consistent picture of schools' balances. There has been a fluctuating trend for some time with some schools showing a continuing reduction in schools balances, which is of concern, and others a more stable trend.

2.7. Grants awarded to schools at 2020/21 and 2021/22 year-ends to manage the impact of the pandemic on education resulted in a large increase in overall school balances, which has somewhat masked inherent structural budget deficits across some schools.

2.8. The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards have also impacted upon budgets.

2.9. All schools that register a deficit balance at the end of a financial year are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. These recovery plans will be confirmed with both the Local Education Authority and each School's Governing Body. Once finalised, the schools with significant deficits will be monitored by the Cabinet member for both Children and Young People and Resources on a termly basis.

Financial Year-end	Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's
2014-15	(1,140)
2015-16	(1,156)
2016-17	(269)
2017-18	(175)
2018-19	232
2019-20	435
2020-21	(3,418)

2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23	(4,257)
2023-24	904

2.10. The increase in school balances during 2020/21 and 2021/22 resulted in a reduction in the number of schools in deficit, as illustrated in the following table. Unfortunately, fourteen schools have returned to a deficit balance.

Number of Schools in Deficit
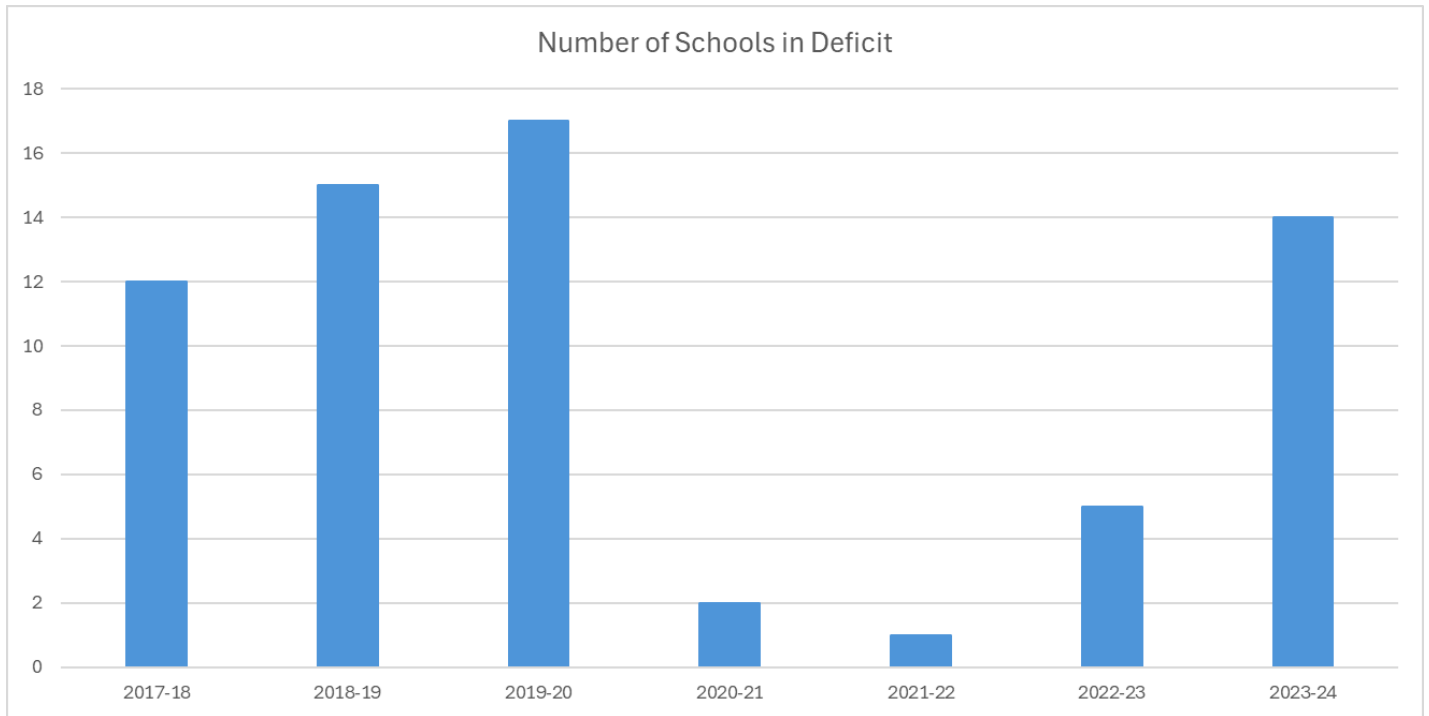
3. Section 4 – Capital budget Outturn

3.1   The summary Capital position at Outturn is as follows:

Category	Slippage B/F	Original Budget	Budget Adjust-ments	Slippage to 2024/25	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual Outturn	Over / (Under) spend
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Expenditure							
Capitalisation Directive	0	3,008	0	(387)	2,621	3,621	1,000
Development Schemes Over £250k	12,042	603	2,203	(8,222)	6,625	6,618	(7)
Development Schemes Under £250k	2,527	360	72	(2,013)	946	946	0
School modernisation programme	6,265	29,375	(63)	(8,604)	26,972	26,972	0
Infrastructure	2,455	6,823	150	(3,250)	6,178	6,178	0
ICT Schemes	866	413	0	(765)	514	514	0
Property Maintenance	2,027	2,190	110	(1,279)	3,048	3,048	0
Renovation Grants	0	900	275	(110)	1,065	1,065	0
LCHO	0	0	191	(27)	164	164	0
Section 106	828	0	453	(1,160)	121	125	4
Regeneration - Specific Grant Funded	6,089	500	10,827	(2,791)	14,626	14,613	(12)
Vehicles	0	1,500	208	0	1,708	1,209	(499)
Other	0	0	103	0	103	103	0
Total Expenditure	**33,098**	**45,671**	**14,529**	**(28,606)**	**64,691**	**65,176**	**485**
Financing							
Supported Borrowing	0	(2,430)	0	0	(2,430)	(2,430)	0
General Capital Grant	0	(2,495)	0	0	(2,495)	(2,495)	0
Grants and Contributions	(8,446)	(19,061)	(19,451)	3,596	(43,362)	(43,362)	0
S106 Contributions	(917)	0	(426)	1,121	(222)	(225)	(3)
Unsupported Borrowing	(20,865)	(15,787)	5,643	22,325	(8,684)	(9,665)	(981)
Earmarked Reserve & Revenue Funding	(305)	(103)	(103)	148	(363)	(363)	(0)
Capital Receipts	(2,565)	(4,295)	(191)	1,415	(5,636)	(6,636)	(1,000)
Leasing	0	(1,500)	0	0	(1,500)	0	1,500
Total Financing	**(33,098)**	**(45,671)**	**(14,529)**	**28,606**	**(64,691)**	**(65,176)**	**(485)**

3.2   The capital expenditure at outturn demonstrating a net underspend £485k, primarily due to the following variances identified:

Scheme	Budget £000's	Over / (Under) spend £000's	Comment
Capitalisation directive	2,621	1,000	A call on a further £1m headroom that was built into the 2023/24 revenue budget to fund the cost of redundancy and associated pension costs upon service reorganisation.
Vehicle acquisition	1,708	(499)	The level of vehicle acquisition during the year was below budget reflective of the actual requirement for replacement across Council services. Vehicle purchases for the year were financed by unsupported borrowing instead of leasing as overall lifetime costs were lower under borrowing.

3.3   **Capital Slippage**

3.4   Capital slippage for the year was £28.606m. The principal schemes reporting slippage are:

Scheme Category	Scheme Name	Slippage £000's	Comment
Schools & Education	King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	8,562	Scheme had been front loaded in 2023-24, as due for completion in 2024-25
Infrastructure	Wye Bridge Monmouth	2,175	Scheme delayed to 2024/25 because there are environmental constraints due to Licences / permits and working with NRW. Costs currently estimated to remain as budgeted.
Economic Development	Capital Region City Deal	1,948	Re-profiling of contributions required by the Cardiff Capital Region board
Children's Services	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,875	Delays to the acquisition of suitable properties identified
Housing	Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	1,767	Acquisition strategy in development to formalise arrangements in respect of buying properties to address homeless issue & support the implementation of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2024-25
Economic Development	Grant –Match Funding Support Allocation	877	Progress dependent upon identifying suitable grant streams, so reliant upon third parties.
Schools & Education	School Refurbishment	816	Delays in contractor engagement for urgent essential maintenance
Schools & Education	Archbishop Rowan Williams Nursery	640	In addition to this funding there is further S106 funding to improve / expand classrooms. The project is currently on-going with final surveys being completed before construction begins.
Schools & Education	Trellech Primary Nursery Childcare Scheme	620	Completion of Nursery scheme to be completed in 2024-25, as improvement works have commenced

Scheme Category	Scheme Name	Slippage £000's	Comment
Economic Development	Placemaking programme	608	Placemaking Plans scheme where local priorities for placemaking interventions have been agreed by steering groups
Maintenance Schemes	Property Maintenance	502	Required for essential schemes delayed by contractor engagement
Infrastructure	Wye Bridge Chepstow	468	Scheme delayed to 2024/25 – Further Investigatory works are required to be completed (traffic data etc), which have been commissioned to support the remedial decisions before the employment of a contractor.
Infrastructure	Reconstruction of Bridges and walls	464	Re-surfacing works delayed on Wye Bridge project. No compliant bids were received in the first tender process so have to go back out to tender and this will take us into the 2024/25 financial year.
Schools & Education	Welsh Medium School and Nursery	392	Project started in 2023-24 and due for completion in 2024-25, after initial delays.
Capitalisation	Capitalisation Directive	387	Support Service Transformation in 2024/25
Environmental	Flood Recovery Grant	379	Multi-year flood management projects
Economic Development	RE:FIT Programme	292	Multi-year investment project funding required to continue projects
Infrastructure	ATF Schemes	280	Schemes due for completion early 24-25 due to slight delays out of Council control
IT Schemes	ICT Desktop replacement budget	230	Delay in identifying required hardware
Infrastructure	Various small schemes	190	Small PROW schemes, Sewage treatment, infrastructure, LCHO and broadband schemes which have been delayed due to external factors
Economic Development	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	187	This is a multi-year project that involves considerable planning and logistical complexities
Schools & Education	Safer Route to Schools Investment	185	Further development of safer routes infrastructure which has had slight delays due to third parties
Economic Development	MUCH Project (Magor with Undy Community Hall)	150	Final fitting out stage to be completed in 2024-25
IT Schemes	Network Estate replacement budget	150	Awaiting infrastructure implementation programme from our Network Provider
IT Schemes	SRS Data Hall Migration	149	Decommissioning costs will now arise in 24/25 as advised by our Network provider
IT Schemes	Sharepoint Online Implementation	135	Project to be completed in 2024-25 following some technical delays
Sustainability	Decarbonisation Investment	134	Continuation in 24 -25 of Investments in Decarbonisation projects as identifed
Community Development	Projects to Safely and Effectively Open Schools to the Community Outside Traditional Hours	123	Projects started and will be completed in 2024-25 as opportunities allow
Renovation Grants	Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	109	To be utilised in Social Care situations in 2024-25

Scheme Category	Scheme Name	Slippage £000's	Comment
Grant Schemes	Small grant schemes	133	Small schemes for Waste, Housing, Leisure and Nature
Adult Services	Mardy Park Minor Works - ABUHB	90	Awaiting authorisation in regard to progressing the scheme with a partner organisation
Economic Development	County Farms Maintenance & Reinvestment	86	Relating to works required to comply with The Water Resources (Control of Agriculture Pollution) Regs 2021 that are now monitored and enforced by NRW
Infrastructure	Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	70	This 3 year scheme will be completed in 2024-25 as affected woodland is identified
Schools & Education	Capital Support for Learners with ALN	65	Capital projects will be completed in 2024-25
IT Schemes	Upgrade of CAPITA 1 system CYP	55	Delay in updating system as exact requirements have not yet been identified.
Community Development	Abergavenny Community Hub Development	45	Project for completion in 2024-25
Economic Development	Fixed Asset disposal costs	37	Reflects slight delay in progressing some asset disposals
Economic Development	Brilliant Basics Fund – WG- Tintern Welcome	34	Scheme due for completion 2024-25
IT Schemes	CCTV for bus fleet	25	Funding required in 24/25 for specialist equipment for a vehicle for a specific pupil that is currently under construction.
Economic Development	Old Station Tintern Investment	22	Required for completion of disability access around the station
IT Schemes	Revenue Systems update	13	Delay in updating system as exact requirements have not yet been identified that enables an integrated solution
S106	S106 Schemes	1,160	Delays in planning / public consultations and contractor engagement, have led to delays on various schemes

3.5 **Useable Capital Receipts Available**

3.6 The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. Whilst overall balances remain healthy, it should be noted that all banked capital receipts have been committed to funding the indicative forward capital programme. Therefore any further use will be dependent upon forecast capital receipts being realised.

Capital receipt balances	2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027/28 £000's	2028/29 £000's
Balance as at 1st April	12,446	9,984	7,840	5,034	2,669	1,304
Capital receipts used for financing	(2,851)	(1,792)	(460)	(460)	(460)	(460)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,008)	(3,358)	(3,008)	(2,008)	(1,008)	0
Capital receipts to meet redundancy costs	(613)	(387)				

Capital receipts Received	4,010					
Capital receipts Forecast	0	3,393	663	103	103	103
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	**9,984**	**7,840**	**5,034**	**2,669**	**1,304**	**947**

Appendix 3 - Capitalisation directive 2023/24

Directorate	Expenditure	Justification to capitalise	Amount £000s
C&P	PTU Software - Route/pupil optimisation.	Driving a digital approach	22
C&P	Planning/Land Charges software system	Driving a digital approach	15
CYP	System software implementation	Driving a digital approach	97
RES	Implementing digital design & innovation	Driving a digital approach	530
	Sub-Total Driving a digital approach		**664**
All	Capitalisation of redundancy costs - non-schools	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	831
C&P	Investment in Decarbonisation team	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	68
CYP	Funding the cost of reconfiguration of school operating model - Abergavenny	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	66
CYP	Capitalisation of redundancy costs -schools	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	373
C&P	Transport - Move to electric/Hydrogen fleet	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	141
RES	Waste - Service Transformation costs	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	327
C&P	Homelessness Prevention Project	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	200
SCH	Supported Living project	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	90
CEO/LG	Improvement & organisational development team	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	321
	Sub-Total Funding the cost of service reconfiguration		**2,417**
SCH	Joint Local authority working (GWICES, Sc. 33, Frailty, regional safeguarding board, Gwent foster fee harmonisation and care home pooling	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	136
C&P	Passenger Transport - Sharing Senior Management with Newport CC	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	41
SCH	Deprivation of liberty safeguards	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	120
	Sub-Total Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies		**297**
C&P	Procurement SLA with Cardiff	Sharing back-office and administrative services	243
	Sub-Total Sharing back-office and administrative services		**243**
	Total		**3,621**

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School reserve balances (Surplus) / Deficit	At 31st March 2022	In Year Movement	At 31st March 2023	In Year Movement	At 31st March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Comprehensives					
Caldicot	(807,785)	580,286	(227,499)	579,936	352,437
Chepstow	124,934	227,517	352,451	500,587	853,038
King Henry VIII*	(756,131)	(29,048)	(785,180)	785,180	0
Monmouth	(814,258)	215,066	(599,192)	369,535	(229,657)
Sub Total Comprehensives	**(2,253,240)**	**993,820**	**(1,259,420)**	**2,235,237**	**975,817**
Middle					
King Henry VIII 3-19	0	0	0	329,197	329,197
Sub Total Middle	**0**	**0**	**0**	**329,197**	**329,197**
Primaries					
Archbishop R Williams	(171,322)	140,262	(31,060)	4,239	(26,821)
Cantref	(254,092)	57,742	(196,350)	85,933	(110,417)
Castle Park	(159,297)	54,000	(105,297)	30,251	(75,046)
Cross Ash	(79,755)	(21,699)	(101,453)	42,986	(58,467)
Deri View*	(189,790)	163,465	(26,326)	26,326	0
Dewstow	(358,616)	83,558	(275,059)	217,499	(57,560)
Durand	(104,979)	49,781	(55,199)	(3,506)	(58,705)
Gilwern	(230,955)	79,190	(151,764)	174,688	22,923
Goytre Fawr	(117,735)	45,610	(72,125)	64,781	(7,344)
Kymin View	(133,714)	45,337	(88,378)	11,511	(76,867)
Llandogo	(214)	6,156	5,941	(23,596)	(17,655)
Llanfoist	(219,420)	47,985	(171,434)	45,949	(125,485)
Llantilio Pertholey	(109,698)	36,984	(72,714)	11,966	(60,748)
Llanvihangel Crucorney	(136,822)	17,602	(119,219)	22,353	(96,867)
Magor Vol Aided	(196,816)	(18,960)	(215,776)	54,257	(161,519)
New Pembroke Primary	(218,668)	15,360	(203,307)	32,231	(171,077)
Osbaston Church in Wales	(93,147)	80,396	(12,750)	86,238	73,487
Our Lady's & St Michael's Catholic Primary	(58,648)	75,726	17,078	4,177	21,255
Overmonnow	(162,470)	154,809	(7,662)	132,066	124,405
Raglan	(160,593)	(34,892)	(195,485)	20,104	(175,381)
Rogiet	(89,222)	67,784	(21,439)	86,860	65,422
Shirenewton	(239,291)	53,954	(185,338)	55,395	(129,943)
St Mary's (Chepstow)	(104,932)	9,908	(95,024)	25,021	(70,004)
The Dell	(146,839)	170,750	23,912	57,082	80,993
Thornwell	(110,622)	106,365	(4,257)	99,447	95,190
Trellech	(153,939)	(3,753)	(157,692)	57,639	(100,054)
Undy	(210,643)	43,618	(167,025)	25,516	(141,508)
Usk CV	(270,840)	2,545	(268,295)	176,876	(91,420)
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	(72,015)	51,227	(20,789)	191,254	170,466
Ysgol Gymraeg Ffin	(66,783)	14,105	(52,678)	69,341	16,663
Sub Total Primaries	**(4,621,878)**	**1,594,915**	**(3,026,963)**	**1,884,883**	**(1,142,080)**
Special					
Pupil Referral Unit	(79,466)	110,173	30,707	711,453	742,161
Sub Total Special	**(79,466)**	**110,173**	**30,707**	**711,453**	**742,161**
Total	**(6,954,584)**	**2,698,908**	**(4,255,676)**	**5,160,770**	**905,095**

* King Henry VIII and Deri View closed on 31/08/23; the King Henry VIII 3-19 School is operating from these sites with effect from 01/09/23, whilst the new build is being completed, and is utilising the previous school budgets.

