Public Document Pack

monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Notice of Meeting

Governance and Audit Committee

**Thursday, 5th September, 2024 at 2.00 pm,
County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA and remote attendance**

Please note that a 30 minute pre-meeting will take place at 1.30pm for Committee Members and Audit Officers

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	**Apologies for Absence**	
2.	**Declarations of Interest**	
3.	**Public Open Forum**	

Governance and Audit Committee Public Open Forum Guidance

Our Governance and Audit Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council website

If you would like to share your thoughts on any matters being discussed by Governance and Audit Committee, you may attend the meeting in person (or join remotely via Microsoft Teams), or submit written representations (via Microsoft Word, maximum of 500 words).

The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting. All representations received will be made available to the committee members prior to the meeting.

The amount of time afforded to each member of the public to speak is at the Committee Chair's discretion. We ask that contributions are no longer than 4 minutes.

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

If you would like to suggest future topics for consideration by Governance and Audit Committee, please do so by emailing GACRegistertoSpeak@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Andrew Blackmore
Colin Prosser
Martin Veale
Rhodri Guest

County Councillor Sara Burch	*Cantref;*	*Labour and Co-Operative Party*
County Councillor John Crook	*Magor East with Undy;*	*Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru*
County Councillor Tony Easson	*Dewstow;*	*Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru*
County Councillor David Jones	*Crucorney;*	*Independent Group*
County Councillor Malcolm Lane	*Mardy;*	*Welsh Conservative Party*
County Councillor Phil Murphy	*Caerwent;*	*Welsh Conservative Party*
County Councillor Peter Strong	*Rogiet;*	*Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru*
County Councillor Ann Webb	*St Arvans;*	*Welsh Conservative Party*

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports
A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

Watch this meeting online
This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

Welsh Language
The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with 5 days notice prior to the meeting should you wish to speak in Welsh so we can accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

- to become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

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

Our Values

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

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

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

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

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

Monmouthshire Governance & Audit Committee Question/Consideration Guide

Role of the Pre-meeting
1.   Why is the Committee considering this agenda item? (relevance and materiality) 2.   What is the Committee's role and what outcome do Members want to achieve? 3.   Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this? 4.   What are the confidential views of the auditors on relevant matters? - Discuss members' views/ key concerns with the papers and agree priorities
Potential Questions/Considerations for the Meeting

Internal Audit (IA)	External Audit (EA)
1. What is the IA functional model and is it fit for purpose?	1. Is the EA team (financial and performance) credible?
2. Does IA have sufficient authority and influence across the Authority?	2. Are we confident over the arrangements for developing the EA annual work plan/ timetable and is it aligned to our understanding of key risks?
3. Is IA suitably resourced and empowered? Is the annual IA plan appropriate? On what do we make this judgement?	3. Do Chief/ senior officers engage appropriately with EA? How is this demonstrated?
4. Do Chief Officers demonstrably accept and champion the role of IA? How do they do this?	4. Is there a constructive relationship between IA, EA (and other inspectorates)? How is this evidenced?
5. Are IA findings acted upon energetically by Officers? How is this demonstrated? Do we effectively challenge and hold officers to account for implementing IA findings?	5. Have relevant officers demonstrably considered the results/ conclusions of EA national and specific reports?
6. How can we be confident that the internal control environment remains appropriate?	6. Do we have good visibility over emerging issues identified by EA?
7. Do we have confidence in overall IA effectiveness? On what do we base this?	7. In respect of ISA260 and equivalent EA financial reports, do officers clearly demonstrate understanding of issues raised and have a credible plan to resolve issues for next financial year?
8. Is the annual/ periodic IA opinion plausible?	8. Does EA have confidence in MCC's Officers and governance arrangements?
9. Do we have sufficient visibility over the work, output and effectiveness of allied IA teams, e.g. TCBC?	
Governance	_Budgeting/ Financial Risk/ Reserves_
1. Is there a codified and cohesive description of MCC's overall governance arrangements? Is it fit for purpose?	1. Is there a clearly defined, governed and checkpointed process and timetable for developing the Authority's budget?
2. Is there clarity over the governance of the various oversight and scrutiny arrangements for (and effectiveness	2. Is there an appropriate suite of financial risk related policies? Are they suitable?
	3. Are the key financial/ operational

of) material partnerships and collaborations?

3. Is there clarity over the apportionment of responsibilities and decision making authorities?

4. How are governance/ control breaches identified and reported?

5. Are we confident that the arrangements for material expenditure (tendering, contracting and capital procurement) are robust?

6. Do we have confidence in whistleblowing (and similar arrangements) for raising concerns?

Corporate Risks

1. Have key accountabilities for the identification, assessment, monitoring and management of risks been adequately defined and implemented?

2. Has the approach to risk management been designed and implemented effectively?

3. How can the Committee be confident that the Corporate Risk Register captures all significant risks facing the Authority?

4. Are the risk mitigation action plans credible and sufficient so as to achieve the desired outcomes?

assumptions understood, credible, documented and stress tested?

4. Does the Finance function have suitable capabilities and capacity to manage financial risk/ meet statutory requirements and obligations to the Council?

5. Do we have confidence that the budgetary process is likely to produce a plausible budget/ MTFP?

6. Are there suitable arrangements in place to manage and report on overall financial performance?

Financial Statements/ Misstatement Risk

1. Is there a shared understanding as to the purpose of the Committee in reviewing draft financial statements?
    a. Are the Notes to the Accounts reasonable?
    b. Are the narrative reports, including the Annual Governance Statement reasonable and accord with the committee's view?

2. Are we comfortable with EA's work and audit opinion?

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations/ escalate matters to the executive, council, relevant scrutiny committee?

Do we need to follow up? If so, how?

Governance and Audit Committee Action List
31st July 2024

Action	Subject/ Meeting	Officer	Outcome	Due date	Action Status	Recommended to close Action Yes/No
1	McCloud Judgement (public service pensions age discrimination cases)	Jon Davies	Speak to our administrators (TCBC) re: an update due in respect of an actuarial assessment anticipated within the next 12 months.	Sept 2024	OPEN	No

This page is intentionally left blank

SUBJECT:	**Corporate Risk Control Arrangements**
MEETING:	**Governance and Audit Committee**
DATE:	**5th September 2024**
DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All	

1.   PURPOSE:

1.1   To provide members with an overview of the arrangements and the effectiveness of these for the corporate risk control policies aligned with the strategic risk management policy.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1   That the committee use the assessment to seek assurance about the effectiveness of the corporate risk control policies.

2.2   That the committee identifies and agrees if it requires further assurance or follow-up of progress on any of the arrangements, in consideration of the suggested options in point 3.5.

3.   KEY ISSUES:

3.1   Governance & Audit Committee requested consideration be given to which corporate risk control policies (extending beyond IT and data protection) that the Committee should periodically review. These were identified as part of the development of the revised strategic risk management policy as, Health and Safety, Emergency Planning, Insurance, Finance, Internal Audit, Information Governance & Cyber Security. It was subsequently agreed that an overview of the arrangements and assessment of their effectiveness be provided to Governance & Audit Committee

3.2   The lead officer(s) have completed an assessment of the effectiveness for each risk control arrangements as detailed in appendix 1. This follows the same process that is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's strategic risk management arrangements, which is regularly reported to the committee.

3.3   The assessment has been structured under the three elements of the councils 'risk management approach' as set out in the strategic risk management policy. These are arrangements in place to identify risks, arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk and arrangements in place to monitor and report risk. The assessment has also identified actions to develop or strengthen the arrangements.

3.4   The assessment of these arrangements is provided to facilitate the committee to seek assurance on their effectiveness. These risk processes have a variety of existing governance arrangements in place, some of which (Finance, Internal Audit and information governance and cyber security) report to the committee in line with its Terms of Reference.

3.5   If the committee determines it requires further assurance or follow-up of progress with developing or strengthening any of the arrangements it has the following broad options. In determining the approach to take consideration will need to be given to optimum use of the committees forward work programme and existing arrangements in place for the respective risk process, in agreement with the lead officer. The broad options are:

- That the committee adds to its forward work programme a report on a specific arrangement if it requires further specific assurance, noting the arrangement already in place as set out in Appendix 1.
- That the committee receives a further update on any arrangement(s) as an additional part of the regular reporting to the committee on the effectiveness of the Council's strategic risk management

arrangements and/or as part of existing reporting arrangement to the committee where this is already in place.

4. REASONS:

4.1 To provide an assessment of corporate risk control policies as integrated arrangements in ensuring the effectiveness of the council's risk strategic risk management arrangements.