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Project Description	Slippage Carried forward
Capitalisation	
Capitalisation Directive	386,563
	386,563
Development Schemes Over £250k	
Capital Region City Deal	1,947,626
Caerwent House, Major Repairs	50,800
Abergavenny Community Hub Development	45,021
Asset Investment Fund	1,852,738
RE:FIT Programme	292,047
Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,875,324
Decarbonisation Investment	133,754
Safer Route to Schools Investment	185,000
Trellech Primary Nursery Childcare Scheme A9480	619,000
Projects to Safely and Effectively Open Schools to the Community Outside Traditional Hours	122,679
Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School Nursery	640,000
Welsh Medium School and Nursery	392,342
Capital Support for Learners with ALN	65,532
	8,221,863
Development Schemes Under £250k	
Fixed Asset disposal costs	36,847
Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	1,766,527
Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	187,253
Old Station Tintern Investment	22,137
	2,012,763
Schools modernisation programme	
Monmouth Leisure Centre/Pool Redesign	42,089
King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	8,561,949
	8,604,038
Infrastructure	
Reconstruction of Bridges & Retaining Walls	464,082
Structural Repairs - PROW	15,618
Shirenewton Sewage Treatment	6,744
Wye Bridge Chepstow works	468,015

Project Description	Slippage Carried forward
Wye Bridge Monmouth works+C161	2,175,423
PROW - Survey's and Closures	50,000
Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	70,075
	3,249,957
IT Schemes - Infrastructure/Hardware	
ICT Desktop replacement budget	230,000
Network Estate replacement budget	150,003
Provision of online facilities Revenue's section	13,000
SRS Data Hall Migration	149,285
WG -Broadband Fund for the Llanthony Community Scheme	8,189
Upgrade of CAPITA 1 system CYP	55,000
CCTV for bus fleet	24,541
	630,018
IT Schemes - Web Related	
Sharepoint Online Implementation	135,156
	135,156
Low Cost Home Ownership	
Low-Cost Home Ownership Costs	26,609
	26,609
Property Maintenance Schemes - General	
County Farms Maintenance & Reinvestment	86,133
School Refurbishment Grant	816,329
	902,462
Property maintainence - Decoration	
External redecoration to prevent decay of external woodwork - Monmouth Hub	28,000
	28,000
Property maintainence - Electrical Services	
Llanfoist Primary - Rectification of defects to automated fire alarm system	15,000
Abergavenny Youth Centre - Renew Fire Alarm	25,000
Electric Windows - Monmouth Comprehensive	11,000
	51,000

Project Description	Slippage Carried forward
Property maintainence - External Areas	
Repairs to boundary walls for health & safety reasons - Chepstow Castle, Dell	20,000
	20,000
Property maintainence - External Walls, Doors & Windows	
Various Properties - Continue works to safely remove asbestos materials in conjunction with	2,454
Shire Hall - External redecoration to front elevation	56,000
Renew external screens and windows - Chepstow Comprehensive	170,000
	228,454
Property maintainence - Floors & Stairs	
Refurbishment of 2 no. squash court floors- Abergavenny Leisure Centre	29,300
	29,300
Property maintainence - Mechanical Services	
Various properties : Legionella remedial works	2,070
Underfloor manifolds upgrade - Overmonnow Primary	6,000
Install LST rads in infants - Usk Primary	6,500
	14,570
Property maintainence - Roofs	
Undy Primary School - Power Wash Roof	5,000
	5,000
Renovation Grants	
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	109,892
	109,892
Section 106	
S106 Little Mill Trail (Little Mill)	27,636
S106 Gilwern OEC (Cae Meldon)	1,790
S106 Wyesham Highways Road Safety Improvements	13,645
S106 - Off Road Cycling Feasibility Study	11,746
S106 – ALN Overmonnow Special Needs Resource Base	15,708
S106 - Chepstow Town Football Club Facility Improvement	583
S106 Children's Voices in Play Project (Forensic Science Lab)	25,000

Project Description	Slippage Carried forward
Magor Walking Routes, Access & Promotion	282
S106 – Abergavenny Skate Park	24,560
S106 – Chippenham Mead Play Area	10,940
S106 – Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme	224,874
S106 - Star Road/School Lane Zebra Crossing and footpath Improvements	6,729
S106 - Sudbrook Play Park Equipment (The Old Shipyard Sudbrook)	3,080
S106 Rockfield Community Nature Spaces – Major Maintenance	34,860
S106 Goytre Playing Field Recreational & Play Facilities upgrade	79,682
S106 Llantilio Pertholey Primary School Pedestrian Access	20,000
S106 Abergavenny Velo Park	450,300
S106 Goytre Play Space – LAP (School Lane Penperlleni)	395
S106 - Major Maintenance Ifton Manor, Rogiet	1,194
S106 - Major Maintenance Queens Development, Magor	9,615
S106 - Major Maintenance Cornwallis Way, Rockfield, Monmouth	45,896
S106 - Major Maintenance Station Road, Rogiet	4,809
S106 - Major Maintenance Little Mill	9,211
S106 - Major Maintenance Kensington Park, Magor	2,444
S106 -Major Maintenance Pen-y-Val, Abergavenny	54,423
S106 -Major Maintenance Denny view, Caldicot	1,923
S106 -Major Maintenance Thornwell Farm, Chepstow	469
S106 -Major Maintenance Cadoc Close, Caerwent	4,912
S106 -Major Maintenance Gypsy Lane, Llanfoist	12,433
S106 -Major Maintenance Larchfield, Abergavenny	5,150
S106 -Major Maintenance Church Road, Caldicot	33,083
S106 -Major Maintenance Cae Meldon, Little Mill	18,143
MF – Tudor Road Drainage Monmouth	4,000
	1,159,515
Specific Grant Funded	
Safer Routes in the Community	161,509
Brilliant Basics Fund – WG- Tintern Welcome	33,604
Grant –Match Funding Support Allocation	625,767
ATF - Caldicot Greenway	20,429
ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	27,570
ATF WFL Link to Town Centre	5,370
ATF Castle Meadow Links	7,100
ATF Bridge Connections	3,920

Project Description	Slippage Carried forward
WG- Comm C- S106 – MUCH Project (Magor with Undy Community Hall)	149,216
ATF – Multi User Route	5,180
B4245 Magor/Undy to Rogiet	210,540
Grant – Match Funding Support Digital Twin - Operational Dept/ ZE Vehicles	150,000
Grant – Match Funding Support Auxillary Power - To provide a zero emissions solution to the p	100,142
Grant – Match Funding Support Usk Public Realm	1,365
Monmouth STP Replacement (Sport Wales / WG)	120,450
Flood Recovery Grant 2020 - 23	378,705
Local Places for Nature	4,118
Mardy Park Minor Works - ABUHB	90,050
Placemaking Grant programme	484,681
Placemaking Plans	123,800
7-43 Newport Road, Caldicot: development	71,000
Repair Reuse fund -WASTE	16,161
	2,790,676
Total Slippage	**28,605,837**

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Appendix 5 - Capital Budget Revisions – Grants and contributions

The Council has been notified of and received significant capital grants and contributions during 2023/24 which would not have formed part of the original capital budget approved by Council at the beginning of the year.

Under the Councils financial procedures any amendment to the capital budget that is funded wholly from grant or external contributions is required to be approved by Cabinet.

The below outlines the amendments to the capital budget that are required to be approved, either resulting from where new grants and contributions have been notified, or, where amendments to existing budgeted levels of grant or contributions are required.

Scheme Category	Scheme	Budget revision
ASSET MANAGEMENT SCHEMES	Crick Road Care Home	55,433.99
	Abergavenny Borough Theatre Works	50,000.00
	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People	875,000.00
	Decarbonisation Investment	167,457.00
	School Refurbishment Grant	144,960.00
	Caldicot School Adaptions 2021-23	-12,572.20
	WG - Community Fridge Project	35,000.00
FUTURE SCHOOLS	King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	6,043,567.00
INCLUSION	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	70,574.79
	Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	116,305.05
	Enable – Support for Independent Living WG	158,319.70
INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORT	Safer Routes in the Community	762,718.40
	LTF - Bus Stop Upgrades	754,476.80
	LTF Severn Tunnel Junction Improvement	68,286.00
	Vinegar Hill Development Undy CCR	1,336,025.22
	Repair Reuse fund -WASTE	124,700.00
OTHER SCHEMES	ATF - Caldicot Greenway	2,083,542.56
	ATF - Monmouth School/Leisure Link	14,778.37
	ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	530,681.38
	ATF - Monmouth Wye AT Crossing	401,861.97
	ATF - Monmouth Kingswood Gate AFL	50,000.00
	ATF - Caldicot Church Road Connections	46,260.05
	WG – Resilient Roads Fund Grant	58,000.00
	UK Gov - Levelling Up Fund	62,140.00
	ATF WFL Link to Town Centre	802,159.34
	ATF Castle Meadow Links	91,952.76
	ATF Bridge Connections	117,577.27
	WG- Comm C- S106 – MUCH Project	720,441.17
	Castle Dell Play Area Chepstow Upgrade	29,850.00
	Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	201,674.00

Scheme Category	Scheme	Budget revision
	ATF – Caldicot Education and Leisure Access	105,779.45
	ATF- Multi-User Route	38,494.00
	ATF – ATNM Dropped Kerbs and Quick Wins	221,889.05
	Museum Storage Transformation Grant - WG	107,762.00
	B4245 Magor/Undy to Rogiet	421,080.00
	Grant –Match Funding Support Digital Twin	-75,000.00
	Grant –Match Funding Support Auxillary Power	75,000.00
	Grant –Match Funding Support Usk Public Realm	23,125.00
	Caldicot MUGA Sport Wales	49,866.56
	Flood Recovery Grant 2020 - 23	286,684.90
	Disability – Toilet Enhancements	17,200.00
	ATF - Abergavenny LDP Site Links	50,000.00
	Mardy Park Minor Works - ABUHB	100,000.00
	Placemaking Grant programme	717,711.00
	Placemaking Plans	93,750.00
	7-43 Newport Road, Caldicot: development	71,000.00
REGENERATION SCHEMES	S106 – Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme	249,423.00
	S106 - Rockfield Community Nature Spaces	-27.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Ifton Manor, Rogiet	1,194.00
	9S106 -Major Maintenance Queens Development	9,614.50
	S106 -Major Maintenance Cornwallis Way, Rock	45,895.50
	S106 -Major Maintenance Station Road, Rogiet	4,809.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Little Mill	9,211.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Kensington Park, Mag	2,444.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Pen-y-Val, Abergavenny	54,423.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Denny view, Caldicot	1,923.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Thornwell Farm, Chepstow	469.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Cadoc Close, Caerwent	4,912.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Gypsy Lane, Llanfoist	12,433.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Larchfield, Abergavenny	5,150.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Church Road, Caldicot	33,083.00
	S106 -Major Maintenance Cae Meldon, Little Mill	18,143.00
	Local Places for Nature	363,000.00
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES	Caldicot Cluster Project	49,404.00
	Y Ffin Additional Classroom	-320,680.89
	Welsh Medium School and Nursery	22,000.00
	Capital Support for Learners with ALN	483,922.00
	Early Years – Childcare Capital Funding	352,843.68
VEHICLE PROGRAM	Leasing - Waste & Recycling Vehicles	100,000.00
	Leasing - Home To School Transport	108,328.00
GRAND TOTAL		19,877,429.37

monmouthshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
sir fynwy

Subject:	**Corporate Parenting**
DIRECTORATE:	**Social Care & Health**
MEETING:	**Cabinet**
DATE:	**17th July 2024**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All	

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To bring forward a recommendation from the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel that cabinet approve adoption of the Corporate Parenting Charter.

1.2 To set out the principles of the Corporate Parenting Charter launched by Welsh Government in September 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For Cabinet to approve the adoption of the Corporate Parenting Charter.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Corporate parenting promotes the collective responsibility of local authorities to safeguard and promote the rights and life chances of care experienced children and young people. Supporting care experienced children and young people through their childhoods, and as they leave care, should be the responsibility of all public sector bodies (Corporate Parenting Charter: A Promise for Wales, Welsh Government 2023).

3.2 The Corporate Parenting Charter was developed in collaboration with care-experienced young people and was officially launched by the Welsh Government in September 2023. The Government is asking public sector bodies to sign-up to the charter to show their commitment

to promoting the rights and life chances of children and young people with care experience. Public bodies are not restricted to Local Authorities but include health authorities, the Police, regulators and third sector organisations amongst others. To date there are 13 Local Authorities in Wales that have signed-up to the charter.

3.3 The charter is a set of principles and promises aligned to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The principles should be followed when providing services to care-experienced children and young people.

As set out in the charter the principles are:

Equality – We will support care-experienced children and young people to have the same life chances as every other young person in Wales. This is because all children have rights, no matter who they are (Article 1. UNCRC)

Eradicate Stigma – We will recognise care-experienced children and young people for who they are, not just by their experience of being in care. This is because all children have a right not to be discriminated against (Article 2)

Togetherness – We will work alongside care-experienced children and young people to ensure their views, feelings and ideas are integral to, influence and inform the services they receive and the way they receive those services. This is because all children have a right to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12).

Support – We will ensure professionals working with care-experienced young people understand their care experiences children and young people's needs and/or have access to information an training. •

Ambition – We will ensure every care-experienced child and young person reaches their potential and can enjoy a wide experience of leisure, cultural, sport and social activities. This is because all children have a right to be the best they can be (Article 3 and 29) and have the right to relax and play (Article 31). •

Nurture – We will make all care-experienced children and young people feel valued, respected, cared for and loved. This is because all children have a right to be safe and protected from harm (Article 19) and because all children who are not living with their families should be checked on regularly to make sure they are okay (Article 25). •

Good Health – We will provide support to access the right health care and advice needed to support the best physical, mental health and general well-being for all care-experienced children and young people. This is because all children have the right to the best possible health and support (Article 24 and 39). •

A Stable Home – We will seek out and provide stable places to live that are right for all care-experienced children and young people. This is because all children have a right to special protection if they don't live with their family (Article 20). This is because any adoption must be overseen by Government to make it supports the young person in their growth and development, is lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests (Article 21).

A Good Education – We will provide opportunities and support for all care-experienced children and young people to learn/develop and help them become who they want to be. This is because all children have a right to an education (Article 28 and 29). •

Thrive – We will ensure all care-experienced children and young people are prepared for the future and are able make positive choices for independent living and adulthood. This is because all children have a right to reach their potential (Article 3 and 29). •

Lifelong – We will work to provide access to and raise awareness of the support and information available after leaving care. This is because adults have a duty to act in children's best interests (Article 3)

3.4 The Corporate Parenting Charter sets out 9 promises which are described as something all Corporate Parents should fulfil when working with care-experienced children and young people.

The promises within the charter are:

We will take time to listen to all care-experienced children and young people and ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard and actively considered in all decisions made about them.

We will treat all care-experienced children and young people with respect.

We will involve all experienced children and young people in decisions that are made about them.

We will keep all care experienced children and young people informed about our involvement with them and explain our actions to them.

We will use straightforward language when we communicate with all care-experienced children and young people.

We will show compassion when considering the needs of all care-experienced children and young people.

We will work with all care-experienced children and young people to help them achieve their goals.

We will advise all care-experienced children and young people of the process to make a complaint should they feel we are not adhering to this charter.

We will advise all care-experienced children and young people that they have a right to access independent advocacy to make sure their views, wishes and feelings are heard during decisions being made or when they are unhappy and want something stopped, started or changed.

3.5 The council has a Corporate Parenting Strategy in place which was endorsed by Council on 18th May 2023. The strategy sets out 9 priority areas for how the council will support and

promote the life chances of children with care experience. The implementation of the strategy is overseen by the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel.

3.6 The priorities within the Council's Corporate Parenting strategy align closely with the principles and promises laid out in the charter. The charter would not supersede the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, but would reinforce and compliment it. At the same time, signing-up to the charter would publicly demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting children with care experience and young people leaving care.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION

4.1 Children who are looked after by the local authority will already have been placed at a disadvantage when they come into care, and are likely to have been exposed to significant adversity. By signing-up to the Charter the council is demonstrating its commitment to overcoming the disadvantages faced by children and young people with care experience. Adhering to the promises and principles within the charter will help to make Monmouthshire a fairer and more equitable county and provide a framework for Monmouthshire County Council to promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people with care experienced.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Cabinet could choose not to adopt the charter. This would not materially affect the Council's commitment to promoting the life chances of children and young people with care experience, as this is already established through the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

5.2 The option of adopting the charter, as proposed within this report, presents an opportunity to add to the collective voice at a national level, of the need to recognise and uphold the rights of children and young people with care experience as a uniquely disadvantaged group within society.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

There are no evaluation measures identified within the charter.

7. REASONS

7.1 The charter has been developed collaboratively and is seen as an important set of commitments and promises made by Welsh Government to care experienced children and young people.

7.2 Welsh Government is actively championing the charter and encouraging adoption of the charter by all Local Authorities and other public bodies in Wales

7.3 The promises and principles within the Welsh Government charter compliment the intentions and priorities of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Signing the charter would be cost neutral to the Local Authority.

9. Consultees

9.1 The corporate parenting charter was discussed at the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel on 23rd October 2023. There was unanimous support that a recommendation should be made for Cabinet to adopt the charter.

9.2 A number of care experienced young people are actively engaged in the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel and have followed the work of the development of the charter. This group of young people are keen to see Monmouthshire adopt the charter.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Monmouthshire Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 – 2025 presented at Full Council 18th May 2023
- Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise from Wales "A SHARED PARENTING PLEDGE" (Welsh Government) and The Principles of Corporate Parenting
  https://www.gov.wales/corporate-parenting-charter

11.   AUTHOR: Jane Rodgers

CONTACT DETAILS

janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Jane Rodgers **Phone no:** **E-mail:janerodgers@monmoutshire.gov.uk**	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal **The proposal is for Cabinet to approve the adoption of the Corporate Parenting Charter**
Name of Service area Children's Services	**Date** **28ᵗʰ June 2024**

1. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	Adopting the charter would positively impact on children who are looked after and young people who are leaving care by ensuring that the Council (and other public bodies) makes a commitment to uphold their rights and take actions that can help overcome any disadvantages caused through being care experienced.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	Adopting the charter would positively impact on children and young people with disabilities who are looked after or who are leaving care by ensuring that the Council (and other public bodies) makes a commitment to uphold their rights and take actions that can help overcome any disadvantages caused through being care experienced.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Gender reassignment	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Pregnancy or maternity	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Race	.None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Religion or Belief	.None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sex	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Sexual Orientation	.None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	People with care experience are less likely than other young people to access higher education stable homes and secure employment. Adopting the charter commits the council to working to provide care experienced children and young people with the support they need to ensure that they are prepared for the future and are able to make positive choices for independent living and adulthood. This is because all children have a right to reach their potential. The charter seeks to highlight and overcome the disadvantage and inequality of outcome that can affect some care experienced people. The charter seeks to commit corporate parenting bodies to providing care experienced children and young people with the same life chances, support and opportunities as any other child.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	*None identified at this point*	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Positive impact: The charter commits the council to support care experienced children and young people to receive the right support and opportunity to enable then to live happy and successfully as independent adults. This includes ensuring access to a good education.	None identified at this point
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Positive Impact: The charter commits the council to ensuring care experienced children have access to the right health care and advice needed to support the best physical, mental health and general well-being.	None identified at this point
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The charter is intended to ensure corporate parenting bodies take actions to address the disadvantages that care experienced children and yung people can face, and ensure that they are given the same life chances and opportunities as others.	None identified at this point

5. **How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?**

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Working together with other partners to deliver objectives	The charter was devised collaboratively with care experienced children and young people and commits corporate parenting bodies to keeping care experienced people at the centre of decision making. The charter seeks to encourage all public bodies to commit to the same set of principles and promises when working with care experienced people.	None identified at this point

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Involvement Involving those with an interest and seeking their views	The charter was devised collaboratively with care experienced children and young people and commits corporate parenting bodies to keeping care experienced people at the centre of decision making. The charter commits corporate parenting bodies to "work alongside care-experienced children and young people to ensure their views, feelings and ideas are integral to, influence and inform the services they receive and the way they receive those services."	None identified at this point
Prevention Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Integration Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies	.The charter commits corporate parenting bodies to take account of what care experienced children and young people need to achieve life-long wellbeing by ensuring they get a good start in life.	None identified at this point

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	Positive Impact: ensuring that care experienced children and young people are given the support they need to thrive.	*None identified at this point*	None identified at this point
Corporate Parenting	The charter reinforces and supports the council's commitment to act as a good corporate parent through the promises and principles set out.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

Welsh Government and local data on outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

.The proposal to adopt the corporate parenting charter would compliment the intentions and priorities of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Whilst it would not materially affect on of the council's current activities, it does present an opportunity to add to the collective voice at a national level, of the need to recognise and uphold the rights of children and young people with care experience as a uniquely disadvantaged group within society.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Inform the WG of the decision taken	End of July 2024	Jane Rogers

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet	28th June 2024	

 monmouthshire
sir fynwy
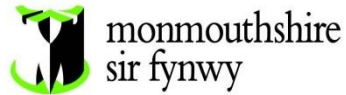
Subject:	**Development of a Residential Children's Home**
DIRECTORATE:	**Social Care & Health**
MEETING:	**Cabinet**
DATE:	**17th July 2024**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All	

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To provide details and seek approval for the development of an in-house residential children's home in partnership with Pobl.