5. AUTHORS:

Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Resources

Richard Jones, Performance & Data Insight Manager

Overview of the arrangements and the effectiveness of these for the corporate risk control policies aligned with the Monmouthshire County Council strategic risk management policy

Risk process: Internal Audit	Responsibility: Chief Internal Auditor

Purpose of the arrangement
Internal audit have a responsibility to oversee the risk management process, and may conduct an audit into the effectiveness of the process to ensure the arrangements in place are robust. There is an internal audit plan in place which is driven by risk identification, and by nature, is a risk based approach, identifying possible weaknesses, or risks, within the organisation and reviewing these. These risks, along with possible ways of managing them, would be made aware to the relevant chief officer. Internal audit are also responsible for the anti fraud, corruption and bribery policy.

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
<u>Arrangements in place to identify risks</u> Across the council a model of Enterprise-wide risk management (ERM) is used	ERM provides a structured, consistent and continuous process across the whole organisation for identifying, assessing, deciding on responses to and reporting on opportunities and threats that affect the achievement of its objectives. ERM brings many benefits as a result of its structured, consistent and coordinated approach. Internal Audits core role in relation to ERM is to provide assurance to management and to the Governance & Audit Committee on the effectiveness of risk management. When Internal Audit extends its activities beyond their core role, safeguards are applied, including treating the engagements as consulting services and, therefore, applying all relevant standards. In this way, Internal Audit will protect its independence and the objectivity of its assurance services. Activities of the Internal Audit team are determined by the Internal Audit Charter. Some activities of the team are completed with safeguards put in place (example - CPR Exemption process). Internal Audit does not set the risk appetite for the organisation, take decisions on risk or have accountability for risk management.	Internal Audit Review of Risk Management Arrangements (2023/24). Planned Internal Audit Review of Service Business Planning (2024/25).
<u>Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk</u> A strategic Internal Audit Plan is in place which covers a 5 year period. An Annual Internal Audit Plan is developed from the basis of the International Professional	The strategic Internal Audit Plan encapsulates the 'Audit Universe' for the Council attempting to cover all areas of the organisation over the period. Due to the number of different operations of the council, limited resources within the Internal Audit team, emerging priorities and emerging risks it is not possible to review each area over a 5 year period. Hence the need for a risk based Annual Audit Plan. The internal audit plan is a process to identify, assess, manage and control potential events or situations to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the organisation's objectives.	Strategic Audit Plan held on Audit Planning files for each year, reviewing the entire audit universe. Updated on an annual basis. External Quality Assessment Completed for the Internal Audit Team (March 2024) – outcome

Practices Framework and the 'Developing a Risk-based Internal Audit Plan' Practice Guidance from the Institute of Internal Auditors. A recently agreed Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy informs fraud Identification and response arrangements.	In developing the Internal Audit plan cumulative knowledge of the organisation is used by the Chief Internal Auditor and discussions held with the wider Internal Audit team to identify any priorities or concerns which may be evident from existing audit work or advice given. The Audit Plan is discussed and presented to each service area's Directorate Management Team (DMT) before being discussed at a meeting of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). The Audit plan is then presented to the Governance & Audit Committee for approval. The Audit Plan is continually under review. In the planning stage time is allocated for Reactive work. This could come in the form of Special Investigations (following allegations of theft, fraud etc.) or unplanned audit jobs (following concerns raised by management / audit team members). All adjustments to the audit plan are agreed by the Chief Internal Auditor following discussion with the Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Officer (Resources) and the Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee. Although Fraud identification, response and risk is monitored by the Internal Audit team it is acknowledged that there is room for improvement. As part of a new structure model for Internal Audit endorsed by the Governance & Audit Committee in April 2024, a dedicated Fraud Officer was added to the structure and recruitment for this role will take place in September 2024. Currently the Internal Audit team co-ordinate the response to the National Fraud Initiative, a statutory exercise completed on behalf of the Cabinet Office. The Internal Audit team also respond to allegations of theft, loss, fraud and bribery across the organisation and investigate where necessary.	'Generally Conforms' (highest grading). Approved 2024/25 Audit Plan. The audit plan is under continual review by the Chief Internal Auditor to adjust for any emerging priorities. Reactive (unplanned) work conducted through the year. Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy approved by Cabinet in January 2024. Completion of National Fraud Initiative reporting. April 2024 Governance & Audit Committee report for new Internal Audit structure reviewing fraud response.
Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk. Internal Audit Reporting standards, arrangements and follow up process.	The Chief Internal Auditor has a responsibility to report when the organisation is not managing risks properly to those people who can take action. In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Monmouthshire County Council Internal Audit Charter, the Chief Internal Auditor has a direct reporting link to the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee to discuss any areas of risk which in their opinion is not being addressed by management. Relevant risk information is captured and communicated in a timely manner across the organisation, enabling staff, management and the Governance & Audit Committee to carry out their responsibilities. Although internal audit has a clear role in providing assurance on risks, it is managers who are responsible for managing risks. Where a	Internal Audit reporting template and opinions Regular (quarterly) reporting into Governance & Audit Committee of reports issued along with opinions and key findings for unfavourable reviews.

	report has been issued, management are responsible for providing a management action, implementation date and responsible officer to address any critical or significant weaknesses raised within the report. All audit reports and opinions issued are reported to the Governance & Audit Committee. The Chief Internal Auditor reports in his own name and has the ability to recommend to Committee to 'Call In' members of the Councils management team if report findings are not accepted which present in their opinion undue risk to the Council. This process has not needed to be enacted during the previous 12 months (and longer). All audit reports are followed-up. The process differs depending on the overall report opinion. Where a positive opinion (Substantial / Reasonable Assurance) has been issued, all follow-ups are conducted on an annual basis via a management self-assessment which is reviewed by the Internal Audit team. For unfavourable opinions (Limited / No Assurance) a formal follow-up audit review is completed where a full review will be completed of the area in question and a new opinion issued. An annual report is presented to the Governance & Audit Committee regarding the follow-up process and the actions which management have taken to address the recommendations raised within Internal Audit Reports. At the last report, April 2024, 84% of recommendations issued had been fully or partially implemented by management. A process also exists where if repeated unfavourable opinions are issued for the same area, that this is reported to the Governance & Audit Committee along with a recommendation from the Chief Internal Auditor to 'Call In' the operational manager, Head of Service and Chief Officer to a meeting to discuss the reasons why this has been the case and to gain assurance that the risk management deficiencies will be addressed. Work is on-going with the council's Digital Team and now SRS to develop an App for real time management monitoring of the implementation of recommendations / management actions. The development of the new follow-up app has been delayed.	The status of the follow-up reviews and outcomes reports to Governance & Audit Committee.
Actions planned Implementation of Follow-up of Recommendations / Agreed Management Actions App. Recruitment to Fraud Officer role.		

Increased Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery training across the organisation covering all employees and members.

Continue to refine audit planning processes and review of the 'Audit Universe' to ensure that all areas of the Council are covered as part of the strategic plan.

Risk process: Emergency Planning	Responsibility: Emergency Planning Manager

Purpose of the arrangement

The Council's aim and intention is to anticipate and manage risks proactively rather than deal with the consequences of actual occurrences. Some risks involving key services are best managed through the Monmouthshire County Council Emergency Management Plan; there is a live risk register that is reviewed regularly that captures risks that may require an urgent response. The emergency planning manager is also responsible for ensuring services have Business Continuity Plans or procedures in place outlining arrangements to mitigate the impact and consequences of any risks likely to have a serious or major impact on service delivery or on communities in general.

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
<u>Arrangements in place to identify risks</u> The arrangements for external risks in relation to emergency planning / civil contingencies are monitored and addressed through tiered risk arrangements. These tiered arrangements are in place at a UK level, Pan Wales level, Local footprint covered by the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (The council is a partner in the forum), then considered from a Monmouthshire County Council perspective.	The process adopted is an on-going iterative approach which identifies and responds to risks. The arrangements consider and approach risks/threats from both a UK level down dissemination and local escalation back up process. This facilitates all partners to consider the risk/threat and ensure collaboratively there is an agreed and proportional measure of control in place. The majority of risks identified require the establishment of formal multi-agency response structures being established. Officers attending and representing their organisation within these structures need to be aware of their role and be given experience in managing such incidents. For the Council Chief Officers have an opportunity to attend specific training annually and currently the majority of the council's senior leadership team are appropriately trained at a strategic response level. The risk process has identified at a tactical level there is shortage of trained staff, due to staff turnover and changes of role, to represent the council at the joint agency tactical response level. To address this service area nominations have been sought for tactical response officers. The nominated officers will be provided training in the role, supported further by a specific joint agency training/exercise opportunity to put into practise the skills required.	UK National Risk Register Gwent Community Risk Register Welsh Government risk register Monmouthshire County Council Emergency planning service business plan
<u>Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk</u>.	This 'Risk Process' applied follows and aligns to the UK and Pan Wales arrangements. Risk is considered and weighted by the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Risk Group and forms the basis of both an LRF work programme and specific Monmouthshire	UK National Risk Register Gwent Community Risk Register

	County Council work programme for the treatment and mitigation of the risks identified.	Welsh Government risk register
Risk registers are in place at each of the tiered arrangements, at a UK level, Pan Wales level and Local footprint covered by the Gwent Local Resilience Forum. These are also considered from a Monmouthshire County Council perspective. Service areas in the Council have Business Continuity Plans or procedures in place. MCC Emergency Management Plan – detailing MCC emergency response arrangements.	The approach uses the expertise and data of subject matter experts from a UK perspective with a robust and thorough methodology in place. The arrangements in place include: • At a UK level, there is a UK National Risk Register in place, the current version can be found here. • Following work carried out at the Pan Wales level and subsequent Gwent LRF level, a Gwent Community risk register is in place. This over-arching risk review produces a public facing Gwent Community Risk Register – which can be found here. The community risk register outlines how each of the risk categories are being mitigated locally – together with how the community can also take appropriate action. • The first public version of a Welsh Government public facing Risk Register is anticipated being published later this year. Service areas in the Council have Business Continuity Plans or procedures in place outlining arrangements to mitigate the impact and consequences of any risks likely to have a serious or major impact on service delivery or on communities in general. The council also has Emergency Management Response arrangements in place and hazard specific response arrangements to respond to major incidents and their consequences – which are aligned directly to the risks identified. There is a continued need to ensure plans are up to date with a process in place facilitated by the Council's emergency planning team to ensure these are reviewed, awareness of arrangements shared with appropriate staff and training and exercising carried out. This planning, training and exercise cycle is a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act and based on the outcomes of the risk management process.	Monmouthshire County Council Emergency planning service business plan Service Business Continuity Plans Emergency Management Plan
Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk. The risk registers in place at each of the tiered arrangements, at a UK level, Pan Wales level and Local footprint covered by the	The UK government formally review the risk register every 3 years. This is mirrored by Welsh Government who undertake in depth assessments. Any significant changes can and are dynamically assessed. The Gwent LRF will review the risk register annually based on outputs and progress from the agreed work programmes which contribute to risk treatment. The risks will change based on the local mitigations that have been put in place through the work	UK National Risk Register Gwent Community Risk Register Welsh Government risk register

Gwent Local Resilience have monitoring and reporting arrangements in place.	programme. For example, mitigations will include what responses have been exercised, what training has been delivered, what plans have been reviewed or what new plans have been identified that need to be introduced. This provides a diligent and focused approach to managing the risks. There is ongoing assessment and delivery of the Councils Emergency Planning Business Plan / Work Programme to ensure alignment and organisational risks in relation to civil contingency risks/threats are being managed in Monmouthshire.	Monmouthshire County Council Emergency planning service business plan

Actions planned
To identify and train further tactical responses officers in the Council. To ensure services business continuity plans are up to date, particularly service areas assessed as more critical for business continuity, together with the council's Emergency Management Plan and related specific response plans. There is continued ongoing assessments of risk through these arrangements, locally this is led via the Gwent Local Resilience Forum Risk Group, which the council is a partner in.

Risk process: Finance	**Responsibility:** Head of Finance

Purpose of the arrangement	
The council has set its Financial Procedure Rules which must be adhered to within all council activities. Section 4 of the Financial Procedure Rules document outlines the responsibilities of the Head of Finance in relation to risk management. In relation to the strategic risks and whole authority risks listed in the Strategic Risk Register, the Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring that any financial implications are fed into the budget planning process.	

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
Arrangements in place to identify risks Financial Procedure Rules The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Medium Term-Financial Strategy (MTFS) Procedures to identify fraudulent activity Capital Strategy	The Financial Procedure Rules govern the day to day operation of the Authority's financial administration. They are introduced both to protect the interests of the Authority, and all those who are involved with financial administration. Risk management is an integral part of the financial procedure rules and are embedded into the wide ranging arrangements in place to identify, manage and mitigate financial risk. These extend to arrangements that include internal control, internal and external audit, preventing fraud and corruption, security of assets and treasury management. Security of assets specifically extends to arrangements around land and buildings, vehicles, furniture and equipment, ICT, stocks and stores, cash, income and clients' private property and monies. All of which have their own separate arrangements in place.	Financial Procedure Rules The Medium-Term Financial Plan and Medium Term-Financial Strategy. Internal audit reviews, system access controls and workflows, bank reconciliations, financial procedures rules Capital Strategy

	The recently agreed Medium Term-Financial Strategy includes an assessment of key financial risks and aligns with the council's strategic risk management policy and guidance. There will be occasions in delivering the financial strategy that Council may be willing to accept a degree of risk in order for a benefit to be gained, for example when introducing new opportunities or adopting innovative approaches. Where circumstances involve exposure to risks, they will be assessed in line with the Council's risk appetite statement. The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is updated and formally reported every 6 months. This ensures key financial risks are modelled and that the link is maintained to meeting the well-being objectives and wider ambition of the Council set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. The Capital strategy provides a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to service provision along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. Arrangements are embedded within the Council's arrangements for financial management and budgetary control Finance teams work with Internal Audit, Digital and our bank provider to ensure our systems are up to date, awareness is high across the council and early reporting mechanisms are in place.	
Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk. Medium Term-Financial Plan risk register Accounting records are maintained Budget monitoring controls Use of reserves controls	The Council maintains a register of all significant risks that bear down on the Council's finances. The register is maintained as part of updates to the medium-term financial plan. Mitigating action is factored into budgetary planning and where possible. High and medium level strategic financial risks are also escalated to the strategic risk register. Finance staff and budget holders operate within the required accounting standards and timetables. All the Authority's transactions, material commitments and contracts and other essential accounting information are recorded completely, accurately and on a timely basis. Procedures are in place to enable accounting records to be reconstituted in the event of systems failure. Reconciliation procedures are carried out to ensure transactions are correctly recorded. Prime documents are retained in accordance with legislative and other requirements.	Statement of accounts, internal audit, external audit, reconciliation documents. Central records of reserve usage held Sundry Debtors Policy and the Debtors Policy for Social Care & Health

Income and debt management arrangements Security of assets Treasury management controls	Budget monitoring control arrangements are in place with specific responsibilities and approval processes in place. A monitoring process is in place to review the effectiveness and operation of budget preparation, performance against budget, and to ensure that any corrective action is taken to respond to risk. Reserves are maintained in accordance with the relevant codes of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom and agreed accounting policies. For each reserve established, the purpose, usage and basis of transactions is clearly identified. Arrangements for the collection of all income due to the Authority is governed by the Council's Sundry Debtors Policy and the Debtors Policy for Social Care & Health. Senior and responsible officers are regularly provided with information on aged debts and are supported by debt recovery arrangements in place. An asset register is maintained for the Authority - assets are recorded when they are acquired by the Authority and this record is updated as changes occur with respect to the location and condition of the asset. All staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the Authority's assets and information, including the requirements of the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and software copyright legislation. Assets for disposal are identified and disposed of at the most appropriate time, and only when it is in the best interests of the Authority, and best price is obtained, bearing in mind other factors, such as environmental issues. Arrangements are in place that guide the disposal of assets based on different values. Guidance is provided to service areas on the maintenance of stock and stores. A register of write off of stock and stores in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations within the Constitution. Appropriate accounting entries are made in relation to stock balances and write offs. Treasury management controls are in place to ensure compliance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice and the Authority's Treasury Management Policy Statement and Strategy. This provides assurances that the Authority's money is properly managed in a way that balances risk with return, but with the overriding consideration being given to the security of the Authority's capital sum.	Maintenance of a register of all properties owned by the Authority To ensure that assets are valued in accordance with the relevant codes of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. Safe custody of all title deeds under arrangements agreed with the Section 151 Officer. Annual Treasury Management Policy Statement and strategy

Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk._	A register of all significant risks to the Council's finances is maintained and reported as part of updates to the medium-term financial plan. The Financial Management board is responsible for maintaining oversight of the budget process and reporting into the Strategic Leadership as required. The boards role includes ensuring the financial risk register is maintained and regularly updated and that suitable mitigations are in place against key financial risks.	Medium term financial plan. Statement of accounts, internal audit, external audit, reconciliation documents.
Medium Term-Financial Plan risk register		
Accounting records are maintained	An annual statement of accounts, in line with regulations and legislation, is produced and reported to Governance & Audit committee and subject to an external audit process.	Reserve usage cabinet reports Annual Treasury Management strategy approved by Council and quarterly updates provided Governance & Audit Committee on in year activity.
Budget monitoring controls		
Use of reserves controls	Reporting arrangements are in place for budget monitoring controls. All Chief Officers and Heads of Service are furnished with periodical statements of receipts and payments and other relevant information required to enable managers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities. In consultation with Chief Officers and Heads of Service, reports are submitted, as determined by the Section 151 Officer to Cabinet and Scrutiny committee. Significant variances from approved budgets are investigated and reported by budget holders regularly. The establishment of reserves and incurring of expenditure from reserves is authorised by Cabinet. The treasury management strategy sets out the Council's longer term borrowing requirement and plans, which is driven mainly by the capital programme requirements and the resulting impact on the revenue budget. The annual strategy is approved by Council and quarterly updates are provided to Governance & Audit Committee on in year activity.	
Actions planned		
Assess any exposure to risk in delivering the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in line with the Council's risk appetite statement		