1.2 Approval is sought based on a Business Case that is attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To approve the Business Case for Children's Services to enter into a renewed leasehold agreement with Pobl on a property in Caldicot for a minimum of 10 years (as per conditions of grant) for the purposes of providing an in-house residential children's home.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Children's Services has identified a property in Caldicot which is suitable to be developed into a registered residential children's home for up to 4 children.

3.2 The property was previously utilised within the Social Care and Health Directorate, in partnership with Pobl, to provide overnight respite for adults with learning disabilities. A Cabinet decision was made to cease this provision on 6th September 2023 and the building is currently unused, albeit that the lease has been maintained.

3.3 In order to meet the needs of the children and the identified objectives of the service the property will require repurposing. The repurposing of the property will be led by Pobl who is eligible to apply for a Welsh Government grant via the Regional Partnership Board capital programme. Under the terms of the grant, housing associations must match fund between 30 – 35%. Pobl's capital costs will be

factored into the cost of the leasehold, and in turn this has been modelled into the annual revenue costs of the residential home.

3.4 The residential service will be designed to create a homely environment for up to 4 well-matched children. The placement will allow for children to be placed closer to their homes and families and given its proximity to Caldicot town centre children placed there will have good access to community-based resources and local amenities.

3.5 Alongside the development of the property, the intention is to develop an in-house residential service whereby the Council would register the provision with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and become the registered provider. A residential workforce, management structure and RI (Responsible Individual) function would be put in place to ensure that quality standards are maintained and that children are provided with the personalised care and support they require.

3.6 This business case is set out within the context of the decisions made at full Council 18th April 2024 regarding proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements, subject to appropriate business cases and cabinet approval.

3.7 The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are looked after. However, at present, the Local Authority has insufficient suitable placements and is over-reliant on independent fostering agencies and spot-purchased residential placements from profit making organisations.

3.8 The current over reliance on the external market is in the context of high demand and competition for placements and is creating numerous pressure and risks for the Council including:

- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.
- Children being placed away from their home, communities and support networks.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for children.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child and the need to enter into placement arrangements that our outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Workforce pressure because of children being placed in numerous different locations; the time it takes to source external placements; and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

3.9 The current ambition, as set out in the report presented to Full Council on 18th April 2024, is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types both fostering and residential over the next 1 – 3 years. This will ensure that Monmouthshire's Looked After Children's needs are consistently met with increased opportunity to be placed closer to their homes and communities; and will enable increased stability and certainty in our wider care planning for children.

3.10 As at the end of March 2024 there were 199 children looked after by Monmouthshire County Council, of which 45 were placed with independent fostering agency carers and 37 placed in residential placements.

3.11 Our commissioning data and analysis confirms that to ensure sufficiency of appropriate placements for children we must significantly increase the number of all placement types. Specifically, the service has identified that at least 12 further standard residential children's homes placements are needed based on current placements, 4 of which would be achieved through the refurbishment of this property; and 4 of which are being achieved through the refurbishment of an acquired property in Monmouth.

3.12 The key objectives for this business case are:

- To enter into a leasehold agreement with Pobl for a minimum of 10 years (as per conditions of grant) on the property in Caldicot. The property will be redeveloped to suit our needs by utilising Welsh Government and Pobl Funding (30-35% of total redevelopment).
- To develop a Monmouthshire Children's Services residential operational team to provide the care and support for the scheme by a redistribution of revenue that is currently going into the private sector.
- To provide a homely children's residential setting that is designed to meet the needs of children who are looked after by MCC.
- To improve services for children who are looked after through ensuring that more children can be placed close to their homes and communities in a way that meets their personal outcomes and care planning needs.
- To allow the Council to meet legal and regulatory requirements under SSWBA and RISCA regulations.
- To secure better value for money and the potential to reduce revenue costs associated with the current arrangements.
- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.
- To improve welfare considerations and efficiencies for the children's services workforce due to reduced travel time.
- By bringing the residential service fully in-house to increase opportunities for integrated working to ensure good outcomes for children who are looked after.

3.13 This is a relatively low risk opportunity for the Council as there is no requirement to draw on borrowing headroom either for acquiring the property or repurposing it. Such risks that exist are associated with implementation and wider service delivery.

Service (Implementation) Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Pobl being unsuccessful in their grant application.	1) Withdraw from the project and seek alternative suitable properties to acquire from the open market and

	lead grant funding application ourselves OR 2) Consider a revised business case with an alternative funding mechanism to finance the refurbishment.
Regulatory process – delays in the refurbishment or difficulties in achieving registration. This would mean some uncertainty in the care planning for specific children and the potential to extend the time when we would be 'double running' [i.e. covering start-up costs of the new home and the costs of children's current placements prior to a move].	The refurbishment will be carried out by Pobl using trusted framework contractors. Children's Services have recruited a Service Manager to oversee the project and work closely with Pobl and CIW to achieve registration as expediently as possible. The service has significant knowledge and experience in meeting regulatory requirements associated with residential placements.
Regulatory process – delays / inability to recruit a residential care workforce	A full recruitment campaign will be run with promotional activity. The service currently has a [relatively] stable workforce and a good reputation as an employer within social care. Posts would be advertised on a permanent basis. The LA salary for residential care workers is competitive comparatively to for-profit employers.
Delays / inability to identify and match suitable children who need the placement	The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual children and how they might match. Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home. MCC will work with the region to offer up a potential placement to achieve a good match / avoid void.
Refurbishment costs exceed what is currently provided for	The notification of events mechanism can be utilised to submit revised project costs in the event of the unexpected. A detailed specification and contract will be

| established. The financial element of this risk will primarily be borne by Pobl. |

Wider Service-Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Risks associated with service delivery of a residential children's home placement including failure to meet regulatory requirements; poor inspection outcomes; children not safeguarded. This could represent reputational risk for the Council.	Children's Services have recruited a Service Manager to oversee the project and act as the Responsible Individual (RI). The service has significant knowledge and experience in meeting regulatory requirements associated with residential placements.
Costs of providing the service outstrips what is allocated because of voids or agency staffing costs	A 25% void rate has been built into the illustrative business plan. A 25% void rate retains a saving. There is a small contingency built into the running costs. There is opportunity to 'sell' placements to other Local Authorities.
Inability to sustain an in-house residential team provision	The care and support element would be tendered to a not-for-profit organisation [at a future point the not-for-profit market may be sufficiently developed to allow for this]
Pobl seek to terminate the partnership at the end of the agreed lease period, leaving us with a placement shortfall for 4 children. Annual rent increases will impact overall revenue budget.	Ongoing partnership work with Pobl to regularly review leasehold conditions and seek clarity on the continuation/extension of agreement in a timely manner. Giving the authority ample time to develop an alternative provision if required. Prior to entering leasehold establish process for annual rental increases and build resilience into financial modelling.

4. **EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**

4.1 The business case seeks to increase the sufficiency of appropriate placements closer to home for children who are looked after and supports the repatriation of Monmouthshire children back into the county. For children and young people this enables better access to local education, play and youth services which will support their social and emotional development, increase their social networks and improve their future economic mobility.

4.2 The money currently being spent on private care companies out of county will be redirected to a local in- house residential children's home, which will provide new jobs and training / career opportunities for the social care workforce.

4.3 Planning is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is encouraged within the home and community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 A full options appraisal is set out in the Business Case. Cabinet could choose to take no further steps to develop its residential provision and continue to rely on a spot-purchasing approach. Given the current context and the introduction of the Health and Social Bill this would be a risky strategy and is not recommended.

5.2 Two minimal options are identified, the first being to opt out of entering into a partnership arrangement with Pobl and seek an alternative property, most likely through the open market. This is not recommended on the basis that this would be a lost opportunity to work collaboratively with a close partner and make good use of an existing available asset through a relatively low risk mechanism.

5.3 The second minimal option is to proceed with the current acquisition and development and to seek a not-for-profit organisation to partner with the Local Authority and become the registered provider. This option is discounted because i) it is felt that currently the not-for-profit provider market for children's residential care is not sufficiently developed to generate a competitive response to a tender, and ii) that this would prove to be a more costly option.

5.4 The option as set out in the Business Case, to renew the leasehold arrangement with Pobl and develop an in-house registered residential children's home, is the recommended option.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Success criteria for the business case have been identified as follows:

- Application for capital grant to be submitted by Pobl. (Timeframe subject to ongoing dialogue between Pobl colleagues and capital grant team at ABuHB)
- Renegotiate lease hold agreement with Pobl.

- Property refurbished.
- Management structure and workforce established.
- Provision successfully registered with CIW.
- The first cohort of children successfully matched and in-situ.
- Children achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new home.

7. REASONS

7.1 This proposal accords with the strategic intention of increasing the Council's sufficiency of in-house placements and reduces reliance on the external market.

7.2 The business case represents good value for money in terms of being able to support Monmouthshire children who are looked after to be placed closer to home and communities and achieve good outcomes. The revenue costs of providing the service in-house can be achieved within the existing budget envelope with the potential to generate a saving.

7.3 The council would not be required to reduce its current borrowing headroom, which would then be retained for an additional property. Furthermore, with Pobl leading the refurbishment, this will allow us to direct our limited internal resources to other on-going or future placement developments.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Currently, the cost of providing the care that could be replaced through the development of this provision is approximately £1,121,395.60 over 4 children (based on illustrative cohort of 6 children currently in spot-purchased residential provision).

8.2 The estimated revenue cost of running a residential children's home set out in Table A of the Business Case is calculated at £786,519 (based on other similar Local Authority schemes data).

8.3 We have modelled the revenue costs against an 100% occupancy rate and a 75% occupancy rate. 75% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the residential home. This illustrates potential annual savings of £334,875 (at 100% occupancy) and £251,155 (at 75% occupancy).

8.4 Given that the target completion date is March 2025 the savings are not profiled into the Children's Services practice change mandate for 2024/25. As a consequence savings will fall into 2025/26. It should also be noted that these savings are illustrative only. The variability of the cost of existing care placements makes it difficult to accurately identify potential savings. Equally, there may be situations where placements in the new home result in cost avoidance (i.e children becoming

looked after and requiring placements) rather than direct savings which could only be achieved through children changing placements.

9.   **CONSULTEES**

- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

- Andrew Ford, Head of Commercial Enterprise Pobl

- Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Officer for Resources and Section 151 Officer

- Nicholas Keyes, Head of Property Services

- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager

- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services

- Sam Mills, Regional Project Manager

- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Report 18th April 2024 - Developing children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements

11. AUTHOR:

Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1: BUSINESS CASE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGISTERED RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME IN PARTNERSHIP WITH POBL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Author:
Jane Rodgers
Chief Officer, Social Care and Health

Date: 28th June 2024

Consultees:
- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Andrew Ford, Head of Commercial Enterprise Pobl
- Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Officer for Resources and Section 151 Officer
- Nicholas Keyes, Head of Property Services
- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Sam Mills, Regional Project Manager
- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Children's Services seek approval to work in partnership with Pobl to develop a registered residential children's home for up to 4 children. The property is a substantial detached property which has previously been used as an adult respite home. The property is located in Caldicot, near the town centre.

Pobl are a Welsh not-for-profit housing provider that offers quality affordable homes, care and support services that make a positive difference to people and communities. They offer housing solutions that cater to various needs and preferences ensuring individuals have a place they can call home.

In order to meet the needs of children who are looked after and the regulatory standards required for registration under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Wales Act 2016 (RISCA regulations), the property will require refurbishment. The refurbishment will be taken forward by Pobl in partnership with the Council.

The residential service will be designed to create a homely environment for up to 4 well-matched children. The placement will allow for children to be placed closer to their homes and families and given its proximity to Caldicot town centre, children placed there will have good access to community-based resources and local amenities.

Alongside the development of the property, the intention is to provide an in-house residential service whereby the Council would register the provision with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and become the registered provider. A residential workforce, management structure and RI (Responsible Individual) function would be put in place to ensure that quality standards are maintained and that children are provided with the personalised care and support they require.

This business case therefore seeks approval to:

- To enter into a leasehold agreement on the property in Caldicot with Pobl for a minimum of 10 years (as per conditions of grant). The property will be redeveloped to suit our needs by utilising Welsh Government and Pobl funding (30-35% of total redevelopment).

- To develop a Monmouthshire Children's Services residential operational team to provide the care and support for the scheme.

This business case is set out within the context of the decisions made at full Council 18th April 2024 regarding proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements, subject to appropriate business cases and cabinet approval.

It was also agreed that progress against the decisions made by Council will be reported to the Performance and Oversight Scrutiny Committee on a 6-monthly basis.

STRATEGIC CASE

2.1 <u>Context</u>

Following the Welsh Government manifesto pledge to *eliminate* profit from children's care, the Health and Social Care Bill will provide the framework to restrict the providers of children's homes and fostering services from making a profit. The bill also includes a provision to require local authorities to submit a sufficiency plan in respect of accommodation for looked after children, and to take all reasonable steps to secure sufficient accommodation provided by not-for-profit entities. This is aligned to Section 75 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act whereby the Local Authority has a legal duty to ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are Looked After.

Monmouthshire is working collaboratively with the region to ensure sufficiency; however, there remains a national shortage of both residential and fostering placements. This has been exacerbated more recently by the instability of the provider market following the Welsh Government policy *eliminating profit* agenda.

At present, there are insufficient suitable placements for Monmouthshire children who are looked after with an over-reliance on independent fostering agencies and spot-purchased residential placements from profit making organisations.

The current over reliance on the external market is in the context of high demand and competition for placements and is creating numerous pressure and risks for the Council including:
- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.
- Children being placed away from their home, communities and support networks.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for children.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child and the need to enter into placement arrangements that our outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Workforce pressure because of children being placed in numerous different locations; the time it takes to source external placements; and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

The current ambition, as set out in the Council report on 18th April 2024, is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types both fostering and residential over the next 1 – 3 years. This will ensure that Monmouthshire's Looked After Children's needs are consistently met with increased opportunity to be placed closer to their homes and communities; as well as providing increased stability and certainty in our wider care planning for children.

As at the end of March 2024 there were 199 children looked after by Monmouthshire County Council, of which 45 were placed with independent fostering agency carers and 37 placed in residential placements.

Our commissioning data and analysis confirms that to ensure sufficiency of appropriate placements for children we must significantly increase the number of all placement types. Specifically, the service has identified that at least 12 further standard residential children's homes placements are needed based on

current placements, 4 of which would be achieved through the refurbishment of this property; and 4 of which are being achieved through the refurbishment of an acquired property in Monmouth.

2.2   Case for Change

2.2.1 Spending objectives

The development of the property in Caldicot as a residential children's home is in keeping with the Council's objective to support placements closer to home and is aligned to the current Welsh Government commitment to eliminate profit from children's social care.

The property was previously utilised within the Social Care and Health Directorate, in partnership with Pobl, to provide overnight respite for adults with learning disabilities. A Cabinet decision was made to cease this provision on 6th September 2023 and the building is currently unused, although it has maintained the lease with Pobl.

Pobl is a trusted partner with the council with similar values in terms of providing safe and secure homes to local people on a not-for-profit basis. This business case offers a way of retaining the property for the provision of social care and continuing the partnership with Pobl. Aligned with the Asset Management Strategy the proposed development of the property ensures that available assets are utilised in accordance with the Council's objectives.

The redevelopment of the property is required in order to provide safe and appropriate accommodation for up to 4 children who are looked after in accordance with statutory frameworks. The development of the property will enable us to support children appropriately to achieve their personal outcomes and wellbeing over the longer-term in accordance with their individual care plans.

The property has been assessed as suitable to develop into a residential children's home set against the range of criteria outlined within the Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017 Version 2 (April 2019). There is sufficient space to provide four children's bedrooms (at 12 square metres of useable floor space) together with adequate provision for sleeping-in arrangements for residential care staff. There is sufficient space for communal areas for recreational activity and there is accessible outdoor space. The building is situated close to the town centre and within walking distance of a range of local amenities and schools.

The development of the property will enable up to 4 children (at any one time) to be suitably matched and to live comfortably and well in the property for as long as it meets their individual care planning needs. Whilst the aim is to create stability, we would naturally expect some children to move on before others resulting in changes within the make-up of the household over time. Each change or move would be carefully planned through matching followed by managed introductions and transition; and children would only be placed in the property if it was the right placement for them.

To develop a prospective business case 6 children have been identified who would benefit from a planned move into a property of this nature. These children are currently in placements that are not best suited to their needs, primarily because of location.

We have used the costs associated with these children to provide a model business case.

The key objectives for this business case are:

- To enter into a leasehold agreement with Pobl for a minimum of 10 years (as per conditions of grant) on the property in Caldicot. The property will be redeveloped to suit our needs by utilising Welsh Government and Pobl Funding (30-35% of total redevelopment).

- Seek approval to develop a Monmouthshire Children's Services residential operational team to provide the care and support for the scheme by a redistribution of revenue that is currently going into the private sector.

- To provide a homely children's residential setting that is designed to meet the needs of children who are looked after by MCC.

- To improve services for children who are looked after through ensuring that more children can be placed close to their homes and communities in a way that meets their personal outcomes and care planning needs.

- To allow the Council to meet legal and regulatory requirements under SSWBA and RISCA regulations.

- To secure better value for money and the potential to reduce revenue costs associated with the current arrangements.

- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.

- To improve welfare considerations and efficiencies for the children's services workforce due to reduced travel time.

- By bringing the residential service fully in-house to increase opportunities for integrated working to ensure good outcomes for children who are looked after.

2.2.2 Existing Arrangements

All children who are looked after have an allocated social worker and a care plan which sets out their individual outcomes within the context of i) why the child needed to come into care; ii) the primary purpose and objective for the time that they are in care; iii) how their family and community relationships

will be maintained and developed; iv) their educational arrangements; and v) their pathway plan to leave care.

Based on an understanding of their individual care plans, the service has identified 6 children who would potentially benefit from a placement in the property. The age range is between 9 – 15 years and the children are currently placed in for-profit residential placements located in:- Ebbw Vale(£4,850), Port Talbot (4961.60), Neath (£4,995), Ebbw Vale (£5,290), Ross on Wye (£6,350), Aberdare (5,041.31) and Swansea (£6,247). These costs are currently met through Children's Services revenue budget. (Costs shown are the weekly cost.)

To develop the business case for 4 potential placements at the property, we have taken the average annual cost of the 6 current placements and recalibrated for 4 placements. This means that the current annual comparator costs associated with 4 placements is £1,121,395.60 for a full year.

We have used a group of 6 children because, given the project development time, and as the wider cohort of children who are looked after changes, it is unfeasible to accurately pin-down the exact 4 children identified for the placement until more detailed work is undertaken. The group of 6 provides a reasonably accurate illustration of such children as might benefit from a future placement at the property and their current associated costs.

2.2.3 Business Needs

Where we are now	ESSENTIAL Objectives of Business Case
Monmouthshire does not have any standard in-house residential children's placements	To develop a standard in-house residential placement for up to 4 children
At risk of having to establish temporary OWR placements because of lack of ability to source placements from the external market	To increase our overall placement sufficiency and decrease risk of having to make OWR placements
Monmouthshire does not have an in-house residential workforce [the workforce for in-house bespoke children's homes to date has been procured from the external market]	To establish an in-house residential workforce to become the registered care provider at the home
Children are in spot purchased for profit providers	Use the revenue money associated with existing placements £1,121,395.60 to develop an in-house residential children's home provision
Provider fees are negotiated on an annual basis	To reduce dependency on external provision and external fee-setting [in the context where a national lack of placement sufficiency is driving costs]
Children are not placed near to their home and communities [being placed away from Monmouthshire leads to disrupted support and family relationships]	To increase opportunities to place children closer to their homes and communities
The Council is reliant on external placements to agree matching for children and there is little opportunity for forward care planning across the cohort of children who are looked after	To increase the ability to forward plan and have greater control on matching and placement decisions

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Social care workers are required to travel to different parts of the country to visit individual children	To reduce the amount of travel time for the social care workforce
Children are placed in a range of different organisations which do not support fully integrated working.	To increase opportunities for integrated working to ensure good outcomes for children
The property is available to provide services to people but is at present unused.	Make good use of an available asset in line with the Council's objectives.

2.2.4   Additional Benefits

The development would support the overall regional position in terms of placement sufficiency, in keeping with the aims of the Regional Partnership Board.

The business case is in-keeping with the objectives of the Welsh Government and the Regional Housing with Care Fund Capital programme. This means that there is a high likelihood of Pobl, in partnership with the Council, being successful in its application for a grant to support the technical design element cost in 2024/25 and the refurbishment costs in year 2024/25 or 2025/26. Pobl colleagues are liaising with the capital programme team to establish the most appropriate grant funding stream, application and award timescales and match funding levels.

2.2.5   Risks

This is a relatively low risk opportunity for the Council as there is no requirement to draw on borrowing headroom either for acquiring the property or repurposing it. Such risks that exist are associated with implementation and wider service delivery.

Service (Implementation) Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Pobl being unsuccessful in their grant application.	1) Withdraw from the project and seek alternative suitable properties to acquire from the open market and lead grant funding application ourselves OR 2) Consider a revised business case with an alternative funding mechanism to finance the refurbishment.
Regulatory process – delays in the refurbishment or difficulties in achieving registration. This would mean some uncertainty in the care planning for specific children and the potential to extend the time when we would be 'double running' [i.e. covering start-up costs of the new home and the costs of children's current placements prior to a move].	The refurbishment will be carried out by Pobl using trusted framework contractors. Children's Services have recruited a Service Manager to oversee the project and work closely with Pobl and CIW to achieve registration as expediently as possible.

	The service has significant knowledge and experience in meeting regulatory requirements associated with residential placements.
Regulatory process – delays / inability to recruit a residential care workforce	A full recruitment campaign will be run with promotional activity.
	The service currently has a [relatively] stable workforce and a good reputation as an employer within social care.
	Posts would be advertised on a permanent basis.
	The LA salary for residential care workers is competitive comparatively to for-profit employers.
Delays / inability to identify and match suitable children who need the placement	The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual children and how they might match.
	Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home.
	MCC will work with the region to offer up a potential placement to achieve a good match / avoid void.
Refurbishment costs exceed what is currently provided for	The notification of events mechanism can be utilised to submit revised project costs in the event of the unexpected. A detailed specification and contract will be established. The financial element of this risk will primarily be borne by Pobl.

Wider Service-Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Risks associated with service delivery of a residential children's home placement including failure to meet regulatory requirements; poor inspection outcomes; children not safeguarded.

This could represent reputational risk for the Council. | Children's Services have recruited a Service Manager to oversee the project and act as the Responsible Individual (RI).

The service has significant knowledge and experience in meeting regulatory requirements associated with residential placements. |
| Costs of providing the service outstrips what is allocated because of voids or agency staffing costs | A 25% void rate has been built into the illustrative business plan. A 25% void rate retains a saving.
There is a small contingency built into the running costs. |

	There is opportunity to 'sell' placements to other Local Authorities.
Inability to sustain an in-house residential team provision	The care and support element would be tendered to a not-for-profit organisation [at a future point the not-for-profit market may be sufficiently developed to allow for this]
Pobl seek to terminate the partnership at the end of the agreed lease period, leaving us with a placement shortfall for 4 children.	Ongoing partnership work with Pobl to regularly review leasehold conditions and seek clarity on the continuation/extension of agreement in a timely manner. Giving the authority ample time to develop an alternative provision if required.
Annual rent increases will impact overall revenue budget.	Prior to entering leasehold establish process for annual rental increases and build resilience into financial modelling.

2.2.6 Constraints

Primary constraint is that we will be entering into a long-term lease agreement with Pobl. Factoring in the conditions placed on the grant funding, this will likely be a minimum of ten years.

2.2.7 Dependencies

The project is dependent on the property being successfully registered with CIW and continuing to meet the standards under RISCA regulation in subsequent inspections.

3.   OPTIONS ANALYSIS

3.1   Critical Success Factors (timeframes to be confirmed)

- Application for capital grant to be submitted by Pobl. (Timeframe subject to ongoing dialogue between Pobl colleagues and capital grant team at ABuHB)
- Renegotiate lease hold agreement with Pobl.
- Property refurbished.
- Management structure and workforce established.
- Provision successfully registered with CIW.
- The first cohort of children successfully matched and in-situ.
- Children achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new home.

3.2   Main Options

Summary of Options Appraisals

OPTION 1	Do Nothing
Description	The Local Authority does not develop any in-house residential placements and continues to spot-purchase from the external market
Net Costs	£0 however, the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against the current approximate spend of £1,121,395.60 (based on illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased residential provision)
Advantages	The Council will avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified above.
Disadvantages	Leaves the Council entirely dependent on the external market to provide residential placements for children.
Conclusion	**Not recommended**

OPTION 2	Do Minimal
Description	Do not proceed with the partnership with Pobl to redevelopment this property and wait for alternative property to become available to purchase on the open market
Net Costs	Average house price £700,000, the council would need to cover this initially prior to receiving the grant funding. Losing the potential to generate any savings against the current approximate spend of £1,121,395.60 (based on illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased residential provision)
Advantages	The Council will avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified above. This option would not require us to enter into a lease hold arrangement and may offer more flexibility.
Disadvantages	The council would lose the opportunity to work in partnership with Pobl to develop an existing asset. Suitable properties for development rarely come onto the market. Delay in pursuing a suitable property such as this would delay the opportunity to develop a residential provision by an indefinite, potentially extended, period.
Conclusion	**NOT recommended**

OPTION 3	Do Minimal
Description	The Local Authority proceeds with the leasehold of the property but seeks to commission a not-for-profit partner to provide the care and support
Net Costs	At present the weekly associated costings with a third party not for profit delivery would be £6,000* per week per bed, equating to an annual revenue cost of £1,248,000 which exceeds the current cost of placements. [*Based on recent tendering exercise of neighbouring council]
Advantages	This would mean that the delivery and implementation risks are shared with another organisation who would become the registered provider with CIW.
Disadvantages	It is felt that currently the not-for-profit provider market for children's residential care is not sufficiently developed to generate a competitive response to a tender. Lack of not-for-profit provider availability may mean that a for profit provider will need to be used. Welsh Government are reluctant to award grant funding for developments where the service provider is a for profit organization. Failure to

	develop internal operational care and support teams may prevent us from accessing future grant funding. A partnership arrangement would reduce the level of autonomy that the council has in terms of care planning and matching. This option does not fully support the wider strategic aims of the council in terms of developing in-house / regional sufficiency.
Conclusion	**Not recommended**
OPTION 4	**To renew the leasehold arrangement with Pobl and develop an in-house residential service to provide a registered 4-bed home to meet the needs of Monmouthshire Children who are Looked After**
Description	The property is redeveloped in partnership with Pobl and Monmouthshire becomes the registered care provider
Net Costs	Capital Costs will be covered through a combination of grant funding and Pobl private finance. No capital requirement from Monmouthshire County Council. Estimated Annual Revenue Cost = £786,519 (covered through existing revenue costs of placements)
Advantages*	This represents good value for money in terms of being able to support Monmouthshire children who are looked after to be placed closer to home and communities and achieve good outcomes, within the existing budget envelope. It accords with the strategic intention of increasing the Council's sufficiency of in-house placements and reduces reliance on the external market. The council are not required to reduce its current borrowing headroom, which would then be retained for an additional property. The development of core funded operational team will deliver a significant revenue saving. Based on the 4 children in scope for this provision, a cost comparison with their current placement could represent a saving of up to £334,876.60. There will be a clear economy of scale associated with the number of MCC homes we develop. Sharing resources across homes i.e. service manager and home manager posts will enable us to realize greater revenue savings. Utilising Pobl to lead on this refurbishment allows us to direct our limited internal resources to the development of our next authority acquisition. The Pobl development will be managed by their own project team and will run alongside our internal developments, with a minimal requirement for resource and oversight from MCC. This approach will enable us to maintain the pace of change required to meet our implementation plan by April 2027.
Disadvantages	It requires the council to manage the asset going forward as per conditions of lease (to be confirmed). There are associated risks and challenges (as per **2.2.5**)
Conclusion	**Recommended**

3.3   Recommended option

Option 4 is the recommended option.

4.   PROCUREMENT ROUTE

Any procurement associated with the refurbishment of the property would be undertaken by Pobl in adherence to their procurement protocols.

5.   FUNDING and AFFORDABILITY

Annual Care Costs

Currently, the cost of providing the care that could be replaced through the development of this provision is approximately £1,121,395.60 over 4 children (based on illustrative cohort of 6 children currently in spot-purchased residential provision).

The estimated revenue cost of running a residential children's home is calculated at £786,519 (based on other similar Local Authority schemes data).

We have modelled the revenue costs against an 100% occupancy rate and a 75% occupancy rate. 75% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the residential home. Other models use an 80 – 85% occupancy rate.

These tables are illustrative because the identified savings / or the impact on savings arising from a void cannot be easily identified due to the variability of existing package of care. Equally, there may be situations where placements in the new home result in cost avoidance.

Table A

(GBP)		
No of beds	4.0	
taking 75% occupancy factor into account	3.0	
Budget Group	**Budget**	
EMPLOYEES up to and incl Assistant Manager	£545,457.00	
REPLACEMENT PAY	£96,930.56	Based on 12% of total employee costs (including Home Manager) £73,570.56 2 x on call staff per day over a 12 month period @£32 per day each. £23360
LEASEHOLD	£18,000.00	This is based on a monthly fee of £1500. However indicative data across the region suggests this could be higher. An example of this would be a neighbouring authority paying an RSL £20,601 per annum for a 4 bedroom property. The revised leasehold amount is yet to be determined by Pobl and will form part of our negotiation with them once the scope of works has been finalised.
PREMISES	£20,000.00	
TRANSPORT	£8,500.00	
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	£30,000.00	
Total Direct Costs	**£718,887.56**	
Management Costs (Home Manager)	£67,631.00	Cost of Service Manager accounted for in Dixton Close and Woodview budgets.
Total Direct Costs (incl Mgmt)	**£786,518.56**	
Total Weekly Cost of Establishment	£15,125.36	
Annual Cost per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£196,629.64	
Weekly Cost per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£3,781.34	
Daily Cost per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£540.19	
Annual Cost per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£262,172.85	
Weekly Cost per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£5,041.79	
Daily Cost per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£720.26	
Annual saving per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£83,719.15	
Weekly saving per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£1,609.98	
Daily saving per Bed based on 100% occupancy	£229.99	
Annual saving per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£62,789.36	
Weekly saving per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£1,207.48	
Daily saving per Bed based on 75% occupancy	£172.49	

Revenue Generation (if applicable)

If voids arise, and there are no children identified within Monmouthshire who will need the placement in the short-term, there is potential to 'sell' the placement to another Local Authority. Standard practice for inter Local Authority purchasing of placements is to charge a mark-up of 20% of the weekly cost which would equate to £4,537 per bed per week.

6.   **DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS**

Task	Person Responsible	Timeframe	Reports to
Development of service specification and statement of purpose	SM for placement development	August 2024 onwards	Diane Corrister

Project management for refurbishment and improvement	Pobl	Sarah Hodges (Pobl)	Andrew Ford (Pobl)
Liaison with CIW to ensure prompt registration of the provision	SM for placement development	August 2024 onwards	Diane Corrister
Financial arrangements	Tyrone Stokes	Ongoing	Jane Rodgers / Peter Davies
Care planning and transition arrangements for children who are identified as suitable to be placed in the new home	Lupupa Nshimbi	August 2024 onwards	Diane Corrister
Target completion date		March 2025 – September 2025	

Monitoring and review of progress towards the objectives of the business case will be provided by Children's Services leadership team, reporting into Social Care and Health Directorate Leadership Team and Chief Officer. Regular updates will be provided into the Council's Senior Leadership Team and a project plan and risk register will be maintained.

7.   **CONTINGENCY PLAN**

The need for a contingency might arise if it becomes clear that registration of the new home won't be achieved, Pobl's grant application will not be approved, or no suitable children are identified to move in. In this case contingency options will be considered follows:

- The council will draw up a specification and initiate a procurement process in order to seek a not-for-profit organisation to become the registered provider.

- The council will seek to sell individual residential placements to neighbouring Local Authorities.

- In partnership with Pobl, the council will liaise with the regional partnership board to seek a change of use for the property in keeping with the overall objectives of the capital programme (to avoid claw back).

- The council will seek an alternative suitable property and lead grant funding applications independently of Pobl.

Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Jane Rodgers **Phone no:** **E-mail:** janerodgers@monmoutshire.gov.ul	**Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal** This impact assessment will look at the impact of the redevelopment of a 4-bedroom children's residential provision in Caldicot.
Name of Service area Children and Family Services	**Date** **25/06/2024**

. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	This project will have a positive impact on children by ensuring sufficient appropriate placements are available for children who are looked after.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Disability	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Marriage or civil partnership	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Pregnancy or maternity	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Race	.There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Religion or Belief	.There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Sex	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	Our project proposes to repatriate Monmouthshire children. Bringing our children back into our communities where they can access local education, play and youth services will support their social development and increase their social and economic mobility. Bringing children closer to their families and support networks will ensure there are reduced socio-economic barriers for parents and guardians to engagement with their children. An example of this could be access to contact sessions within a local community, thus making it easier for all parties to access.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on people who are socio-economically disadvantaged.	Placement of children within localities to improve social and economic mobility where appropriate. Ensuring the project is close to schools, libraries, youth and play services to enhance the opportunities for development.

Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favorably	The proposals will be neutral in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language and will not treat the Welsh language less favorably than the English language. The proposal will ensure children remain in Wales and enable them to maintain connections to the Welsh language.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	All supporting documents, information and surveys are available in Welsh upon request
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	We will be implementing an authority led operational delivery team. All recruitment materials and processes will be provided in Welsh as well as English.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Any future recruitment will be undertaken through the medium of English and Welsh and all documents displayed bilingually on the council website and social media channels. Applicants will be invited to apply in Welsh if that is their preference.
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home, as the home will have authority led care and support provision this will be a core focus.. Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Development of bilingual policies and procedures to be available on request.

	All policies and procedures implemented within the home will be available in Welsh on request.	

4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well-Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	The proposal will help prevent children and young people from living outside of Monmouthshire or even outside of Wales due to a lack of placement and provision. Utilising local properties and developing existing relationships with housing associations and subsequent contractors, boosting local economy.	This proposal will bring Monmouthshire children looked after back into the area. The money currently being spent on private care companies out of county will be redirected to local foster carers and in house residential children's homes. This proposal will also provide new jobs and training as foster carers and as residential home staff.
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	Children and young people in private out of county placements can be placed at significant distances from their communities. Placements closer to home are vital to develop their identity and build their own self-esteem, confidence which contributes to their resilience. We aim to increase the properties EPC rating to A, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring sustainability is at the heart of the development. Examples include air source heat pumps, EV charging.	Bringing our Children looked after back into Monmouthshire will reduce the volume of miles being travelled to visit these children who are currently placed all over the UK. It will enable them to grow and develop connections and access sources here in Monmouthshire.
A healthier Wales	Children and young people will be living in Monmouthshire with access to their communities and	The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, who have access to local services and maintaining links to their family and

Well-Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood	support networks thus improving their sense of identity and general wellbeing.	community. Bringing our children looked after back to Monmouthshire will mean we can work more closely with our local partner's where good relationships have already been built to ensure that the child has the best access to services and their physical, emotional and mental needs are being met.
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Children and young people will be able to connect to Monmouthshire and their communities once back in county.	Bringing children closer to home to maintain connections with families and communities and school placements. As children grow and develop into adulthood, there is a greater possibility that they will remain in Monmouthshire as adults.
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	Living inside of Monmouthshire and Wales will enable children and young people to take ownership for their future and contribute to the development of Wales.	This proposal will keep children in county and in country. It will promote a child's right to a family while maintaining close links to families and communities.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Children are enabled to live and grow in communities which represent their own language and culture.	Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home. Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The creation of the residential provision will provide the children with a supportive family environment from which to grow and develop as people. This provision will provide stability and structure for the children and	

Well-Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	ensure their life experiences do not inhibit their development and progression.	

4. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future **Long Term**	Significant emphasis has and will continue to be placed on the long-term care planning and reviewing arrangements for these children, ensuring that both their immediate and longer-term needs are met as they mature in young adults.	None identified at this point
Working together with other partners to deliver objectives **Collaboration**	Throughout the process contract arrangement and property redevelopment we will work closely and engage with Pobl to deliver the desired objectives. In addition, collaboration with the Gwent regional partnership board has been a key collaboration in coordinating the HCF funding application.	None identified at this point

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Involvement — Involving those with an interest and seeking their views	Children have been consulted regarding their return to Monmouthshire, the transitional arrangements for these children will be managed in great detail. Key internal stakeholders have been engaged in the design and inception of the provision. All council governance has been adhered to, with an all-council engagement piece of work undertaken to ensure all members are briefed on proposals. Specific Ward Members will be consulted further and kept abreast of all developments. Neighbours and neighbourhood groups will be consulted as necessary, with some public engagement events planned to ensure all stakeholder views are heard and concerns mitigated where necessary. *Who are the stakeholders who will be affected by your proposal? Have they been involved? Do those people reflect the diversity of the area which is served?*	Continued dialogue with children, home visits, managed transitions into schools and home. Public engagement events with neighbours and community groups.
Prevention — Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	Children Services works to the earliest possible intervention, preventing problems occurring or getting worse. The introduction of the 'Going home staying home' team in Monmouthshire highlights the focus on this.	None identified at this point

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies	The proposal allows children and young people to become integrated into the local community, they will be encouraged to engage in community activities such as Mon life and Mon Sport. They will have access to local education and healthcare facilities integrating them well into life in Monmouthshire.	None identified at this point

5. **Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions have on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?**

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	By developing an in house provision safeguarding for our young people will be improved as the care provision will be inhouse with internal oversight of the care being delivered. MCC will have have full oversight of the care delivery.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact to safeguarding.	None identified at this point
Corporate Parenting	By developing Budden Crescent we are enhancing the role off the corporate parent, we will be providing a local authority residential placement for our children. Improving their care experiences and having full oversight of the care and support that is provided.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact on corporate parenting.	None identified at this point

6. **What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?**

==The Council as at 31.03.2024 had 37 children accommodated in for profit residential care settings==. From a corporate parent perspective, we are duty bound to provide the best and most suitable accommodation to meet the needs of our children and people. With the reliance on the for-profit sector and the underdeveloped internal provision we are limited in the variety and availability of accommodation to meet their needs.

The Council does not have its own residential provision and is totally reliant on the residential care home market which is almost exclusively operated by for-profit agencies. Therefore, it is important for the Council to develop provision which is bespoke and tailored to the individual emotional and physical needs of children and young people to ensure they develop.

The reallocation of revenue away from the for-profit sector and into our own Monmouthshire developed in partnership with a not-for-profit sector provision will provide greater variety, quality and oversight of the care our children receive. It will strengthen our decision making and ensure our children can return to / remain within their communities where possible.