Risk process: Insurance	Responsibility: Section 151 Officer/Principal Insurances and Risk Management Officer

Purpose of the arrangement

Insurance is a key aspect in risk management processes. Some risks are best managed through involving another party in bearing or sharing the risk, i.e. insurance. Ensuring an effective insurance function of risk management is a key priority and legal requirement for the authority. This involves analysing the types of insurance required to cover off the whole authority using in-house data to establish values of coverage required. This includes but is not limited to property, motor, cyber and liability. A programme of risk reviews at random property sites are also undertaken for insurance purposes

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
Arrangements in place to identify risks Annual insurance cover	An annual assessment of insurance cover is undertaken, and insurance cover is in place at the commencement of the insurance year. Negotiation of claims is undertaken in consultation with other Chief Officers, where necessary. The annual renewal process is in place to ensure all aspects of insurance is covered. This includes the identification of all appropriate employees of the Authority who should be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance. Arrangements are in place to identify and notify the Section 151 Officer (Head of Finance) promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurances. Along with identifying any significant acquisitions or disposals of assets or any alteration to the scope or level of services provided, particularly where the risk of accident, injury, loss or damage is likely to increase.	Insurance policies in place at commencement of insurance year.
Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk Annual insurance cover & schedule of assets covered.	An annual renewal process is in place to ensure all aspects of insurance is covered and insurance policies are in place. This includes on a regular basis, Chief Officers are provided with schedules of assets covered by insurance.	Insurance policies.
Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk Annual insurance cover & schedule of assets covered Annual risk reviews, reports and history.	An annual risk review is undertaken in partnership with our insurers. Action is taken via Insurance and the directorate, as required, to ensure cover is maintained. Risk reports and claims history is produced and reported. For example, quarterly reporting is provided to Transport and Highways and regular reporting for Corporate Health and Safety. Arrangements need to be strengthened for gaining assurance that directorate action is being taken in response to insurance risk reported. Chief Officers are provided with the schedule of assets covered by insurance and must examine the schedules and ensure that the details of those assets are correctly	Risk reports and claims history produced

	recorded and that the scope and level of insurance cover are adequate, and consistent with the Authority's corporate insurance arrangements. Chief officers also provide any information that is needed to manage the council's insurances effectively. This aims to ensure officers are aware of the continuing need to review the perils/risks associated with the insurance profile in order to cover off those known.	

Actions planned

Strengthen arrangements for gaining assurance that directorate action is being taken in response to insurance risk reported.

Risk process: Information Governance & Cyber Security	**Responsibility:** Head of Information Security & Technology

Purpose of the arrangement

The council is extremely aware of the importance of cyber security; we implement a number of measures to ensure the protection and safeguarding of our information, technology and systems.

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
Arrangements in place to identify risks Cyber/information/ICT security policies, and guidance in place	The council has cyber, information and ICT security policies, and guidance in place to support the identification, management and reporting of risks. An established Cyber/Information security team is place on behalf of all SRS partners who effectively 'audit' the SRS and Partner security risks and operations. The team manage and monitor all risks within the communications infrastructure.	Cyber/information/ICT security policies, and guidance
Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk Cyber/Information security operational Risk Registers	Cyber/Information security operational Risk Registers are in place and are monitored every month by the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), Chief Information Security Officer (CIS) and SRS.	Cyber/Information security Risk Registers
Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk SIRO information security board	Information Governance & Cyber Security Risk is reported and monitored through a range of arrangements: An Information Security Board is set up with the SIRO'S of SRS partners	Evidenced by risk registers, audit reports, policy and training documentation, reports to Committee Meetings and Boards and accreditation from external bodies

Monmouthshire Council Information Governance group	A council Information Governance Group meets regularly and facilitates directorate representatives to monitor Information Governance arrangements.	
SRS Governance structures	Digital infrastructure development and projects and cyber and information risks are managed through groups and boards as part of the SRS governance structures.	
Audit and regulation	The council is part of different national cyber and information security networks with associated accreditation for our cyber/information security performance.	
	Scrutiny of the SRS, Cyber security and information governance is reported through the council's Governance and Audit Committee.	
	Information Governance & Cyber Security arrangements and the SRS are subject to Monmouthshire and Torfaen Council internal audits**.**	

Actions planned
No further action identified.

Risk process: Health and Safety	Responsibility: Corporate Health and Safety Manager
Purpose of the arrangement Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of employees and others, such as contractors, visitors and members of the public who may be affected by the Council's activities is a key priority for the organisation. The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for health and safety. The Deputy chief executive is the Strategic Leadership Team lead for health and safety and the council has a designated Corporate Health and Safety manager. The day to day management of health and safety is delegated to Strategic Directors, Headteachers and Senior Managers who are responsible for ensuring all activities within their Directorate/schools are conducted safely, in accordance with legislative requirements and the Council's health and safety risk management policies. Each Directorate has a nominated health and safety lead responsible for coordinating health and safety activities, including establishing and coordinating a Directorate Health and Safety Working Group. They support managers by providing advice and guidance on health and safety matters or signposting them to more specialist advice as necessary. The Council has a corporate health and safety working group with representation from all Directorates that meets quarterly. This group has an action plan and terms of reference.	

Risk arrangement	How effective is the arrangement?	How do we know? (evidence)
Arrangements in place to identify risks A corporate health and safety policy is in place, this sets out roles and responsibilities for health and safety and the identification and management of risks. The corporate policy is supported by a subordinate suite of health and safety policies and guidance covering a range of areas.	A Corporate Health and Safety Policy is in place which sets out the council's general approach to health and safety. It explains how the council, as an employer, will manage health and safety across the organisation. The policy was recently reviewed and revised to ensure it is up to date and more clearly sets out who does what, when and how. The revised version is currently the subject of internal consultation, including with Trade Unions, and it is anticipated it will be signed off in October 2024. The implementation of the revised policy aims to strengthen the roles and responsibilities for Health and Safety and management of related risks. Following sign off, the revised policy will be available to all staff on the Authority's intranet site and managers will be reminded to signpost staff to the policy on induction and during staff meetings. A risk-based approach is being adopted to guide a schedule of review for the Authority's suite of subordinate health and safety policies and guidance, including identifying and developing policies where any gaps are identified.	Corporate health and safety policy and subordinate health and safety policies.
Arrangements in place to respond (treatment) to risk. A corporate health and safety risk register is in place to manage overall risks to the implementation of policies, arrangements, and controls for health and safety. Managers are responsible for Health and Safety risk assessments	A corporate health and safety risk register has recently been developed to identify the significant corporate health and safety risks, assesses risk levels, identify mitigating actions and progress in implementing them. A corporate health and safety service plan will also be produced. The continued use of the updated risk register will need to be embedded within the arrangements to deliver the revised corporate health and safety policy. Managers are responsible for undertaking and documenting risk assessments and implementing effective controls. The need for a more consistent approach to risk assessment across the Authority has been identified, although there are some areas of good practice. The risk assessment policy and guidance will be reviewed this year. The need for a more consistent approach to risk assessment training has been identified and the new learning management system (Thinqi) will be used to host risk assessment e-learning. The process for gaining assurance needs to be further developed so that the council can be confident risks have been identified, assessed and suitable control measures have been established and are being maintained.	Corporate health and safety risk register Health and Safety risk assessments.
Arrangements in place to monitor and report risk.	An annual health and safety report is produced and reported to Strategic Leadership Team and the relevant cabinet member. The report highlights achievements and areas for development as well as priorities for the year ahead. This includes assessing and	Corporate health and safety working group

| Annual Health and safety report

A corporate health and safety working group is in place, who will receive regular updates on the corporate health and safety risk register.

Directorate health and safety working groups. | evaluating progress in mitigating and addressing risks through proactive health and safety work. In addition, Directorate health and safety leads produce annual health and safety reports for their respective Directorates. A suite of health and safety performance indicators are being developed to facilitate more regular reporting of health and safety performance.

The Council's Corporate Health and Safety Group which has representation from all Directorates, the Training Team, Property Services, Insurance and Trade Unions agreed renewed Terms of Reference in 2024 and will monitor progress in delivering the review of subordinate health and safety policies and guidance. The group has also agreed a Health and Safety Action Plan for 2024/25 which is subject to regular review.

The updated corporate health and safety risk register will also be reported to the corporate health and safety working group. The arrangements to monitor and update the register need to be developed in line with the revised corporate health and safety policy. This includes strengthening arrangements to identify and monitor risk in directorate health and safety working groups.

The Health and Safety Executive produce a checklist for leaders to self-assess arrangements in place under the headings Plan, Do, Check, Act. The checklist is being used to assess the Council's health and safety arrangements and inform areas for improvement. | Annual health and safety report |
|---|---|---|
| **Actions planned** | | |
| Sign off and implement the revised corporate health & safety policy
Develop a risk-based schedule of review for the Council's suite of subordinate health and safety policies and guidance
Strengthen arrangements for completing health and safety risk assessments and implementing effective controls
Strengthen arrangements for gaining assurance that health and safety risks are being identified, suitable controls are in place and are being effectively implemented. | | |

monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SUBJECT:	INTERNAL AUDIT
	Progress Report for Quarter 1 (2024/25)

DIRECTORATE: Resources
MEETING: Governance & Audit Committee
DATE: September 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1.   PURPOSE

To consider the adequacy of the internal control environment within the Council based on the outcomes of audit reviews and subsequent opinions issued to the 30th June 2023.

To consider the performance of the Internal Audit Section over the first 3 months of the current financial year.

2.   RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee note the audit opinions issued.

That the Committee note the progress made by the Section towards meeting the 2024/25 Operational Audit Plan and the Section's performance indicators at the 3 month stage of the financial year which are currently ahead of the profiled target.

3.   KEY ISSUES

3.1   Audit work has started in line with the 2024/25 agreed draft audit plan, considered by the Governance & Audit Committee in April 2024.

3.2   This report gives brief details of the work undertaken in the year to date. The report also gives details of the Section's performance indicators for the 3 months to 30th June 2023.

3.3   The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards came into force in April 2013 (updated March 2017) which the Internal Audit team needs to demonstrate compliance with.

3.4   The new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) were issued in January 2024 for implementation by January 2025. They will replace the International Professional Practice Framework, the mandatory elements of which are the basis for the current UK public sector internal auditing standards (the PSIAS). The PSIAS are issued under the

authority of the Relevant Internal Audit Standard Setters (RIASS). The RIASS have agreed to use the new GIAS as the basis for internal auditing for the UK Public Sector and have asked the UK Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards Advisory Board (IASAB) to carry out a review of the new standards with a view to identifying and producing any sector specific interpretations or other material needed to make them suitable for UK public sector use. Consultation is due to begin in September 2024.

The effective date of the new material developed by IASAB will be 1 April 2025. Until then, the existing PSIAS based on the old International Professional Practices Framework will continue to apply.

3.5 The year end opinion for 2024/25 will be based on the audit work undertaken during the year, cumulative audit knowledge from previous years on key financial systems along with any assurance gained from other parties where relevant.

4. REASONS

4.1 Since the start of the financial year, the Internal Audit Section has completed 7 audit jobs to draft stage from its 2024/25 draft Operational Audit Plan; 6 of these being opinion related and are shown in the table at Appendix 1.

4.2 In relation to audit opinion related reports, 6 had been issued in draft by the end of the 1st Quarter;
   1. Flying Start (2023/24)
   2. Youth Offending Service (2023/24)
   3. Car Parks
   4. Homelessness Assessment & Prevention
   5. Job Evaluation / Equal Pay

4.3 In addition to the list above, 1 further opinion job has been issued during the quarter which has been given a Limited audit opinion. After discussion with the Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee and the Deputy Chief Executive it has been agreed to delay reporting the findings of this review to the Committee. This is due to significant on-going work within the area in question, where the reporting of the findings may impact subsequent investigations and processes which are continuing.

A commitment has been made by the Acting Chief Internal Auditor to report the details of this audit and investigation to Committee as soon as possible. Consideration has been given to reporting these findings as a confidential paper, however, it was concluded that it would be in the public interest that the findings are shared fully upon the investigation conclusion.

4.4   One other audit opinion was subject to an unfavourable opinion which was issued during Quarter 1 – Job Evaluation. The findings from this review are included as Appendix 4 to this report.

4.5   Other audit work in line with the plan has started and site visits have been undertaken to a number of establishments. At the end of Quarter 1, 35% of the agreed audit plan has been deemed as being started or in progress.

4.6   Where reports had been issued in draft, but not finalised, by the 31st March 2023, work has been undertaken during Quarter 1. As of the 30th June 2024, 5/8 had been successfully finalised.

        Audit Management are working to finalise these outstanding reports as soon as possible.

4.7   Five special investigations / reactive pieces of work commenced during Quarter 1. 3 of these have been closed / completed during the quarter, the other 2 remain outstanding and are subject to further investigation.

4.8   During the first quarter the Acting Chief Internal Auditor has been appointed as an independent investigating officer for 2 disciplinary investigations. These investigations have diverted internal audit resource away from planned audit work during the quarter. It is hoped that the investigation will be completed during the second quarter of the year.

4.9   Appendix 3 of the report gives details of the Section's performance indicators as at the 30th June 2024.

4.10   10% of the 2024/25 Audit Plan has been completed as at 30th June 2024. This is on target (10%).

5.   **SERVICE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

5.1   Heads of Service and service managers are responsible for addressing any weaknesses identified in internal systems and demonstrate this by including their management responses within the audit reports. When management agree the audit action plans, they are accepting responsibility for addressing the issues identified within the agreed timescales.

5.2   Ultimately, managers within MCC are responsible for maintaining adequate internal controls within the systems they operate and for ensuring compliance with Council policies and procedures. All reports, once finalised, are sent to the respective Chief Officers and Heads of Service for information and appropriate action where necessary.

6.   **FOLLOW UP AUDIT REVIEWS**

6.1 Where 'unfavourable' (Limited Assurance / No Assurance) audit opinions are issued, they are followed up within a twelve month timescale to ensure that the agreed actions have been taken by management and that the internal control systems are improved.

6.2 No follow-up reviews have commenced during the first quarter of the financial year. The following reviews were subject to unfavourable audit opinions issued during the 2023/24 financial year and the table below indicates when the follow-up work will be conducted by the Internal Audit team. The findings from each of these reviews have already been presented to the Committee.

Year	Assignment	Opinion	Status
2023/24	Chepstow School	Limited	2024/25 – Q3
	Till Float	Limited	2024/25 – Q3
	Commission & Control	Limited	2024/25 – Q3
	Mileage	Limited	2024/25 – Q4
	General Expenses	Limited	2024/25 – Q4
	Children Looked After Savings	Limited	2024/25 – Q4
	Private Sector Leasing	Limited	2024/25 – Q4
	Democratic Services & Governance	Limited	2024/25 – Q4

6.3 The timing of a follow-up review is based on when the previous final report was issued plus enough time for management to successfully implement their management actions along with sufficient time to pass to ensure the changes are fully embedded within the service. As the table details, this is a challenging programme to ensure all these reviews are completed during quarter 3 and especially quarter 4 of the year. The Audit Management team are planning workloads to ensure as much of these can be completed within the year as possible.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

8. CONSULTEES

Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Officer Resources
Chair of Governance & Audit Committee

Results of Consultation:

N/A

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Draft Operational Audit Plan 2024/25

10. AUTHORS AND CONTACT DETAILS

Jan Furtek, Acting Chief Internal Auditor
Telephone: 01600 730521
Email: janfurtek@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Internal Audit reviews from the 2024/25 Operational Audit Plan where fieldwork has been completed and/or final reports issued since 01/04/24 are listed in the table below.

Internal Control Opinions give the auditor's overall conclusion on the control environment operating in each system/establishment under review. Opinions range from Substantial Assurance through to No Assurance (Appendix 2).

Draft issued indicates that a draft report has been issued and a response is awaited from the client before the report can be finalised.

Status of reports as at 30th June 2024

Internal Audit Services - Management Information for 2024/25 – Quarter 1

Opinion Summary	Number
Substantial Assurance	1
Reasonable Assurance	3
Limited Assurance	2
No Assurance	0
Total	**6**

Job number	Directorate	Service	Job Name	Risk Rating / Priority	Final / Draft	Opinion given (Assurance)
P2425-43	Communities & Place	Enterprise and Community Animation	Homelessness Assessment & Prevention	High	Draft	Substantial
P2425-12	Children & Young People	Achievement & Attainment	Flying Start (2023/24)	Medium	Draft	Reasonable
P2425-32	Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	Childrens Services	Youth Offending Service (2023/24)	Medium	Draft	Reasonable
P2425-40	Communities & Place	Placemaking, Housing, Highways and Flooding	Car Parks	Medium	Draft	Reasonable
P2425-57	People, Performance and Partnerships	Human Resources	Job Evaluation / Equal Pay	High	Draft	Limited
Redacted	Redacted	Redacted	Redacted	Redacted	Draft	Limited

Non – opinion / Added Value Audit Work

Job number	Directorate	Service	Job Name
P2425-68	Communities & Place	Communities & Place General	Fleet Management Board

Internal Audit Opinions

Each report contains an opinion which is an overall assessment of the control environment reviewed.