Utilising the momentum of the Welsh Government manifesto pledge to 'eliminate' profit from children's social care by April 2027 and the funding being made available via the Housing with Care Fund (HCF) grant, we have identified the need for the acquisition of three residential properties, to develop into residential children's homes providing twelve placements for our current cohort of CLA. Significant emphasis has and will continue to be placed on the long-term care planning and reviewing arrangements for these children. Similarly, it supports the Council and the Gwent region in its duty to achieve sufficiency of placements for children and young people who are looked after under Part 6 of the SSWBA.

Existing Arrangements

The table below shows our total CLA number (199) and their curremt placement type.

MCC Kinship In	16
MCC Kinship Out	19
MCC Generic In	29
MC Generic Out	11
IFA In	11
IFA Out	34
Other LA	1
Residential incounty	7
Residential out of county	15
Supported living/Lodgings	15
Family assessment Centre	0
Prospective Adopters	3
NHS	0
Placed with Parents	31
Independent Living	0
Other	7

Development of in-house provisions supports the local authorities' vision to repatriate young people back in-county where appropriate.

We have used the costs associated with 6 children to help model the business case and provide a comparator cost.

7. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

Positives

Our project proposes to repatriate Monmouthshire children. Bringing our children back into our communities where they can access local education, play and youth services will support their social development and increase their social and economic mobility.

By developing and in house provision safeguarding for our young people will be improved as the care provision will be inhouse with internal oversight of the care being delivered. MCC will have the opportunity to have full oversight of the care delivery specification.

Bringing children closer to their families and support networks will ensure there are reduced socio-economic barriers for parents and guardians to engagement with their children if appropriate. An example of this could be access to contact sessions within a local community, thus making it easier for all parties to access.

This proposal will bring Monmouthshire children looked after back into the area. The money currently being spent on private care companies out of county will be redirected to local foster carers and in house residential children's homes. This proposal will also provide new jobs and training as foster carers and as residential home staff.

The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, who have access to local services and maintaining links to their family and community. Bringing our children looked after back to Monmouthshire will mean we can work more closely with our local partner's where good relationships have already been built to ensure that the child has the best access to services and their physical, emotional and mental needs are being met.

Negatives
Preparation is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is present and encouraged within the home. Development of support with the Welsh language is needed for both young people and staff. Community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward as this may represent a barrier if not managed correctly and communities are not well informed.

8. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Community Engagement Events	July– September 2024	
Engage with ward member	July 2024	

9. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision-making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet	17th July	

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monmouthshire
sir fynwy
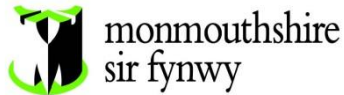
SUBJECT: A Replacement Social Care Case Management System

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: July 17th, 2024

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

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1.   PURPOSE:

1.1 To present the issues associated with ensuring a fit for purpose Social Care Case Management System (SCCMS) for Monmouthshire and recommend the preferred approach.

1.2 To set out the initial resources and arrangements that are required to support local implementation of a SCCMS.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That Cabinet agrees to work at a regional level to purchase an 'off-the-shelf' Social Care Case Management System under the national programme (option 2).

2.2 That cabinet thereby agrees for the Chief Officer for Social Care together with Chief Officer Resources / Deputy Chief Executive to:

- Work collaboratively with the other Gwent Local Authorities and Digital Health Care Wales (DHCW) to enter into a procurement process for a SCCMS for the region.
- Work collaboratively at a national, regional and local level to develop a programme plan to ensure the successful implementation of the new system whilst minimising risk and making best use of available resources.

2.3 That cabinet notes that:

- At present, the one-off and annual revenue costs associated with procuring a replacement system are currently estimations.
- A national Business Case is being submitted to Welsh Government which will set out the rationale and resource requirements for replacing SCCMS in Wales.

- There is an urgency to press ahead with replacing the SCCMS, despite the current unknowns.

2.4 That in the event that external funding does not meet all of the one-off implementation costs, Cabinet approve the underwriting of a maximum of £291,000 from the Council's reserves, split over 2024/25 and 2025/26.

2.5 That in the event that external funding from Welsh Government does not meet all of the one-off and on-going revenue costs, a further decision report will be brought to cabinet prior to the point of contracting, in line with the procurement timetable.

3.   KEY ISSUES:

What is a Social Care Management System?

3.1 A social care case management system stores all the data and personal information of people who have had contact with social care and health (where services are integrated). They are large and complex digital systems which not only store and allow speedy access to data, but also supports the workflow of practice in line with legislative requirements. A fit for purpose system is essential to ensure that people are safeguarded, and that people's care and support needs are met.

3.2 Alongside of supporting practice, a SCCMS must comply with data security requirements, data protection and information governance. The system needs to generate management and performance reports, support business functions and provide data analytics to support strategic and operational decision making. Interoperability with other systems is also a pre-requisite of a fit for purpose SCCMS.

Background & Current Position with the Current System

3.3 Currently Monmouthshire's Social Care and Health Directorate utilises a SCCMS which is one of the very few self-built systems in Wales. Following 2 years of development the system went live in July 2015 for Adults Services, and in November 2015 for Children's Services. Since that time the system has served the Local Authority well. The current system instilled a sense of pride and ownership and allowed autonomy over development with a clear focus on the user perspective with the service shaping its functionality as the system evolved. The commitment to the success of the system has continued right up to the present day.

Why we can no longer move forward with the Current System

3.4 There are a number of factors which now mean that our in-house system is not a viable option moving forward. In line with Monmouthshire's digital and data strategy we want to ensure our workforce to be equipped with the most up to date technology. Given the age of our system, to keep it on a par with current technology it would require significant upgrading and investment – something we have neither the appropriate timeframe nor the technical resource to achieve.

3.5 The current concerns over the longevity and resilience of our system have coincided with the opportunity to step-in alongside the rest of Gwent and be part of the national programme to commission a 'best of breed' replacement system. This will ensure that we aren't left behind with an out-of-date system and will allow us to build-in resilience. The social care case management market is niche, with limited specialist providers. To miss out on this opportunity could leave us working in isolation with very limited costly options should we need to commission a replacement in the near future.

Background and Current Position with WCCIS

3.6 The decision to build and remain with our own system within Monmouthshire went against the grain from a national (Welsh Government) perspective. Over the preceding 10 years or so, WG has wanted all LAs and Health Boards to enter into a contract with WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System). This aligned with the vision of one shared record supporting integrated services. The majority of Welsh Local Authorities entered into contracts with WCCIS, albeit at a range of different times, including the other 4 LAs within Gwent. It is uncontentious to say that WCCIS has not been wholly successful as a national system and has not achieved its original aspirations.

3.7 Similar to our current system, the Microsoft Dynamics platform on which WCCIS is built is now reaching end of life added to which the provider appears to have no appetite to remain in the market. In terms of the way forward, the National Programme has now moved away from a one system approach to encouraging Local Authorities and Health Boards to enter into a competitive tendering process to purchase 'best of breed'. To support this, LAs have grouped together with the idea that regions will procure together off a national framework.

3.8 The Gwent Local Authorities have come together as a cluster and have worked collaboratively so that we are in a favourable position to procure the best system for the region via a single instance.

The opportunity to align with the national programme.

3.9 It is within this context, both in respect of our own in-house solution reaching a natural end and the developments within the national programme, that we have considered our options for the future. Our ultimate objective is to achieve a fit for purpose SCCMS which will grow with us over the medium term (up to circa 12 years) supporting our on-going practice development and interface with people as well as our wider service reform, particularly around digital and interoperability with other systems. It is a critical decision for the department and the council as a whole.

3.10 The timing of events has presented a strong option for Monmouthshire to move forward as part of the national programme through collaboration with our Gwent partners. This should present some opportunities for economies of scale and shared

developments as well as additional resilience from a technical and workforce perspective. This is put forward as our preferred approach.

3.11 The alternatives - rebuilding the current system or splitting away from either Gwent or the National Programme and entering a stand-alone procurement process, both create additional potential risks and issues that would be hard to mitigate. A full options appraisal is carried out in Section 5.

Implementing a new system

3.12 As well as making the best decision about a replacement system, the service is also preparing to undertake the task of moving from the old system to a new one. The scale of this task is difficult to understate and will affect almost every individual member of the workforce as well as all aspects of the service in terms of time, effort and resource. It is a significant undertaking necessitating strong elements of change management; not only the task of 'learning a new system' but reorientating from a local to a regional perspective in terms of ownership and governance.

3.13 Implementing and transferring to a new SCCMS will require a programme approach over an 18/24-month timeframe. Tasks will fall into both technical and practice orientated activities over 3 main workstreams: adults, children's and finance, and will include:

- Contracting
- Data validation (preparedness for migration)
- Workshops to process map for new business processes and procedures
- Data migration / extraction
- Workforce training
- Configuration, including form building
- Report functionality
- Testing
- Inter-operability with other systems
- Legacy system development
- Communication and engagement.

3.14 The resource required to procure and implement the new system is tiered over national, regional and local levels.

National Level

3.15 At a national level, the DHCW delivers the Welsh digital strategy of which Connecting Care (which the delivery of a new SCCMS is now known) is a central part. To this end DHCW sets out and manages the overarching programme and coordination across LAs and Health Boards. DHCW has developed a national procurement approach and national framework using a minimum specification. It advises and provides an interface with WG and has developed a business case setting

out the resources required to support implementation. In the longer term, DHCW are looking to develop a shared care record through system interoperability.

3.16 There have been some concerns about how well DHCW is able to meet the needs of social care (as opposed to health); respond to specific issues within Local Authorities and manage the interface between Local Authorities and the national programme. WLGA have recently joined with the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS Cymru) to try to facilitate relationships between DHCW and ensure that there is a strong LA voice and representation within the National Programme.

Regional level

3.17 There is a regional team in place which is hosted by ABuHB comprising four (4) permanent employees: - Regional System Lead, System Manager and x2 Data Quality Officers. The annual revenue cost of the team is £148,000.

3.18 The regional team supports the current system for the other Gwent LAs and more latterly has been turned to supporting the Gwent cluster develop its regional specification, evaluation process and implementation plans for a new system. The regional team bring significant technical expertise and are in the best position to support and coordinate critical tasks across the 5 Gwent LAs such as data migration, information governance, data sharing, testing and reported. They will provide a key interface with the supplier during the implementation phase and beyond.

3.19 As part of developing the Connecting Care Business Case for WG, the regional team, alongside other such teams across Wales, has undertaken an analysis of what additional, temporary, regional resource is required to support implementation. This identified a further 3 posts: - Regional Programme Manager, Programme Officer and Information Officer are needed for approximately 18 months. The cost of this would be £233,764 (over 18 months).

3.20 It is said, though not confirmed, that the existing regional team costs will continue to be funded through the DHCW up until March 2025 (as a backstop). At the same time the costs of the existing regional team and the additional temporary posts have been represented within the national Business Case. It is not known what the WG response to the Business Case will be. In an attempt to de-risk the situation, Gwent Directors have put a case forward to the RPB to divert partnership money into Connecting Care at a regional level to support implementation, should all else fail.

Local level resource requirements

3.21 During the implementation, whilst the overall coordination and technical expertise will be managed via the regional team, a significant amount of our own resource will need to be turned to the programme. To varying degrees, some people will be required to incorporate the work generated by the implementation programme into their existing roles. This will have an impact on the wider operations of the service at particular points and will take careful planning.

3.22 There will need to be an effective interface between the regional resource and our local resource. Wherever possible, we will be looking for synergy and opportunities to do things only once within the region; however, there will be certain activities and tasks that will need to be carried out locally. This is because the 5 Local Authorities have different structures, roles, forms, sign off arrangements and workflow processes.

3.23 Existing job roles that will be utilised to support the implementation programme will include:

- Current system leads (1.6 FTEs)
- Data and performance officers (2 FTEs)
- Business Support Managers
- Business Support Teams
- Social Care Practitioners and Managers
- Finance leads
- Workforce development officers

3.24 We anticipate that to ensure safe and timely implementation, in accordance with our responsibilities towards the supplier and our Gwent partners, we will require additional resource during the implementation phase.

3.25 Having the right resources and support in place to deliver the programme at this point is critical because once the contract is deployed system implementation will commence immediately and to a tightly coordinated timetable across the 5 Local Authorities. Monmouthshire needs to be as best placed as possible to ensure proper preparedness particularly as our process (of transferring from our current system to the new one) will not be the same as our Gwent counterparts.

3.26 The additional resource required is based on our understanding of the size of task; previous experience within MCC of implementing systems; workforce analysis of the required resources for the purposes of the WG Connecting Care Business Case and knowledge of available resources within other Local Authorities.

3.27 Our analysis shows that our capacity and skills gap could be addressed through:

A Programme Manager – to oversee and co-ordinate the programme, manage and take accountability for the delivery of each workstream and act as the prime interface with the regional programme and the supplier.

A Project support officer – to support the project manager on all day-to-day project administration and activities including reports, data, workshop support, process mapping, meeting management and progress chasing.

Additional system admin resource - to ensure that we are as well prepared as possible prior to programme commencement (early preparedness and data validation / cleansing).

Strategic Oversight

3.28 Achieving the objective of ensuring a functioning SCCMS is critical to the Council's core business. To support the Social Care & Health Directorate during the implementation phase, skills and expertise will be required from other Directorates specifically (though not exclusively) legal, digital, performance, workforce development and information governance. To prioritise and allocate resources, and to ensure that there is proper oversight and governance across directorates, it is proposed that a steering group is established. This would support shared ownership, decision making and problem-solving as well as providing oversight and risk monitoring.

Business as Usual

3.29 Following the implementation of a new system, on-going support is required to ensure it remains working properly. This will include dealing with bugs and glitches, overseeing the contract and managing risks, as well as on-going development and liaison with the suppliers and the national programme including the development of a shared care record. Given our intention to proceed on a regional basis, our Business-as-Usual support mechanism will look differently from how it does at the moment. The implementation phase will give us time and greater understanding so that we can decide on the best configuration for on-going support, aligning and adjusting our local resource with the potential for shared services at a regional level.

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

4.1 The proposal to seek a replacement Social Care Management System will ensure that the Council keeps pace with the latest changes in digital technology and has access to a system that is fit for purpose with the capacity for further development and growth. The key objective is to harness the benefits of digital technology within social care and health so that we can better safeguard, protect and meet the care and support needs of hundreds of vulnerable residents within our communities, many of whom are older people, people with disabilities, children or those with physical or mental illnesses. At the heart of the proposal is collaborative working with partners and ensuring that the Council has the capacity to support connected and integrated services into the future.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option 1 – Remain with Current System

The current system has supported the transformation of practice over the last 9 years and over time has recouped initial investment costs. However, there are

significant concerns in the governance and contractual arrangements of the application.

OPTION 1 Remain with the current system and invest in re-writing and new servers to update the technology	
RECOMMENDED: NO	
Benefits	**Dis-benefits**
Teams feel committed to the current systems due to their involvement and ownership of the design and development. Autonomy over development priorities and design. Co-production in design. No licence Costs – the current system is built on Open Source technology and as such have no licence costs. Reduced disruption and less training required for the workforce. Potentially less costly, at least in the short term.	Lack of connectivity across Gwent region and shared services (interoperability is part of the national specification) There is no formal contract arrangement to support new development or changes in service delivery. Current developer accessibility is unsustainable which could result in escalating development costs. The current system is not part of the national framework. Remaining with our own system would mean that we were not aligned with the national programme or with the rest of Gwent. This would mean loss of access to potentially available resources. The technology would require significant investment to remain up to date. The costs of this are unknown, and it is currently not feasible (in terms of technical availability).
Option 1 COST	No licence costs Annual revenue support and development costs including data security and replacement server costs – £125,000 New Build Costs – unknown (potentially significant) / not feasible

Option 2 – Procure a replacement SCCMS with the Gwent cluster (as part of the Connecting Care national programme).

OPTION 2	
Replacement system via a Gwent Procurement Model	
RECOMMMENDED: YES	
Benefits	**Dis-benefits**
Collaborative Approach – will allow Monmouthshire and Gwent partners to benefit from shared knowledge and from 'doing things once' across Gwent. This option would align Monmouthshire with the National Programme and allow access to potential available resources. Working as a regional cluster will bring purchasing power to achieve best value (through scaled licensing costs). There is a national and regional team in place to support implementation. This builds in resilience for technical support with the potential for additional shared services on Gwent footprint moving forward. Supports mobility of workforce across Gwent.	Implementation costs, licencing costs and potential 'hidden' costs depending on the specification and contract. Potential funding from WG remains unknown but is unlikely to cover entire costs. [Some assistance might be forthcoming from regional funds.] Dealing with an external supplier and contract monitoring (which is not part of MCC's recent experience). Lack of autonomy around design priorities and development time, which would need to be negotiated with other partners. Practice change and significant training requirement of workforce. Service disruption through the implementation phase.
Option 2 COST	Implementation Support Costs £291,000 over an 18-month period. Annual revenue licensing costs best case £250,000, worst case £600,000. One off implementation costs of data migration are not known. Business as usual support costs - unknown at this point, estimated between £70,000 and £100,000 annually.

OPTION 3	
Do not move with Gwent, delay acting, and enter a stand alone procurement at a later point	
RECOMMENDED: NO	

Benefits	Dis-benefits
Least disruptive in the short-term Will allow knowledge about 'best of breeds' to emerge with the potential to learn lessons from other areas. Freedom of choice [albeit SCCMS market is very limited]	May not attract any suppliers, and lack of purchase power may make this more costly. This could result in having no functioning SCCMS, which would pose serious risks to people and the council. MCC would be outside of the national programme and may have little or no access to any available resource.
Option 3 COST	**UNKNOWN**

6. Evaluation criteria

- Replacement SCCMS procured
- Contract established
- System implemented in a safe and timely way
- Workforce training and using the system effectively to support all practice and management arrangements
- Business as usual system support established aligned with a Gwent footprint
- On-going governance and system development in place.

7. REASONS

7.1 It is essential that Monmouthshire County Council keeps pace with digital changes so that we can realise the benefits technology brings within social care and health. Crucial to this is the deployment of a fit for purpose system that supports the service to safeguard people and meet their care and support needs in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

7.2 The current context represents an opportunity for Monmouthshire to move away from its in-house system and join forces with Gwent to procure a modern replacement system in keeping with the national programme. Whilst this represents a significant change for Monmouthshire and an immediate increase in costs, the benefits of increasing system resilience and collaborating with others outweigh these disadvantages.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

<u>One-off implementation costs and annual revenue costs</u>

8.1 At this stage, just prior to entering into a procurement process, it is not possible to provide accurate information about any one off-costs associated with the new system, particularly the cost of data migration. The method and potential cost of data migration is yet to be determined between the national programme and regional teams and will in part depend on the supplier; a number of options are being explored.

8.2 In terms of annual costs, the new system will be significantly more than the cost of our current system – the prime reason for this is that we do not currently pay license fees. Based on published GCloud pricing the best-case scenario for the annual license fees is £250,000 and the worst case £600,000. The actual annual revenue costs will be ascertained through the specification and procurement process.

8.3 It is not known to what extent, if at all, Welsh Government will assist Monmouthshire with the additional cost pressures associated with a replacement system. Once we have ascertained the costs, and the extent of any available financial support, we will bring forward a subsequent cabinet decision, prior to contracting. This will set out the costs and a proposed approach to how those costs will be met through the revenue budget for the Social Care & Health Directorate (MTFP). Based on the current timetable, it is likely that this subsequent decision will be needed early to mid-September.

<u>Workforce Implementation Costs</u>

8.4 The resource costs for implementing the new system over an 18-month programme have been identified as:

Cost of existing regional team	£44,452 Apportioned for MCC
Cost of additional regional posts	£46,752 Apportioned for MCC
Costs of additional temporary resource for MCC: Prog Manager £75,000 PA Prog Officer £45,000 PA System Admin £20,000	£200,000
	£291,204

8.5 It is anticipated that some external (WG) funding will be available to assist in meeting the one-off implementation costs.

8.6 To the extent that this is not fully funded, the Council will need to underwrite this from its own funding through revenue reserves or capital receipts. The timing and quantum of this funding remains uncertain, and therefore Cabinet are asked to approve the underwriting of a maximum of £291,000 from the Council's reserves, split over 2024/25 and 2025/26.

<u>On-going Support Costs</u>

8.7 At the moment it is too early to specify what the cost will be of on-going system support and development. The implementation phase will provide the opportunity to decide on the best configuration for on-going support pursuing every opportunity for shared services where these are beneficial. An initial estimate of the annual support costs is between £70,000 to £100,000. This is based on our current annual support (local and regional).

<u>Potential Cost Mitigation</u>

8.8 We are actively pursuing all opportunities to mitigate the potential cost burden on the Local Authority for one-off implementation costs, licensing costs and on-going support costs including:

- Funding of the existing regional team through the DHCW
- Welsh government funding for implementation costs arising from the national Business Case
- Procuring on a regional basis to achieve purchasing power
- Regional partnership funding.

<u>Timeline and Criticality of Decision Making</u>

8.9 The recommendation to make funds available at this point, prior to the confirmation of any outside funding being available, will allow us to ensure we are as well prepared as we can be ready for contract deployment. Once the contract is deployed, there will be little room for delay or manoeuvre as every stage will need to be coordinated with the supplier and with other Local Authorities. Good preparation and planning will enable us risk assess and mitigate critical aspects of the programme as safely and with as minimal service disruption as possible.

9.CONSULTEES

- Peter Davies – Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
- Cllr Ian Chandler – Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Social Care and Health Directorate Management Team (DMT)
- Shared Resource Services

- Information Security and Governance

- Digital, Design and Innovation Team

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. AUTHOR

Jane Rodgers - Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1 Time-Line
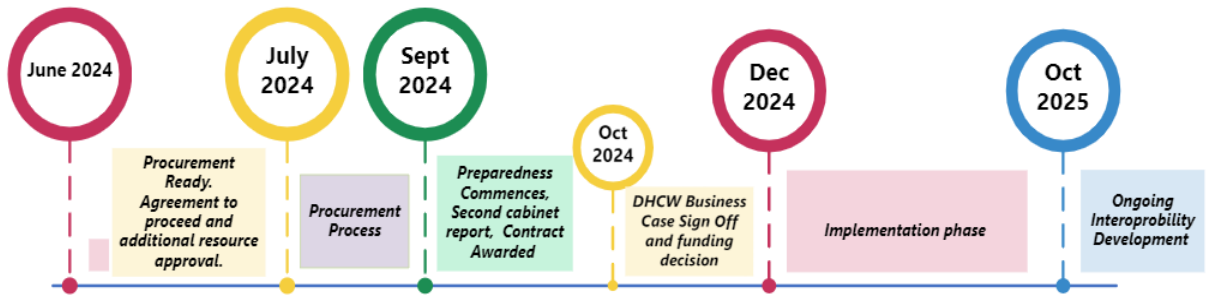
Appendix 2 Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 Risk Analysis

No	Risk	Mitigation	RAG
1	**Current Supplier Market** There are a limited number of products on market – there is a risk there are insufficient bidders / inadequate response resulting in failure to award.	By taking a Gwent approach this mitigates this risk. Working with 5 local authorities together rather than as an individual LA is a better commercial proposition. The suppliers are established Social Care suppliers with developed products.	(green)
2	**Terms and Conditions** Bidders could potentially seek to diminish terms and conditions to below what are required.	An all Gwent approach will mitigate the chances of this happening as supplier will be less reluctant given the size of the contract. The procurement process will mitigate this risk.	(green)
3	**Common Standards** Gwent not holding together in terms of common standards and streamlined working practices.	Having a central Gwent team to support and facilitate will make it more likely to achieve greater levels of standardisation. Gwent Directors are involved and provide the required governance to shape /drive common standards moving forward.	(amber)
5	**Procurement Timelines** The majority of LAs across Wales will be looking to procure at same time.	By working at pace with Gwent - it is a key priority to ensure the regional group keeps to the procurement timescales in order to secure a contract with the new supplier.	(green)
4	**Affordability** We have broad estimations of the annual revenue costs at this point and will know the licence costs during the procurement phase. We are also awaiting the final business case for further updates on implementation funding via DHCW.	We will need to build into future budgets the ongoing licence costs for the preferred system for all future years. We will work with finance to ensure budgets reflect any new contracts.	(red)

6	**Implementation Costs** The workforce costs associated with implementation will create a financial pressure within the current financial year (24/25) and in the year 25/26). The full cost of implementation including the cost of data migration are not fully known.	We will continue to work with DHCW to ensure that the business case accurately represents costs. We will use all available methods to highlight to WG the financial impact that replacing the SCCMS has on the Council, and fully explore all potential avenues for alternative funding. If all else fails, we propose that implementation costs will make use of one-off capital reserves.	6
7	**Workforce Planning** Implementing a new system is a huge project for all involved. It will require commitment, specialist resources and dedicated support to deliver on time. This will impact the whole workforce both operational and strategic as well as challenging competing demands.	We will be fully utilising all available resources in order to assign roles and responsibilities across the organisation. Priorities will be considered and realigned as necessary in order to maximise the skills knowledge and experience across Monmouthshire to ensure we deliver the programme on time.	7
8	**Maintaining Current Systems & Reporting** Whilst we focus on implementing the new system we will also have to continue to maintain and operate safely the current system.	We will review our current support and structure along side SRS to ensure both the current and new requirements have dedicated support as necessary and that we are operating within a secure and safe environment and relevant security standards.	8

Date updated : 1st July 2024

Phase :   Pre-Procurement

Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Jane Rodgers **E-mail: JaneRodgers@Monmouthshire.gov.uk**	**Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal** That Cabinet agrees to work at a regional level to purchase an 'off-the-shelf' Social Care Case Management System under the national programme.
Name of Service area Social Services	**Date : 19th June 2024**

1. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	**Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic**	**Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic**	**What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?**
Age	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use, secure and is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities, particularly the young and most vulnerable.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Disability	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities, particularly people with disabilities.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	. The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Marriage or civil partnership	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Pregnancy or maternity	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Race	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Religion or Belief	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities. The new system will be able to record details on religion or belief in order to consider any specific arrangements when commissioning any care and support i.e dietary requirements of community meals.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Sex	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities.	none	n/a
Sexual Orientation	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities.	none	n/a

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

| **Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice** | The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with the most vulnerable people across our communities. | None identified at this stage | None identified at this stage |

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favorably	We will continue to offer our services in Welsh and record this within the new Social Care Recording System. We welcome and encourage our workforce to develop their Welsh language skills and we work in partnership with AHUHB to fully utilise Welsh Language skills across both workforces.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Documentation used and within the new case recording system will be standardised and will be available in both English and Welsh. All social care recruitment is carried out in both Welsh and English.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	All assessments are actively offered in the language of choice in line with the 'More than words' strategy. This will also be recorded in our new Case Management System.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage

4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	The project will provide learning and development opportunities for the workforce. Additional resource is required, therefore creating potential employment opportunities within Monmouthshire. Regional resource is also required creating jobs across Gwent. Therefore supporting the economy.	None identified at this stage

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	The new system will be available on mobile devices and will support the drive towards reducing unnecessary travel, keeping milage to a minimum and reducing Monmouthshire carbon footprint.	None identified at this stage
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	The project includes the development of a 'Shared Care Record' between Health and Social Care.	None identified at this stage
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	The new system will support our place based approach to providing care and support in our communities.	None identified at this stage
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	The project is overseen by Welsh Government on a national level as well as working operationally on a Gwent wide basis. We anticipate that the flexibility created by this approach will allow Monmouthshire to place greater emphasis on health and wellbeing. We will be able to continue to develop creative approaches supporting people in the community. The new system will support the recording and delivery of these approaches through its design and capabilities. The system will support practice change and will have a focus on prevention.	None identified at this stage
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	The social value matrix is part of the procurement process. This will include how the providers (who are bidding for the new contract) will be supporting the Well Being goals. Across our services we continuously strive to create an environment where culture, heritage, and the Welsh language are not only preserved but actively promoted.	Collaborate communication training supports the 'what matters' conversations where building relationships are a cornerstone to our practice. Understanding the cultural heritage, Welsh language promotion, being involved in community events and sport and recreation all can nurture the culture identity of the people we support.
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The new system will continue to support our social care teams who rely on a robust and appropriate recording system that has to be fit for purpose and future proofed. A system that is easy to use with appropriate access that is up to date with accurate data is essential when working with people in our communities	When recruiting for the additional posts both regionally and locally we will ensure equal opportunities during selection

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle		Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Long Term	Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future	It is essential that Monmouthshire County Council keeps pace with the changes in digital, as this will allow us to realise the benefits of new technology. Crucial to this is the deployment of a fit for purpose case management system that supports our services to deliver our statutory obligations and meet the personal outcomes for children and adults in Monmouthshire.	The procurement process will consider both the short term and longer term requirement of our system against the rate at which technology is advancing. We will ensure there is both longevity and flexibility in the new system we procure.
Collaboration	Working together with other partners to deliver objectives	There is a Gwent Regional Programme Team and Board already in place to support this Programme. Regional engagement is an important part of maximising the benefits of the new system, and the five Local Authorities will work collaboratively in partnership.	Ensuring Monmouthshire has a key voice and is part of each workstream, all decisions and milestones is essential.
Involvement	Involving those with an interest and seeking their views	All Key stakeholders have been involved form the outset including:- • SRS • Digital and Innovation Team • Information Governance Team • SLT • Workforce teams across Social Care (the users) • Transformation Team	For the duration of the Programme continue to review the stakeholder list and update as necessary.
Prevention	Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	Now is the right time to look to decommission the current system and join the regional collaboration for a new system. If we delay the procurement there is a chance we could be left behind and need to invest more resources down then line.	By joining the Gwent collaboration and the national Programme at the outset we will be able to realise all of the benefits of being part of the joint procurement process. Benefits include, maximise our resources, greater leverage in negotiating with potential providers, share technical resources when in design and development phase, Migration support, programme co-ordination and management support. Implementation and on going development.

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies **Integration**	Across Social Care we have integrated services, working closely with our colleagues in ABUHB. Whilst we are planning to procure a Social Care system, we will continue to work in an integrated way and will continue to develop our sharing protocols. Our development road map will include the interoperability of our systems across both Social Care and Health. .	Interoperability functionality will be part of our specification for procurement.

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	The new system will support close professional integration, joint working, and information sharing between services, disciplines and providers in order to safeguard the people we provide with care and support. The 'shared care record and further development of interoperability will make the sharing of information more seamless and will support the principals of safeguarding.	None identified at this stage	The project will consider further development of streamlining systems and process across Gwent.
Corporate Parenting	The new system will support close professional working and service integration for children and young people who are care experienced.	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

- DHCW Business Case
- Current system evaluation (independently commissioned).
- User feedback
- Welsh Government information and advice.
- Digital and Innovation Team advice and guidance.
- SRS engagement and advice.

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

For the duration of the project there will be continued stakeholder engagement and 2 way communication.

The views of the workforce will be fully considered at each stage of the project.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Set up a MCC Programme board		
Build the Programme plan		

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
	DMT		
	SLT		
	Cabinet		

monmouthshire
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SUBJECT:	DIGITAL AND DATA STRATEGY
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	17th JULY 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To present to Cabinet the Council's Digital and Data Strategy for approval.

1.2 The strategy outlines how its use of digital and data will transform and modernise services, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and support the delivery of the wider Community and Corporate Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To endorse the vision, themes and aims of the Digital and Data Strategy.

2.2 To approve the delivery plan and to note business cases for further and future investment will be prepared for consideration as required and to the extent that they cannot be managed within the Council's existing budgetary framework, capacity, and resources.

2.3 To delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships, in consultation with the Leader as the lead Cabinet member with portfolio responsibility, to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the strategy.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The digital landscape is evolving rapidly, and the council needs to keep pace with the changes and opportunities that it brings.

3.2 The council also needs to harness the power of data analytics and insights, and the potential of automation and generative AI capabilities, to inform its actions and decisions, do things differently, and to deliver better services for its users.

3.3 It is important to draw the distinction between being digital enabled and data driven and aligned with the Council's aspirations. Being digitally enabled will involve the Council updating and transforming its processes, systems and services using digital platforms and tools. On its own this allows services to be provided more **efficiently**.

3.4 Being data driven leads to the Council using digital products and services to collect data about Monmouthshire residents and communities. But beyond simply collecting data to

analyse that data to understand resident intentions, preferences and needs and using these insights to provide services that are more **effective** in meeting those needs.

3.5   The council faces significant financial pressure and increasing demand, and the efficient and effective utilisation of digital and data can be a key enabler in meeting these challenges.

3.6   The council has developed a Digital and Data Strategy, which sets out its vision, themes, aims, and actions for the next three years. The vision being:

"The Council is digitally enabled and data driven, delivering excellent services and inclusive outcomes for its residents and communities"

3.7   The strategy's themes create the "stretch" in the strategic aims and ambitions. They are expanded on more fully in the strategy and maintain a focus around:

   i.   User-centred design and service delivery
   ii.   Data analytics and insights
   iii.   Information and data governance

3.8   The strategy is then underpinned by three strategic aims:

- Working with partners to develop and maintain strong foundations to support delivery of the strategic vision.
- Using data analytics and insight, digital advancements and a user-centred focus, to re-think how needs are met.
- Equipping and empowering the organisation and communities to get the most out of digital and data technology.

3.9   The strategy is aligned with other enabling strategies (People, Customer and Financial) which are either in place or in development and which support the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan with its clear purpose: to become a zero-carbon county, support well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

3.10   The strategy will be supported by a detailed and prioritised annual delivery plan, which will include the activity, expected outcomes and measures of success for each action. The action plan will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the Council and its stakeholders.

3.11   The strategy will be subject to regular evaluation and feedback, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, to assess its effectiveness, impact, and value. The results of the evaluation will be communicated to members, staff, residents, and partners, and will inform the continuous improvement of the strategy.

3.12   The implementation and monitoring of the strategy will be overseen by the Digital, Data and Technology Board, which will include representatives from the Digital Design and Innovation team, the Data Insight team, the Information Security and Governance team, the Shared Resource Service, and other relevant service areas. The board will report to

the Strategic Leadership Team and the Cabinet on the progress and outcomes of the strategy.

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

4.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment for this strategy is appended. A summary of the key impacts and considerations are provided below:

    a) Addressing digital exclusion barriers such as skills, confidence, access to connectivity and devices will support those with protected characteristics and/or those suffering socio-economic disadvantage to become digitally included.

    b) The use of accessible digital solutions can support the development and further use of the Welsh language – e.g. translation services, Welsh language learning apps and bi-lingual provision of public facing solutions such as online forms, the My Monmouthshire App and Chat Bot – Monty.

    c) The strategy aligns with the ways of working and well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 e.g. increasing the skills and competency of the workforce; providing 24/7 access to information; using data insights to inform decision making which can positively impact health, community cohesion, tackling inequality and resilience. The strategy also recognises the potential environmental impact of increased use of cloud technology and will ensure this is understood and mitigated against.

    d) The strategy will ensure information and data security whilst also providing opportunities to use insight appropriately to safeguard vulnerable residents.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Option 1: Do nothing. This option would mean that the Council would continue to operate as it is, without a clear and coherent direction for its use of digital and data. This option would have significant risks and disadvantages, such as losing out on the opportunities and benefits that digital and data offer, falling behind the expectations and standards of the users and the regulators, and failing to address the challenges and pressures that the council faces.

5.2 Option 2: Adopt the Digital and Data Strategy. This option would mean that the Council would have a strategic framework for its use of digital and data, aligned with its purpose and objectives. This option would have significant advantages and benefits, such as improving the services and outcomes for the users and the communities, enhancing the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the council, and supporting the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The strategy will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- The extent to which the strategy delivers its vision, aims, and actions.
- The extent to which the strategy contributes to the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan.
- The extent to which the strategy improves the services and outcomes for the users and the communities.
- The extent to which the strategy enhances the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the council.
- The extent to which the strategy addresses the challenges and risks that the council faces.
- The extent to which the strategy meets the expectations and standards of the users.
- The extent to which the strategy demonstrates best practice and innovation in the digital and data field.

An annual Delivery Plan will be reviewed as part of the council's service planning and performance monitoring activity.

7. REASONS:

7.1 The reasons for adopting the Digital and Data Strategy are:

- To set the strategic direction for the council's use of digital and data.
- To align the Council's use of digital and data with its purpose, priorities and objectives.
- To maximise the opportunities and benefits that digital and data offer.
- To address the challenges and pressures that the council faces.
- To meet the needs and expectations of the users.
- To demonstrate best practice and innovation in the digital and data field

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The strategy will require the allocation of staff time and expertise from various service areas, such as the Digital Design and Innovation team, the Data Insight team, the Information Security and Governance team, the Shared Resource Service (SRS), and other relevant service areas.

8.2 The Council will also proactively seek out opportunities to strengthen collaborations with external partners and will work closed with neighbouring local authorities and the SRS to remove duplication, maximise resources and deliver on shared ambitions around the use of digital and data. Similarly, the Council will seek to work with other local authorities, public sector partners such as ABUHB, Gwent Police, the voluntary sector, the Centre for Digital Public Services Wales, the WLGA Digital Team, and private sector partners to deliver on its strategic ambitions.

8.3 Delivery of the strategy is anticipated to generate savings and efficiencies for the council, by reducing costs, increasing productivity, and improving outcomes.

8.4   There is however recognition that the council may need to invest in skills and capabilities to deliver this strategy. Business cases for investment and alternative delivery models will be prepared for consideration as required.

9.   CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team
Directorate Management Teams

10.   BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Digital and Data Strategy
Appendix 2 – Intergrated impact assessment

11.   AUTHOR:

James Vale - Head of Customer, ICT & Digital (Torfaen CBC)

12.   CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: **(**07773) 134730
E-mail: james.vale@torfaen.gov.uk

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Digital and Data Strategy

2024-2027

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Digital and Data Strategy

Version Control

Title	Digital and Data Strategy
Purpose	To set the strategic direction for the Council's use of digital and data.
Owner(s)	Deputy Chief Executive Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships
Approved By	Not yet approved – scheduled for Cabinet Decision on 17th July
Date	03/07/2024
Version Number	Version 1.6
Status	Draft
Review Frequency	Following any update to the Community and Corporate Plan
Next Review Date	May 2027
Consultation	Staff (Directorate Management Teams), Strategic Leadership Team, Cabinet.

Cabinet Member Foreword

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Digital and Data Strategy

I am delighted to introduce Monmouthshire's Digital and Data Strategy, which sets out the vision, themes, aims, and actions for the next three years. The strategy is key in enabling the delivery of the Council's policy aims as set out in its Community and Corporate Plan.

The Council has a clear purpose to become a zero-carbon county that supports well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Digital and data are recognised as key enablers for changing and modernising services, improving operational efficiency and effectiveness, and enhancing outcomes and impact. Putting residents and users at the centre of everything the Council does is key, ensuring that digital and data services are intuitive, accessible, and responsive to needs and expectations.

The Council is ambitious and optimistic about the potential for digital and data to make a positive difference to the county and its communities. The Council also needs to be realistic and aware of the challenges and risks that are faced, such as the fast pace of change, the increasing demand and expectations, and financial challenges. These challenges and risks will be addressed proactively and collaboratively, seeking to maximise the opportunities and benefits that digital and data offer.

This strategy covers a range of themes and areas, setting out how digital and data will inform service planning and delivery, placing the needs of residents at the heart of everything the Council does.

In its development the strategy has drawn upon best practice and innovation in the digital and data field, both locally and nationally. The input and feedback received has been invaluable, and the strength of partnership and collaboration will continue in delivering this strategy.