OPINION	DESCRIPTION
SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
REASONABLE ASSURANCE	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
LIMITED ASSURANCE	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
NO ASSURANCE	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

The table below summarises the risk ratings used during our audits:

RISK RATING	DESCRIPTION
CRITICAL	Major or unacceptable risk which requires immediate action.
SIGNIFICANT	Important risk that requires attention as soon as possible.
MODERATE	Risk partially mitigated but should still be addressed.
STRENGTH	No risk. Sound operational controls and processes confirmed.

For grant claim audits:

Unqualified opinion - the terms and conditions of the grant were generally complied with;

Qualified opinion - the terms and conditions of the grant were not fully complied with; the identified breaches of terms and conditions will be reported to the grantor and internally to relevant Head of Service/Chief Officer.

INTERNAL AUDIT SECTION PROGRESS REPORT
2022/23 – 3 MONTHS

APPENDIX 3

Performance Indicators

N /A – not available

	2023/24	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target
1	Percentage of planned audits completed	15%	36%	50%	82%	80% pa
2	Average no. of days from audit closing meeting to issue of a draft report	2	4	2.5	1.8 days	15 days
3	Average no. of days from receipt of response to draft report to issue of the final report	N/A	4.2	1.6	1.4 days	10 days
4	Percentage of recommendations made that were accepted by the clients	N/A	100%	100%	100%	95%
5	Percentage of clients at least 'satisfied' by audit process	N/A	100%	100%	100%	95%

	2024/25	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target
1	Percentage of planned audits completed	10%				10% in Q1 80% pa
2	Average no. of days from audit closing meeting to issue of a draft report	2.7 days				15 days
3	Average no. of days from receipt of response to draft report to issue of the final report	N/A*				10 days
4	Percentage of recommendations made that were accepted by the clients	N/A*				95%
5	Percentage of clients at least 'satisfied' by audit process	N/A*				95%

* These statistics are based on the conclusion of an audit review (final report stage). As at 30th June 2023, no 2023/24 audit review had yet been finalised.

SUMMARY OF WEAKNESSES – JOB EVALUATION (2024/25)

The objective of the audit was to examine and evaluate the financial and administrative controls, as well as the effectiveness of the governance framework operating within the job evaluation process. The scope included examining the policy/guidance framework, adherence to the Job Evaluation Scheme, and the decision-making, validation, and appeals process. However, the audit did not re-perform individual job evaluations but ensured high-level reasonableness and adherence to the internal control framework.

RISK RATING	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL IDENTIFIED
CRITICAL	Major or unacceptable risk which requires immediate action.	0
SIGNIFICANT	Important risk that requires attention as soon as possible.	10
MODERATE	Risk partially mitigated but should still be addressed.	9
STRENGTH	No risk. Sound operational controls and processes confirmed.	11

Ref.	SIGNIFICANT
1.04	The Job Evaluation Guidance was not aligned to actual working practices. There was no evidence to confirm that the Guidance had been reviewed since its inception.
1.05	There was no documented Senior Officer Job Evaluation process.
1.06	There was no central point of storage for all documents relating to the Job Evaluation process. Although a retention period had been set for documents, not all staff were aware of this.
2.04	Roles had been regraded without going through the Job Evaluation process.
2.05	Requests to perform a Job Evaluation did not always come from the Head of Service (or above).
3.06	There was no evidence to confirm that prior to an Honorarium being awarded that the additional duties had been considered through the Job Evaluation process.
3.07	Employees who have been awarded Honorarium or Market Forces Payments were not provided with notification letters.
3.08	Honorarium payments have been paid for periods in excess of the recommended 18 months.
3.09	HR Business Partners or Accountants were not required to formally comment on or confirm that they support Honorarium and Market Forces arrangements prior to authorisation.
3.10	Payroll Amendment Forms were not checked to ensure that the correct authorisation or Job Evaluation procedures had been followed.

Ref.	MODERATE
1.07	The Authority's Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy was dated 2002 (22 years) with no evidence of review.
1.08	HR Business Partners who undertake Job Evaluations have not been provided with any formal training for the use of Zellis' Greater London Provincial Scheme (GLPC) electronic system.
1.09	No master record existed of all Job Evaluation requests, their current status and if any appeals were received.
2.06	The Head of Service/Headteacher New Post Evaluation Request Form (JE1) or Manager / Headteacher Post Re-evaluation Request Form (JE2) were not completed for the Job Evaluations reviewed.
3.11	Job Evaluations were not subject to a secondary review as set out as an expectation within the Job Evaluation Guidance
3.12	Backdated pay was not appropriately authorised by the Head of Service.
3.13	New Post Request Forms were deleted after 18 months.
3.14	Market Forces payments had not been correctly paid pro-rata for part time staff.
3.15	The date the Job Evaluation was undertaken was not always noted on the system.

This page is intentionally left blank

SUBJECT:	Draft Self-Assessment 2023/24
MEETING:	Governance and Audit Committee
DATE:	5th September 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All	

1   PURPOSE:

1.1   To provide the committee with an opportunity to review the draft Monmouthshire County Council Self-Assessment Report, in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1   That the committee review the draft self-assessment report 2023/24 and makes any recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions prior to the report being considered by Council.

3.   KEY ISSUES:

3.1   The Self-Assessment Report is a requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act requires each local authority in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', that is the extent to which; it is exercising its functions effectively; it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and its governance is effective for securing these.

3.2   Under the Act, the mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. It needs to be embedded across the organisation to help the council continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce. The self-assessment process has been embedded as part of the council's performance management framework (appendix 1). It is important that the assessment dovetails with, but does not duplicate, the Annual Governance Statement.

3.3   The self-assessment report evaluates the council's performance under each of the six Well-being Objectives set out in the Community and Corporate Plan, and the programme of work that supports their delivery. The report focusses on the 'what we want to achieve' outcome statements that are each underpinned by specific actions for each objective. To support the delivery of the objectives, the council has to make sure that all of its areas are working efficiently and effectively. The report also assesses the effectiveness of the 'enabling functions' that support council services to meet changing demands and ensure their sustainability. These include corporate planning, performance and risk management, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, asset management, digital and data.

3.4   Appendix 2 provides the committee with an overview of the process that was followed to complete the draft self-assessment report. This included desk-based evidence gathering to inform an initial evaluation, followed by workshops with each of the directorates and a session with Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team. The assessment has been facilitated through a focus on answering

three key questions about the effectiveness of the council's arrangements: how well are we doing? how do we know? And, what and how can we do better? These informed the draft report, which is constructed around:

- How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities? (Understanding well-being in the county)
- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes? (How well are we achieving the outcomes set in the Community and Corporate Plan)
- How do we know? (Evidence)
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities? (Enabling functions/services)
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes? (Partnership and collaborative working)
- What could we do better? (Actions)

3.5 The self-assessment report demonstrates the progress the council has made in achieving its intended outcomes and identifies any further areas for development to be addressed in 2024/25. These include:

- We have continued to support those on low-income and address inequality in the county through working with partners to provide cost-of-living support sessions across Monmouthshire and implement universal free school meals for all primary school pupils. We need to develop a joined-up whole-authority approach to sustain the impacts of our interventions.
- We have shown our commitment to reducing our impact on the planet through developing a refreshed Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, underpinned by four delivery plans which set out the action we will take. However, we recognise these are complex challenges and unless there is an increase in the public finances available for this, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our net-zero ambitions will be extremely challenging.
- Through Rapid Rehousing we are preventing an increasing number of households from becoming homeless and are decreasing the number of homeless households in costly B&B accommodation. We've begun the process of acquiring properties to transform into temporary accommodation to address the issue of limited availability.
- We are focused on understanding barriers to learning, particularly for vulnerable pupils, and ensuring suitable wellbeing support is available. We are facing challenges in returning attendance figures to pre-pandemic levels, and are seeing an increase in behaviours that challenge.
- We are developing a Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The financial strategy is key to realising the aims and ambitions set out in the Community and Corporate plan. The strategy explains how the Council will respond to the challenges ahead, and the principles that will be adopted in managing and using financial resources.

3.6 Governance and Audit Committee has an important role in contributing to the self-assessment report. Committee findings have been used to inform our assessment of performance and formed a key part of our evidence base. Evidence presented to and scrutinised by the committee which informed the assessment includes, but is not limited to, the Annual Governance Statement; the Strategic Risk Register; self-assessment of performance management arrangements; 2023/24 Treasury outturn report; and the Governance & Audit Committee annual report 2023/24. The self-assessment report should be used to inform the committee's role of seeking assurance of the effectiveness of the council's governance and performance management arrangements. Scrutiny of the council's performance, which is contained in the report, is the remit of the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee, who received the report at their 16th July meeting.

3.7 Governance and Audit Committee are presented with the final draft of this report, as per the statutory guidance under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and can make any

recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions the council intends to take. If the council does not make a change recommended by Governance and Audit Committee, it must set out the recommendation and the reasons why in the final report. The final assessment will be presented to Council on the 19th September.

3.8   The annual self-assessment report will be complemented by a panel performance assessment once in an electoral cycle, providing an opportunity to seek external insights (other than from auditors, regulators or inspectors) on how the council is meeting the performance requirements.

4.   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4.1   There are no additional resource implications as a result of this report. However, there may be resource implications in undertaking further actions identified in the self-assessment report. These would be subject to the usual council decision-making processes.

5.   BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Performance and governance of local authorities: statutory guidance

Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28

Self-assessment Report 2022/23

6.   AUTHORS:

Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
Hannah Carter, Performance Analyst
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships

7.   CONTACT DETAILS:

E-mail: richardjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 01633 740733

E-mail: hannahcarter@monmouthshire.gov.uk

E-mail: robertmcgowan@monmouthshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 01633 644430

E-mail: matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 01633 644397

Performance Management Framework

Our performance management framework makes sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction to deliver real and tangible outcomes.

Building a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life is the unifying purpose of the diverse range of services for which we are responsible. We are a partner in the Public Service Board, which is responsible for setting well-being objectives for the county. The council's own well-being objectives are set by Council and form the backbone of our Community and Corporate Plan. Each of our teams has a service business plan that aligns to these objectives. We have a range of performance measures that we use to keep track of our progress. Our risk management policy enables us to manage strategic risks to our delivery. Our employee aims and objectives show the contributions that individual colleagues make to these objectives and delivering our vision in accordance with our values.
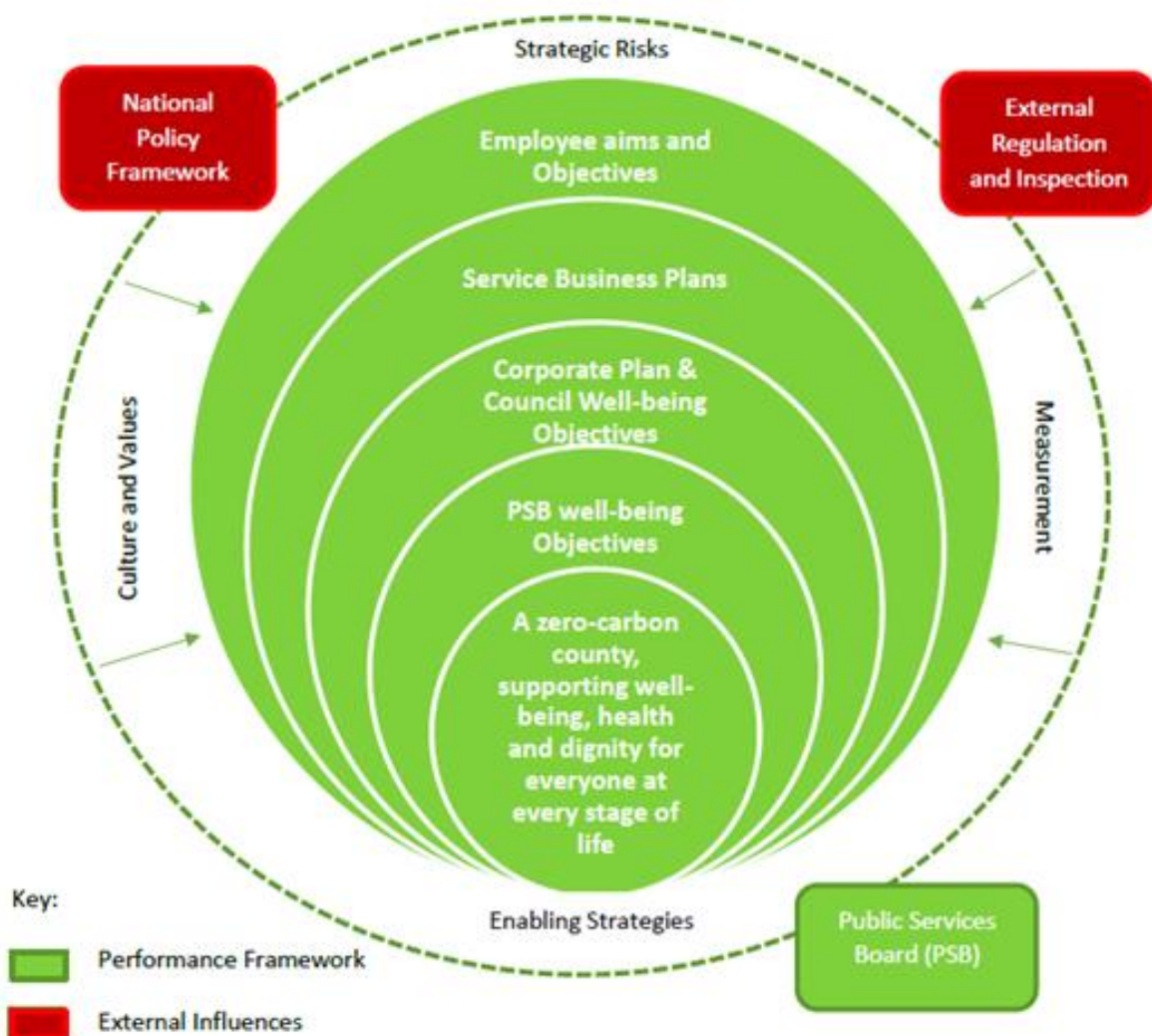
Appendix 2 – Self-assessment process

Legislation

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act") provides for a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. The Act replaces the previous improvement duty for councils set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', that is the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively; it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; its governance is effective for securing these.

The performance and governance provisions in the Act are framed within the context of the well-being duty in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which sets out a legally binding common purpose for public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Self-assessment will be complemented by a panel performance assessment once in an electoral cycle, providing an opportunity to seek external insights (other than from auditors, regulators or inspectors) on how the council is meeting the performance requirements.

Why

Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the current position in order to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. It is about the council being self-aware, understanding whether it is delivering the right outcomes, and challenging itself to continuously improve. It needs to be embedded as effective self-assessment helps the council to continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce.

The WLGA have identified draft principles for self-assessment for councils to ensure that they have arrangements in place that:

- demonstrate self-awareness derived from evidence-based analysis that focuses on outcomes;
- are owned and led at a strategic level and are not an exercise in compliance;
- further develop a culture of challenge to facilitate improvement as part of an ongoing process;
- are integrated as part of the council's corporate planning, performance and governance processes; and
- enable an organisation-wide assessment rather than an assessment of individual services.

Further developing this culture and embedding an evaluative mindset will be a key development point through the continued production of the self- assessment report.

Process

The council has developed a process to undertake self-assessment under the Act, assessing performance in the 2023/24 financial year. The main component parts of the process and timeline are:

April – May	May – June	June – July	July - September	September
Desk-based evidence gathering	Directorate self-assessment Workshops	Council self-assessment report drafted	Draft report to Scrutiny and Governance & Audit Committee	Self-assessment report agreed in line with council process

This timeline ensures that the self-assessment can inform and be informed by the policy direction of the council and how it uses its resources efficiently and effectively, particularly the budget setting process.

Evaluative evidence to inform the assessment has been compiled at a directorate level. Most of the evidence has been collated by using intelligence already held corporately in an insightful way; this includes, for example, the Annual Governance Statement, audit and inspection reports, and service level business plans.

The evidence gathered has been explored further, and challenged where necessary, at directorate and enabling function based self-assessment workshops, to determine if the objectives (outcomes) of the council are being achieved.

Self-assessment workshops

Directorate workshops
Children & Young People
Social Care & Health
Communities & Place
MonLife
Enabling functions workshops
People, Performance & Partnerships – Performance, Data, Scrutiny & Workforce planning
Resources – Financial planning, Assets & Digital

The workshops were facilitated through the following questions:

- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes? (Community & Corporate Plan objectives)
- How do we know? (Evidence)
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities? (Enablers)
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes? (Partnership working)
- What could we do better? (Actions - including a review of actions from the previous report)

The full evidence and conclusions from workshops have been collated and will be used by directorates and enabling functions to inform their services business plans.

Following the workshops, the evidence has been reviewed, further challenged, and collated into a corporate level evaluative self-assessment. This has been integrated with the council's requirement to report on the progress it has made in meeting its well-being objectives for the preceding financial year (2023/24) under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The report is structured under these headings:

- Understanding our local place
- Outcomes (progress against our objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan):
  - How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?
  - How do we know?
  - Areas for development
- Enabling functions
  - Corporate planning, performance and risk management
  - Financial planning
  - Workforce planning
  - Procurement
  - Assets
  - Digital & Data
  - Democracy & Scrutiny
- Our work with partners
- Our Actions (including progress against previous actions)

The self-assessment report will be scrutinised by the council's Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee. A draft of the self-assessment report will made available to Governance and Audit committee, who must review the draft report and make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or action the council intends to take. The self-assessment will be approved in accordance with the council's agreed processes at a meeting of full Council.