An annual delivery plan underpin the strategy and will evolve to ensure that the changing needs and priorities of the county and stakeholders, and the ever evolving digital and data landscape, can be reflected, and responded to. Progress and impact will be measured and evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Learning and achievements will also be communicated and shared.

I hope you find this strategy informative and inspiring, and I invite you to join us on the Council's digital and data journey.

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Digital and Data Strategy

Councillor Ben Callard
Cabinet Member for Resources

Digital and Data Strategy

Introduction:

Monmouthshire's Digital and Data Strategy sets out the Council's strategic aims and a three-year plan outlines how digital and data will be used to transform and modernise services, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and enhance outcomes and impact.

This strategy sits alongside other enabling strategies and is key to the delivery of the Council's policy aims as set out in its Community and Corporate Plan.

The Community and Corporate Plan, *Taking Monmouthshire Forward,* focuses on working together for a fairer, greener, more successful county while also supporting well-being, health and dignity for all.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Fair place	Green place	Thriving and ambitious place	Safe place	Connected place	Learning place
to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced	to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency	where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop	to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure	where people feel part of a community and are valued	where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

The plan recognises that the challenges are great. Responding to climate and nature crises. Responding to inequalities, the provision of affordable housing and the growing needs of the elderly and most vulnerable. Ensuring that nobody is left behind.

The plan recognises the financial challenges faced and the fundamental changes that will be required in how services are delivered to remain sustainable. Leading to a focus on prevention and a need to work in partnership. The Council will continue be a strong and progressive partner that looks to be at the forefront of driving forward existing and new collaborations and partnerships such as to deliver shared strategic aims and outcomes.

Notwithstanding the challenges over the last two years the Council has achieved many successes and outcomes and has already put many of the building blocks in place to allow the Council's policy aims to be delivered.

The approach sees a continuous adaptation of services in line with the needs and demands of residents, where the Council is entrepreneurial and innovative in its approach, acting in an agile and responsive way. This underpins the digital and data strategy for the next three years and allows for success to be built on the foundations that have been put in place.

Digital and Data Strategy

In line with the aspirations set out in this strategy it is important to draw the distinction between being digitally enabled and data driven.

Being digitally enabled will involve the Council updating and transforming its processes, systems and services using digital platforms and tools. If that remained the sole focus,whilst services would be provided more efficiently, they would not necessarily be provided more effectively as digitally enabled services alone can be equally unaware of their customers intentions, preferences and needs as before.

Being data driven leads to the Council using digital products and services to collect data about Monmouthshire residents and communities. But beyond simply collecting data to analyse that data to understand resident intentions, preferences and needs and using these insights to provide services that are more effective in meeting those needs.

The Council will continue to operate in an environment where resources are not increasing in line with the demands upon services. This will require the Council to be both effective and efficient in its use of resources and being both digitally enabled and data driven will be key to this.

Equal Regard needs to be given to understanding, and where possible, addressing any environmental impact from the implementation of the strategy. Positive impacts are often clear to see in so far as for example a reduced need to travel. However, less visible impacts are for example the increasing need for data storage and where suitable mitigations will need to be sought.

Why is a Digital and Data Strategy Needed:

A digital and data strategy is not just about technology; it's about using digital tools and data to empower our staff, drive productivity and operational efficiency and enhance the quality of life for residents.

This strategy looks to communicate the Council's digital and data ambitions to a range of stakeholders: to staff and leadership within the Council; to our public sector partners and, those with whom the Council will look to collaborate in our pursuit of common aims and objectives. At the heart of the strategy is demonstrating to Monmouthshire communities and residents how digital and data will contribute to meeting their needs and the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan.

Keeping pace with the rapid and evolving the digital landscape and optimising the opportunities for the benefit of the organisation and residents requires clear strategic intent. So too, harnessing the power of data analytics and insights, as well as the potential of automation and generative AI capabilities. The strategy

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Digital and Data Strategy

will bring both together to inform our actions and decisions, do things differently, and to deliver better services for residents and users.

We need also to protect our services against a backdrop of significant financial pressure and increasing demand. Our digital and data strategy will contribute to ensuring that the Council is resilient and agile in the face of uncertainty and disruption.

The Strategy sets the longer-term aims and initial actions to deliver them. The Council's approach will evolve and mature as the capabilities and capacities to be data driven and utilise digital products and services are enhanced and strengthened.

Strategic Links:

The Digital and Data Strategy is one of a number of enabling strategies that will contribute to the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan. The strategy, along with the associated delivery plan, is aligned with them all.

The enabling strategies will have complimentary activities and interdependencies. For example, to become a truly digital first and data enabled authority, the Council will need to empower its staff to understand and utilise the digital and technological solutions available – developing this capability is a key component of the People Strategy. Similarly, the Customer Strategy will inform how digital and data can inform the development and delivery of user-centred services, that improves the customer experience and overall operational efficiency.

The delivery of this strategy will also underpin the council's Medium Term Financial Planning with digital and data acting as key enablers to unlock savings associated with new ways of working, managing demand and delivering improved outcomes.

How Has it Been Developed:

This strategy has been developed through consultation and engagement with staff groups, Elected Members, and partners. The Council has also learned from best practice and innovation in the digital and data field, both locally and nationally. The input and feedback received has informed the development of the strategy. Working together with staff, residents, and partners will be key to delivering the strategy and the delivery plan underpinning the strategy will continue to evolve based on feedback and opportunities that arise.

Digital and Data Strategy

The Case for Change:

The digital and data strategy looks to build on the foundations already in place. Advancements in technology, digital and data are fast moving and why the strategy is for a period of only three years.

In order to reach out and deliver the aims and ambitions set out in this strategy it is important to start from a position of understanding existing strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats that present. More commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis.

Appendix 1 provides a detailed SWOT analysis for digital and data. This looks to evaluate the Council's current context and strategic case for change such as to inform the vision, themes and aims of the strategy. These are summarised as follows:

Digital strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths in having an effective digital design and innovation team, a number of approved digital solutions, and strong information security, but also facing challenges from an overall lack of organisational and collaborative prioritisation, limited adoption of user-centred design principles, and manual and expensive processes that remain present.

Digital opportunities and threats:

Opportunities that include the impact that can be felt from upskilling and empowering staff and residents, adopting digital ways of working, collaborating with local authority partners and the SRS, using automation and AI technology, and implementing the education digital strategy. However, a need not to be complacent and to be aware of the risks of bypassing agreed processes and support, not communicating the benefits and capabilities of digital solutions, having fragmented customer journeys, and in not maintaining security against the ever-present threat of cyber attacks.

Data strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths are represented by having the ambition to develop the use of data, having developed data dashboards and GIS web maps, having some experience and skills in processing data, and having strong data protection and security policies. However, capacity and capability is something that needs to be developed and where there is variability in data knowledge and skills across service areas, where data isn't being harnessed and connected as a council wide and community asset, and data is not being sufficiently brought together on service user perspectives and acted upon.

Data opportunities and threats:

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Digital and Data Strategy

There are significant opportunities that present such as using analytics to generate actionable insights that benefit those who need to draw on the Council's services, using digital, data and technology to respond to rising demand and financial challenges, building on existing partnership working and developing collaborations, and learning and evolving in the fast paced data space. Set alongside this are the increasing demand faced for data analytics, the threat that poor data quality poses and the inevitable data security challenges faced.

Digital and Data Strategy

Vision and Themes:

Vision:

The Council is digitally enabled and data driven, delivering excellent services and inclusive outcomes for its residents and communities.

Themes:

The digital and data strategy covers a number of key themes:

- **User-Centred Design and Service Delivery**:

  Digital services designed from the perspective of residents and users, and their needs and interests.

  Digital services that prioritise user needs, ensuring that they are intuitive, accessible, and responsive to all citizens, thus promoting equity and inclusivity.

  Focusing and prioritising digital change on improving operational efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing the agility of services to respond.

  Using generative AI and other emerging technologies to automate tasks and business processes to drive efficiencies and to deliver better services for users.

- **Data Analytics and Insights:**

  Leveraging data analytics in an open and transparent way to provide actionable insights for evidence-led decision-making.

  Data and insight that confirms what the Council does is inclusive, equitable and, having an impact. Tracking patterns of engagement and participation in order to see that the Council is reaching everyone it needs to.

  A better disaggregation of data that allows for information on service access, use and preference to be tracked spatially, socially and economically for anonymised profiles of cohorts and communities. To be able to tell what kind of services households or residents are accessing or not, such as to be more preventative in offering or sign posting access to services.

Digital and Data Strategy

Moving towards real time and forward looking (predictive) datasets that produce a rounded picture of what is being done and where resources might have to be moved to improve the chances of meeting intended outcomes. Allowing services to adapt to specific communities or geographies to meet the diverse range of resident needs.

- **Information and Data Governance:**

  Maintaining robust information and governance security to ensure sensitive data and critical infrastructure is protected and not compromised.

  Enhancing data quality through good data governance arrangements.

These themes underpin the strategic aims and will be achieved by the Council developing the capacity and capability necessary to realise its vision over time. This will be achieved by:

- strengthened collaborations with the Shared Resources Service (SRS) and its local authority partners, as well as with other agencies, private sector partners, and communities of interest.

- a focus on digital and data skills and workforce development. A skilled workforce is crucial for the successful implementation of the strategy.

Delivery will be underpinned by: strong governance and change management arrangements, and a performance framework that is evaluative and focuses on delivery of outcomes and continuous improvement.

Digital and Data Strategy

Aims

The strategy has three aims:

- Aim 1: Work with partners to develop and maintain strong foundations to support delivery of the strategic vision

- Aim 2: Use data analytics and insight, digital advancements and a user-centred focus, to change how the diverse needs of citizens and service users are met

- Aim 3: Equip and empower our citizens, communities and the organisation to get the most out of digital and data technology

Actions for each aim are detailed at Appendix 2.

Aim 1: Work with partners to develop and maintain strong foundations to support delivery of the strategic vision

The Council already has some of the infrastructure, processes, and skills in place to deliver this strategy. For example, there are strong information security, information governance and data protection arrangements in place; the Council's Digital Design and Innovation team has a history and track record of digital delivery; and a Performance and Data Insight team that already supports service areas to understand their data, provide insight and support improvement activity.

The already strong foundations need to be built upon to take the Council to the next level of digital and data innovation, putting insights in the hands of decision makers that will drive improved services and outcomes, supported by the effective, compliant, and innovative use of digital solutions.

The Council will:

- Ensure that data is of high quality, consistent, and reliable across the organisation.
- Make data easier to find, access, and use.
- Use digital technology and infrastructure to support service delivery and analytics.
- Ensure current and new digital solutions are fit for purpose.
- Ensure there are robust data sharing guidelines and processes in place across the organisation. Allowing opportunities to share data across services and with partners to be developed, where there is an identified benefit in doing so.

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Digital and Data Strategy

- Ensure the use of data is maximised in a way that is open, legal, and ethical.
- Explore opportunities to build on partnership working and collaborate.

Aim 2: Use data analytics and insight, digital advancements and a user-centred focus, to change how the diverse needs of citizens and service users are met

It is imperative that the diverse demands and needs of all our citizens, businesses, visitors, elected members, and staff are understood. A key enabler for doing so is taking a user-centred approach which puts those diverse needs at the heart of what the Council and its services do and why they do it.

The availability of good quality and joined up data and insight will develop the understanding of diverse needs. The application of digital and use of technology will enable those different needs to be met in ways that will deliver improved services and outcomes, in line with our Community and Corporate Plan.

The Council will:

- Empower staff to use digital, data and technology to understand more about residents needs and what matters most to them to focus on delivering better outcomes.
- Prioritise digital and data related activity and projects effectively with a focus on improved citizen/customer outcomes and/or operational efficiency.
- Use digital, data and technology to understand, and in response to, rising demand and financial challenges.
- Design digital services that are user-centred, intuitive, accessible, and responsive.
- Use analytics to generate insights that inform the development and delivery of objectives and policies in an inclusive, equitable and impactful way.
- Work with partners and develop digital and data networks to adopt a more preventative and predictive approach.

Aim 3: Equip and empower our citizens, communities and the organisation to get the most out of digital and data technology

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Digital and Data Strategy

There are things that can be done now using digital, data and technology that could only have been dreamed of being done a few years ago. As the pace of change accelerates staff must be supported to be able to take advantage of the technological revolution for the benefit of themselves and residents. Equally, digital inclusion barriers must be addressed such as confidence, skills, connectivity, or access to devices, by providing support to those residents who need and want it.

The Council will:

- Ensure the council has the capabilities and capacity required to maximise its use of digital and data.
- Improve general data literacy and digital capability across the whole Council.
- Support residents to improve their digital skills and tackle digital inclusion barriers such as connectivity and access to devices.
- Explore opportunities to build on existing partnership working and further develop collaboration.
- Support staff to focus on the tasks that matter most by automating repetitive, high-volume activity.

How Will Delivery of this Strategy Have an Impact?

We've used some fictional characters to bring the strategy to life and explain its potential impact and benefit:

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Digital and Data Strategy

Emily - The Staff Member

Emily is a social worker who works with families across Monmouthshire. She typically used to spend a lot of time each week typing up handwritten notes from meetings and creating assessments and reports. She didn't always use to know if the families she worked with were also engaged with other council or partner services and spends a lot of time trying to find this information out. She often used to work late to ensure her case load is complete.

Emily's new AI-enabled platform not only streamlines her workflow but also supports the council's commitment to reducing inequality. The platform's analytics identify residents who may be at risk of falling through the cracks, enabling Emily to proactively reach out with support services. By ensuring equitable access to information and resources, Emily plays a pivotal role in fostering a more inclusive community.

The digital transformation has also made Emily an inadvertent environmental champion. With most services moving online, the need for paper has drastically reduced, contributing to the council's carbon emission reduction goals. Moreover, Emily's dashboard includes a feature that tracks the environmental impact of council operations, encouraging eco-friendly decision-making.

The Johnsons - A Family living in Monmouthshire

The Johnsons are new to Monmouthshire and are trying to get to grips with things like their recycling days, local clubs and activities and travel.

The Johnsons' personalized portal is more than a convenience; it's a gateway to a vibrant community. The portal suggests local events that align with the family's interests, encouraging them to participate in town centre activities, supporting local businesses, and fostering economic growth.

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Digital and Data Strategy

The family also receives notifications about community-led climate action initiatives, supported by the council and its partners, such as tree-planting days or local recycling programs, making it easy for them to contribute to the climate emergency response. The portal's journey planner, which draws upon open data captured by the council, helps them minimize their carbon footprint by suggesting the most eco-friendly routes and modes of transport.

The family are also farmers and have access to the latest technology and insight such as predictive insights for crop selection, irrigation scheduling, and soil management, through the council's relationship with Hartpury University's Agri Tech Centre.

George - An Older Resident

For George, technology has become a lifeline to the world around him. The smart technology he has in his home helps to keep him safe, warm and connected, and has significantly reduced his carbon footprint and energy bills - as well as providing a small additional income with unused energy sold back to the grid.

He accesses the council's AI-driven platforms which provide him with safe access to local news, service updates, and community resources, and suggest local groups and activities where George can meet peers, reducing his sense of isolation and improving his well-being.

George's digital interface also connects him with local volunteer opportunities, enabling him to share his skills and experience with others. This not only helps George feel valued and connected but also allows him to contribute to the community's well-being.
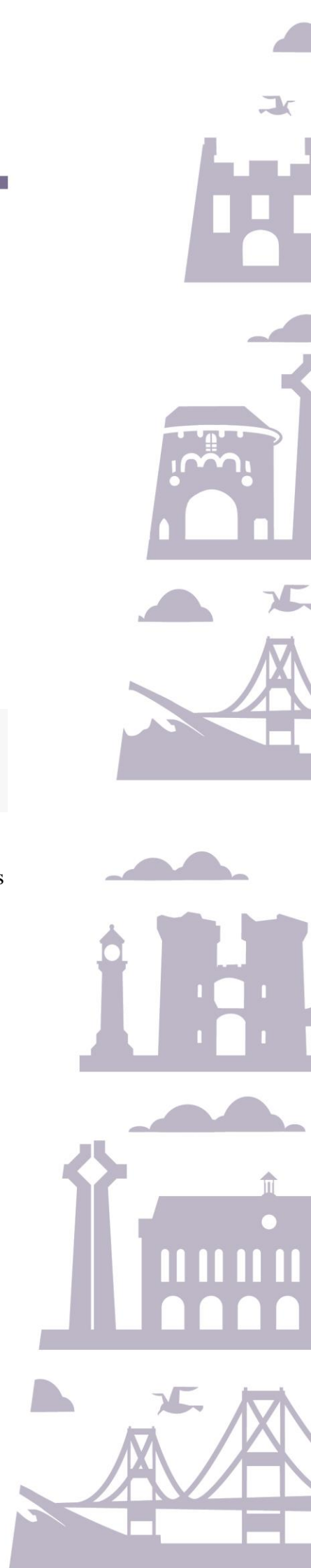
Digital and Data Strategy

Implementation and Governance

The implementation and monitoring of the strategy will be overseen by the Digital, Data and Technology Board, which will include representatives from the Digital Design and Innovation team, the Performance and Data Insight team, the Information Security and Governance team, the Shared Resource Service, and other relevant service areas. The board will report to the Strategic Leadership Team and the Cabinet on the progress and outcomes of the strategy.

The terms of reference of the Board will be underpinned by the need to ensure that the strategic aims and outcomes are being met, with capacity and capability prioritised and redirected as needed to ensure that impact is optimised.

The strategy will be supported by a detailed delivery plan, which will include the timelines, resources, responsibilities, and indicators for each action. The initial delivery plan is shown in appendix 2. Milestones and targets will be developed and set through the initial phase of delivery of the strategy .The plan will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the Council and its stakeholders. The strategy will also be aligned with the service business plans and the performance management framework of the Council.

The strategy will be subject to regular evaluation and feedback, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, to assess its effectiveness, impact, and value. The evaluation will also identify the challenges, risks, and opportunities for improvement and learning. The results of the evaluation will be communicated to the staff, residents, and partners, and will inform the continuous improvement of the strategy.

Digital and Data Strategy

Appendix 1: SWOT Analysis

Digital

Strengths

An effective Digital Design and Innovation Team is in place providing digital leadership and support across the organisation.

We have a number of approved digital solutions available to us to help drive productivity and operational efficiency.

There is an established network of Digital Champions across the organisation.

We have strong partnership arrangements in place with both the SRS and our neighbouring Local Authorities, and play an active role in the WLGA Digital Advisory Group.

There are strong Information Security, Data Protection and Information Governance arrangements, policies and procedures in place.

We understand how digital can transform the way we operate and how it can contribute towards the delivery of our Community and Corporate Plan and the financial challenges we face.

There is an appetite for digital amongst our residents:
- During 2023/24 our website had 2.7m web views.
- There is 92% Superfast (>=30Mbps) and 71% Ultrafast (>100Mbps) broadband coverage across the county.

Weaknesses

We don't always take an organisational and collaborative view on the prioritisation of our digital activity.

There is some understanding of user-centred design principles, but it is not fully embedded across our organisation.

Our ambition can sometimes exceed our capacity to deliver.

We don't always think "digital first" and have many manual, time consuming and expensive processes in place.

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Digital and Data Strategy

Digital continued...

Opportunities

Upskilling and empowering our staff will enable us to get the most out of the tools available to us.

The successful adoption of digital ways of working will improve our operational efficiency, acting as a key enabler in tackling the financial challenges we face.

We have an opportunity to do more in collaboration with our local authority partners and the SRS, recognising we are often working on similar challenges, and we can potentially achieve more through closer working on aligned priorities.

Automation and AI technology can support our staff to work differently, focus on value added tasks and deliver better outcomes for our residents.

Ensuring digital tasks and projects are prioritised appropriately will ensure our resources are focused on the areas that will have the most impact for us and our residents.

Threats

Opportunities to do more with the digital tools available may be missed if services bypass agreed processes and support.

If we don't fully understand and/or communicate effectively the benefits and capabilities of things like Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things, we may be unable to take full advantage of them.

Our customer journeys can be fragmented meaning customers may not always trust our digital services.

Digital and Data Strategy

Where we are now: **Data**

Strengths

We have the ambition to develop our use of data and have developed products that have improved how we present and visualise data.

Developed data dashboards and established GIS web maps provide a platform to share data and provide insight into our services and county.

We have some experience of processing data along with skills in extracting, transforming and loading data,

There are strong data protection and security policies in place for data and ongoing awareness raising.

Weaknesses

There is variability in the data knowledge and skills across service areas which impacts our overall ability to maximise the value of data we hold.

We are a data rich organisation, there are a wide range of arrangements to manage data, we need to further harness and connect data as council wide asset.

We are not bringing together data on service user perspectives in a way that would allow us to be truly evaluative.

Opportunities

Use analytics to generate actionable insights that inform the development and delivery of our objectives and policies.

Use digital, data and technology in our response to rising demand and financial challenges.

To build on existing partnership working and further develop our collaborations to achieve our digital and data aims.

The data space is incredibly exciting and fast paced and we need to continue to learn and evolve as part of this space.

Threats

There is an increasing demand for data analytics, some of which we are unable to achieve due to limited skills and/or capacity.

Data quality limits the accuracy and quality of data insights we can generate.

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Digital and Data Strategy

Appendix 2: Delivery Plan

The delivery plan will remain an iterative document and will evolve over the next three years. The plan will be the subject of ongoing review and prioritisation by the Digital, Data and Technology Board. A strategic lens will continue to be applied to ensure that the capacity and capability is developed and in place to ensure that the strategic aims and outcomes are delivered.

Aim 1: Work with partners to develop and maintain strong foundations to support delivery of the strategic vision

Activity	Expected Outcome	Measures of success	Direction of travel
Undertake digital and data maturity assessments to understand strengths and developmental areas.	Improved digital and data maturity	Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	Increase from baseline
Develop and implement data standards.	Improved data quality	Data Maturity Assessment Scores	Increase from baseline
Develop and implement information governance policies, and procedures.	Improved information governance, security, and compliance.	Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	Increase from baseline
Implement SharePoint document management system	Improved usability of data and information Improved information governance, security, and compliance.	Document management System implementation and feedback	

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Digital and Data Strategy

		Case studies of impact	
Develop automation of data processing, and integration of data flows between systems	Improved operational efficiency	Number of systems integrated for data flow Case studies of impact	10
Make data analysis tools available to staff who require them	Improved data analytics	Data Maturity Assessment Scores	Increase from baseline
Develop a data warehouse/lake for capturing current and historical data for advanced analytics. Informed by a collaborative Single View project pilot.	Improved ability to make data-led decisions	Number of data sets held in data warehouse Case studies of impact	10
Protect sensitive data and critical infrastructure by ensuring cybersecurity and resilience	Maintained security of customer data Legislative compliance	Cyber security audits	Compliance determined by audits
Introduce a meta data catalogue to understand what data is held and where within the organisation	Improved data maturity Identification of opportunities to link data sets	Number of data sets catalogued	50
Establish a Digital, Data and Technology Board to set priorities, ensure delivery and	Prioritisation of effort on high impact tasks/projects Raised awareness of digital and data capability	Digital and Data Maturity	Increase from baseline

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champion the use of digital and data.	Increased adoption of digital and data	Assessment scores	
Review existing data sharing agreements to ensure continued suitability	Legislative compliance Improved access to data and insight Improved ability to make data-led decisions	Case studies of impact	

## Aim 2: Use data analytics and insight, digital advancements and a user-centred focus, to change how the diverse needs of citizens and service users are met

Activity	Expected Outcome	Success Criteria	Direction of travel
Apply digital service standards and a user-centred focus to improve the accessibility of services	Increased channel shift to online/App, self-service Improved operational efficiency Improved customer satisfaction	% of Customers who score 3 or above for Customer Satisfaction Case studies of impact	80%
Monitor and measure user satisfaction, usage, and impact of digital services, to inform continuous improvement	Improved customer experience	% of Customers who score 3 or above for Customer Satisfaction	80%

Digital and Data Strategy

Build data insight products to generate insights to inform delivery of the Council's purpose and objectives in the community and corporate plan	Improved insight for decision making	Case studies of impact	
Develop the use of specialist Geographical Information Systems (GIS), for geospatial analysis	Improved insight for decision making	Case studies of impact	
Create an open data offer.	Increase transparency and availability of data for civic value	Number of open data sets published	20
Promote and evaluate the use of data and analytical plans and projects within the council	Increase awareness, learning and sharing of practice for data projects	Case studies of impact	
Develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution, in collaboration with partners,	Improved customer experience Improved customer service response		
Create customer personas for use in service design activity	Improved customer experience	Number of customer personas created Case studies of impact	10
Identify new data sharing opportunities both internally and externally, with partners, putting in place data sharing agreements where it is appropriate to do so.	Improved access to data and insight Improved ability to make data-led decisions Legislative compliance	Case studies of impact	
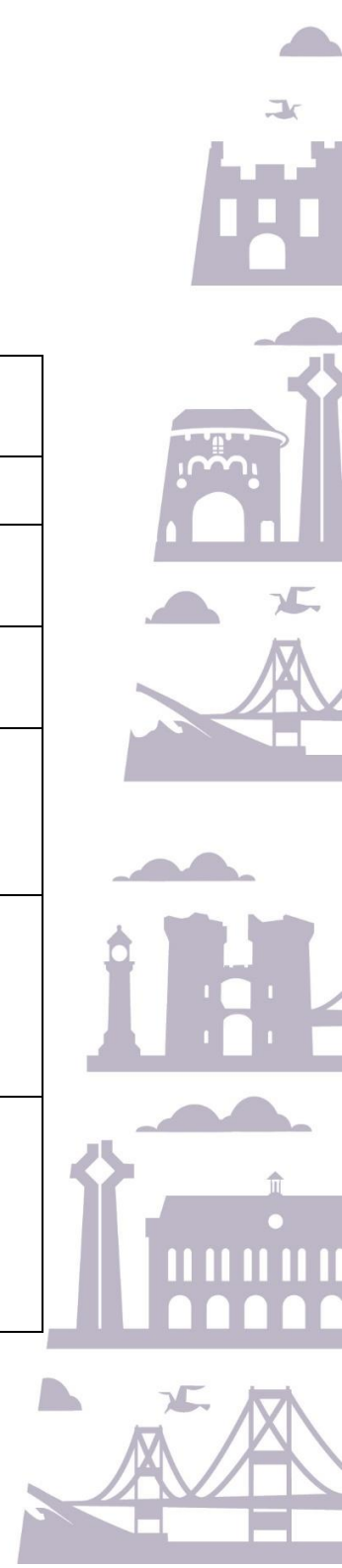
Digital and Data Strategy

Aim 3: Equip and empower our citizens, communities and the organisation to get the most out of digital and data technology

Activity	Expected Outcome	Success Criteria	Direction of tarvel
Undertake an assessment of digital and data skills, knowledge, and capacity	Improved digital and data maturity Improved data quality	Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	Increase from baseline
Plan and deliver targeted digital and data support and training for staff	Improved digital and data literacy Improved data quality	Number of training sessions held. Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	20 Increase from baseline
Embed core skills such as user research, design thinking, and agile methods into culture and practices, and provide the necessary training tools, guidance, and support to staff	Improved digital and data literacy	Number of training sessions held. Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	20 Increase from baseline
Maintain a Council wide digital Champions network and Systems and Data Administrators network	Raised awareness of digital and data capability Increased adoption of digital and data	Number of network sessions facilitated. Digital and Data Maturity Assessment scores	8 Increase from baseline

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Work with partners to understand digital barriers and to provide appropriate digital inclusion activity and support across the county. This will include alignment with the Schools Digital Strategy and supporting children and their families to be digitally enabled.	Increased digital inclusion for residents, children, and their families.	Digital exclusion rates Resident feedback.	
Ensure the website is accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities.	Increased accessibility of information and services to residents	Usage rates of website Resident feedback.	
Develop a Minimum Viable Capability model for digital and data and focus collaborative efforts and investment as necessary to ensure the digital and data ambitions over the next three years can be fulfilled.	Data- and digitally enabled, council	Annual evaluation of delivery of Digital and data strategy Case studies of impact	
Use AI and other emerging technologies to automate tasks and business processes	Improved operational efficiency Improved productivity Improved staff wellbeing and satisfaction	Case studies of impact	

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Name of the Officer completing the evaluation James Vale **Phone no:** (07773) 134730 **E-mail:** james.vale@torfaen.gov.uk	**Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal** **To consider and approve the Council's digital and data strategy and that sets strategic direction for the use of digital and data for the next three years.**
Name of Service area Digital Design and Innovation / Information Technology and Security / Performance and Data Insight	**Date 25/06/24**

Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

| Age | The strategy recognises that some members of communities may be digitally excluded and seeks to address barriers such as skills, confidence, or lack of access. There may be older people within the county who are digitally excluded who may be supported with their digital skills and confidence, and/or access to devices and connectivity through the delivery of the strategy. | There are potential negative aspects for pockets of the community who are digitally disadvantaged due to their skills and abilities as well as network connectivity. This potentially applies disproportionately to people in the older age categories. | Digital services are the lynchpin of any community, and the advantages for people of any age to access council services far outweigh the negative impacts. However, in order to ensure that the protected characteristic of age isn't a disadvantage actions have been incorporated into the delivery plan to address staff training as well as liaising with community focus groups to ensure digital products and offerings are easy to use and navigate as well as supplemented by the more traditional contact methods to the council.

A skilled workforce can assist people in the community to develop the skills to access digital services. This can be through carers r any of the front line staff in the council.
Digital Skills and Workforce Development are key to the success of this strategy as are the transfer of those skills into the community by MCC staff.

The Digital Design and Innovation team have links with third sector organisations and other wider government organisations to ensure that digital skills gaps in this area are considered and addressed.

One of the personas in the digital strategy describes the benefits to the older residents of Monmouthshire and how digital services will support his aspitrations. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Disability | The use of data analytics can identify where to:
    1. Re-design services | There is potential that people with disabilities could lack the dexterity and technical skills to use digital services. | Digital services are the lynchpin of any community, and the advantages for people of any age or ability to access |

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	2. Make policy decisions Digital development has a positive impact on accessibility to council services and information, especially where technology can assist with physical, hearing and visual impairment. Assistive tech can help people to live within their own homes and make use of: 1. Wearable devices to detect hazards 2. Alarms and smart voice devices		council services far outweigh the negative impacts. However, in order to ensure that the Council is able to ensure the protected characteristic of disability isn't a disadvantage it has incorporated actions into the delivery plan to address accessibility within digital applications and services e.g. the council website and forms design. The strategy has incorporated the need for all employees to develop digital skills that can be passed on into the wider community by front line staff.
Gender reassignment	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None
Marriage or civil partnership	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None
Pregnancy or maternity	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Race	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None
Religion or Belief	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None
Sex	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None
Sexual Orientation	This strategy is not expected to have a substantial positive or negative impact on this characteristic other than in the collection of information and data analytics to inform service design and policy making.	None	None

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

| Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice | This proposal takes into consideration that people may be unable to access council services due to financial or physical barriers e.g. travel costs, no available transport etc.

Online services are far cheaper and flexible to use at any time of the day or night for people who work outside of normal office hours.

The proposals are designed to ensure that education services (both adult and children) deliver digital skills and abilities to benefit future employment opportunities.

Data analytics will enable us to identify members of the community suffering socio economic challenge and target these groups when considering policy changes or service re-design. | The financial cost of connectivity (broadband and electronic devices) can be a deterrent to accessing digital services. | Public buildings in town centres will contain access to digital council services.

Access to digital devices and skills will be made available in the Council's community hubs

Digital services will be designed to operate off mobile devices

Digital services won't entirely replace traditional service delivery for those people who are at soio-economic disadvantage |

3. **Policy making and the Welsh language.**

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	This proposal will have a positive effect on the Welsh Language with the use of digital translations services and electronic meeting transcripts	None	Positive impacts can be improved by liaising with suppliers of tech applications to incorporate the Welsh Language during procurement and specification building.
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Digital services can assist with Welsh language translation and transcription as well as apps to teach the Welsh Language to the wider workforce	None	Not Applicable
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	When advertising services you must promote the fact that people can deal with the council in Welsh by phone,email, twitter, facebook, letters, forms, website transactions etc	None	Not applicable

4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: 1. Using automation to replace manual and resource intensive processes 2. Providing 24 hour information services for businesses and communities 3. Developing digital skills within the workforce, schools and communities 4. Enabling people to find employment using digital apps 5. Enabling businesses to interact online with government agencies	
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: 1. Reducing travel and the carbon emissions 2. Reducing print consumables and paper 3. Providing access to electronic information and forms at the touch of a button	
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	The effective use of technology such as IoT can provide insight into things like air quality, which can be used to inform decision making.	
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: 1. Providing businesses and communities with information 2. Ensuring the safety of personal information for vulnerable residents	

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	3. Using data analytics to discover areas of social deprivation and crime and target resources and services accordingly	
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: 1. Considering the global impact of climate change with local digital solutions to reduce carbon emissions 2. Using automation to take the drudgery out of work and make the best use of valuable people and financial resources 3. Using online digital teaching and learning resources in schools and community education services to enable people to learn and grow	
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: Providing digital Welsh Language translation and transcription services to the wider workforce	
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	This digital strategy contributes towards this goal by: Providing digital access to services that residents can access at any time of day or night	

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle		Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Long Term	Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future	Council services cannot be provided without the use of technology. Digital services are already embedded within MCC through the 2 previous digital strategies, bringing us a robust technology and system infrastructure. The short term needs being met through operational business planning. This strategy builds on the success of previous ones to cover a 3 year period from 2024 to 2027. It now incorporates the use of information and data to inform service delivery options to communities. The strategy describes how it will achieve future digital service delivery in the longer term through technological advances in automation and AI.	None
Collaboration	Working together with other partners to deliver objectives	This Digital Strategy was developed in collaboration with the SRS, the shared service providing technology infrastructure in partnership with Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Gwent Police. All of these partners work in collaboration under a robust governance structure to deliver common digital objectives. In addition to the SRS partner organisations the Council works in collaboration with Welsh Government, the WLGA and other digital networks and organisations throughout the country.	None
Involvement	Involving those with an interest and seeking their views	The strategy was developed alongside the workforce, the SRS and its partners. It is one of a number of linked enabling strategies that will contribute to the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan. The enabling strategies will have complimentary activities and interdependencies	None

Sustainable Development Principle		Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Prevention	Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	Data analytics can provide the information needed to solve problems and target service delivery/resources to priority areas	None
Integration	Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies	This digital strategy addresses all of the above Wellbeing goals, and data analytics/automation can integrate and balance the competing impacts	None

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	This proposal will enable the proper digital storage, retention, deletion, safety accuracy and governance of information. This ensures that the personal information held on vulnerable adults and children does not inadvertently get into the wrong hands therefore safeguards them from harm.	There are no negative impacts from this proposal.	
Corporate Parenting	There are no positive or negative impacts for corporate parenting	There are no negative impacts from this proposal.	Not applicable

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

The following evidence was used to develop this proposal:

Business cases, minutes of meetings and discussions at the SRS governance boards
MCC Service business plans
Industry digital and data standards
Government sources e.g. WLGA and other digital networks across the county
Industry best practice guides for digital and data services
The information commission
Cyber security accreditation and best practice
Wales Audit Office best practice and audit recommendations
Business cases for procurement of digital applications and systems
Partner organisatins of Torfaen, Blaeunau Gwent and Gwent Police

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The Council cannot operate as a business without digital data and services

The Council requires robust technology infrastructure
The Council needs to work in full collaboration with the SRS and government partnerships in order to provide digital information and services economically, accurately and safely
The council and corporate plans can't be delivered without digital services
The Council must support staff, businesses and communities with digital services, skills and expertise

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do:	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Deliver the digital strategy via an action plan	In each of the 3 financial years 2024-2027	Peter Davies Matt Gatehouse James Vale Sian Hayward

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
	SLT	18/06/2024	
	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee	11/07/2024	
	Cabinet	17/07/2024	

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Performance & Overview Scrutiny 11th July 2024

Note: the following minutes focus on the challenge from members – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting is at
Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 11th July 2024 (youtube.com)

Attendees:

Councillors: Rachel Buckler (Vice-Chair), Ben Callard (Cabinet Member), Alistair Neill (Chair), John Crook, Meirion Howells, Jane Lucas (observing), Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Laura Wright.

Officers: Jonathon Davies, Peter Davies, Hazel Ilett, Richard Jones, Robert McGowan, Nia Roberts, James Vale, Pennie Walker.

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Fookes and Councillor Bond, with no substitutes. The Chair commented that it would be helpful if any changes to membership of the committee could be formalised to ensure a full complement.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Digital and Data Strategy – Pre-decision Scrutiny ahead of Cabinet on 17th July 2024

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Peter Davies, James Vale and Richard Jones.

- A Member queried how the digital strategy aligns with the financial strategy and other enabling strategies. The explanation was given that the digital strategy supports the financial strategy by enabling more efficient and effective use of resources, data, and technology, and by creating new opportunities for income generation and service transformation. There was reference to it also aligning with other enabling strategies by providing the tools, skills, and culture to deliver better outcomes for the organization and the community.

- Questions were asked around how the digital strategy addresses the digital divide and ensures digital inclusion for all residents and staff. A further question asked was what difficulties were foreseen in encouraging the workforce to

embrace new technologies and data-driven processes. Training and developing user-friendly and accessible digital solutions were seen as key to achieving this.

- Discussion took place on how the digital strategy will measure and evaluate its impact and success, as well as use data to inform service planning and delivery.

- Members asked how the strategy supports collaboration and service integration with other local authorities and partners, particularly in terms of the extent to which we are working collaboratively with other Local Authorities, to ensure we have a common digital infrastructure should we consider integrated services in the future.

- Questions were also asked about how the digital strategy fosters a data culture and data literacy among staff, partners, and residents.

- Another question asked was in what ways the strategy will ensure a user-centred approach in mind, taking into account the needs and expectations of residents.

- A member suggested there was a need to be careful in making assumptions about whether older people can and do use digital platforms and social media.

- A member also raised the question of whether isolation due to increased use of technology had been captured in the Integrated Impact Assessment.

- Reference was made to the presentation of the Financial Strategy in the previous agenda item that had discussed the increased use of artificial intelligence and data analytics, a member asking whether the Council would be investing in those skillsets and whether it has the financial capacity to do so, and whether there would be scope for additional borrowing if required.

- Another member highlighted that residents are not finding the My Mon app user-friendly. Also, if the app retains resident's protected data, do we use this data to contact them about consultations on service change, as residents often ask how they are supposed to know about upcoming consultations, unless they proactively seek this information. It seems like a lost opportunity to consult with residents.

- A query was made around how to ensure that the data officers use is up to date.

All questions were responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers and the Committee moved the report and its recommendations, drawing the following conclusions.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to officers and the Cabinet Member for bringing the Digital Strategy to the Committee who were supportive of its direction and would like to highlight the following points:

- It's clear from the report that this isn't simply about the Council collecting data, but also about making it easier for residents to access our services. We anticipate that if digital access methods become easier, demand for these may increase, so this needs to be modelled to ensure we have factored increased demand and that there is sufficient resource in the community hubs to deliver this.

- As councillors, we have a role to play in bridging the gap between the Council and residents and that may involve explanation and assistance, but customer engagement has been referred to in our discussions and that's encouraging.

- Members have also expressed that they would benefit from further training on digital platforms, having been in their roles for some time, so we will pass on the request for further member training on digital platforms to the Democratic Services Committee **(Action: Scrutiny Team).**

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