Summary

We want to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. We will do this working with, and alongside, our communities. This is the ambition set in our Community and Corporate Plan.

This self-evaluation is one of the ways in which we hold ourselves to account. We track the progress against our priorities, identify lessons learnt and assess where improvements can be made so we can stay on track. Every council in Wales is required to do the same under the requirements of The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This report captures the conclusions of our self-assessment covering the period 2023-24.

Local authorities deliver hundreds of services. This evaluation cannot cover every single one of them. Instead, it is structured around the six objectives of the Community and Corporate Plan set out below. To actively manage performance in all our service areas we also have scrutiny committees and business plans in place to allow our councillors to hold senior officers and Cabinet members to account for delivery of all aspects of our work.

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 report also looks at some of key governance arrangements and enabling functions that support our work. This includes things like workforce planning, use of assets and our financial management arrangements. We also rely on the work of our Internal Audit team and external regulators such as Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales.

How well do we understand our local context and place?

Monmouthshire is a great place and one which we are rightly proud of. Our county has the second most competitive economy in Wales after the capital city of Cardiff and has improved its UK ranking since 2019. People here enjoy, on average, longer and healthier life expectancy that in other parts of Wales. We have vibrant towns, great visitor attractions and enjoy good connections to other parts of the UK. However, we also face significant challenges. We know that many people are struggling. High house prices and rents relative to wages make it hard for some people to live here. We also have a carbon footprint which is above the average for Wales and the UK, caused in part by the rural nature of the county. Headline measures can also mask the diversity, and some of the inequality that exists within our communities. We have an older population, which brings huge benefits in terms of experience and social capital but can also places pressure on public services.

We have a good understanding of our place. We analyse a range of statistical information on things such as health and the local economy. We also get qualitative feedback about residents' perceptions of our area from the National Survey for Wales and our own surveys. However, we recognise that we do not have a comprehensive understanding of how well all our services and policies are meeting the needs of the people who use them.

We have 46 ward councillors who help us understand local issues in communities. We also consult directly when we are planning service changes or considering action in a particular area.

Once every five years we conduct an extensive well-being assessment and population needs assessment with partners across Gwent. We have sought active participation in decision-making, for example through promoting attendance at the public open forum we hold before our committee meetings. We recognise there is more to be done to understand peoples lived experiences as part of our commitment to work with and alongside residents, enabling them to shape their futures.

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

We have assessed our progress against the six objectives of our Community and Corporate Plan using a six-point scale that rates each one from 1 (unsatisfactory) through to 6 (excellent). In the early years of this plan a lot of the activity has been about understanding challenges and developing our approach. More of the delivery actions will fall in the second half of the plan. Many of the things we have set out to do, such as improving river health and achieving net zero are complex societal challenges and will take time to deliver. As a result, some of the activities we will be reporting on now are the building blocks and milestones on the way to achieving our intended outcomes rather than outcomes themselves. These give us the foundations and set the trajectory for future improvements.

A fair place to live **– Our Rating: 4 (Good)**

We want to see improved life chances for people irrespective of their income or background. It will take time for us to see the impact of our work. In the meantime, we have put in place solutions to mitigate the effects of inequality on different groups of people.

Healthy meals at school help all children to learn and thrive. We have rolled out universal free school meals in primary settings. We are developing an understanding of the barriers to take up so we can take action to reduce these. The proportion of children accessing this free service increased from 64% to 75% in the 12 months to March 2024. Research shows that children from low-income families can often fall behind over the summer holidays. We have provided healthy meals and activities in the holidays to try and overcome this. We are working with headteachers to target this at those who will benefit most and doubled the number of people taking up this offer.

A good diet and being active are vital parts of improving healthy life expectancy for all people. We know that achieving these can be harder for people on low incomes. We have developed a new food strategy that includes a commitment to increasing access to healthy, sustainable and affordable food. We have also worked with partners to develop and open the new £2.9M Magor and Undy Community Hub based on the needs identified by local people.

A green place to live **– Our Rating: 3 (Adequate)**

We are committed to taking local action to reducing our carbon emissions and playing our part to tackle global warming. The score we have allocated reflects the complex nature of the challenge we are facing.

One of the things we can influence is the level of emissions from our own operations. We are presently building a new carbon neutral school in Abergavenny. We have also refitted a lot of our public buildings with LED lighting, solar panels and heat pumps. This has reduced energy use and carbon emissions. We have developed plans for the next phase of this work. We have been upgrading our fleet to ultra-low emission vehicles when they need replacing. The costs involved mean we cannot do this as quickly as we would like. We also want to help communities to reduce their emissions. We have secured grant funding and worked with partners and volunteers to develop 'libraries of things', reuse shops and repair cafes to reduce the amount of waste in the county. Our residents have also recycled 71.7% of household waste. This is well above the national target of 64% and our local target of 70%.

The level of phosphates in the Wye and Usk rivers remains a major problem. We have worked with partners to develop an action plan to tackle this. Welsh Water/Dŵr Cymru is installing phosphate

stripping technology in Abergavenny and Monmouth. We are in the process for approving a new Local Development Plan. This will ensure that new developments do not have an adverse effect on water quality.

The way in which we grow, transport and consume food has an effect on the environment. We have produced a new food strategy and have awarded grants to support community growing to increase access to healthy local produce with lower food miles. We have worked with local farmers to trial the use of new technologies to increase food production and supported a scheme to provide mentoring to farmers to enable them to move towards more regenerative farming methods.

The range of work that we are undertaking is helping us to understand the scale of the challenge and the path we need to take to reach our goal. We remain ambitious in our aim of becoming net zero by 2030. We are making good progress with our actions. However, unless there is significant public investment, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our target will be extremely challenging.

A thriving and ambitious place – **Our Rating: 4 (Good)**

We want a diverse economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating the conditions for shared prosperity in which businesses and workers can thrive. We have produced a new Economy, Employment and Skills strategy which will guide this work.

We want to see vibrant town centres throughout our county. We have secured funding and are working with town councils, communities, and other stakeholders to develop placemaking plans to shape this work.

We want people of all ages and backgrounds to have the skills to do well in work or start their own business. We provided support to 165 pre-start-up and existing local businesses. We have also provided employment advice to unemployed people and have helped 115 people into work.

Transport and connectivity are vital to any economy. We have developed a new local transport strategy. We are working with other stakeholders to make the case for the new Magor Walkway station and have begun to develop proposals to improve bus access to existing train stations in the county. Meanwhile, we have continued to maintain our road network and delivered 100% of our planned maintenance programme.

We recognise that we are part of a global economy and have played an active role in regional economic partnerships including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, The Western Gateway and Marches Forward Partnership. These collaborations are helping us attract and retain innovative companies, attract inward investment and grow exports. We have seen an upward trend in the number of businesses in the county. We have also improved our ranking in the UK competitiveness index.

A safe place to live – **Our Rating: 4 (Good)**

We want Monmouthshire to be a safe place that people are proud to call home with an increased supply of good quality, energy efficient homes. We have prepared a replacement Local Development Plan which will set out the detailed policy framework for land use up to 2033. The adoption of the plan has been delayed by a range of factors. This has limited the ability of developers and housing associations to deliver sufficient numbers of affordable homes.

We have introduced a Council Tax premium on vacant properties to encourage them to be brought back into use. Homeowners can secure grant funding to assist with this. We received 36 applications for this funding in 2023-24. This has contributed to a 17% reduction in empty homes from 541 to 447.

High property prices, a shortage of affordable private rented accommodation and the rising cost of living have all contributed to a rising homelessness problem. We are working with partners to support people at risk of becoming homeless. We helped 261 people with funding last year to remain in their own homes or find new accommodation. We have also acquired more properties to reduce the use of costly and unsuitable B&B accommodation for homeless households. Overall, we have reduced the use of B&Bs by

50% from 92 to 46 by March 2024. As a corporate parent, we are particularly mindful of the needs of those leaving care. We provide support through our corporate parenting panel, however, despite the work of the panel, 8 young care leavers experienced homelessness in 2023-24 compared to 5 in the previous year.

The rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population has increased slightly from 10.6 to 13.1. We have worked with young people to address their concerns about knife crime and anti-social behaviour and have extended three public space protection orders to prevent anti-social behaviour. We have also responded to 619 environmental protection incidents, such as littering and fly-tipping, dealing with 84% of these within 3 days. Overall, 95% of people in Monmouthshire who responded to the National Survey for Wales said they were satisfied with the area as a place to live which compares positively with other parts of the nation.

A connected place where people care – **Our Rating: 4 (Good)**

We want Monmouthshire to be a place where people's contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others. Across the UK social services are facing increased demand and more complex cases. Monmouthshire is seeing the same trend and it is taking an increasing proportion of our budget each year. We know that there are many factors that affect our health and well-being. We have committed to working with others across Gwent and the Institute of Health Equity to tackle these by becoming what is known as a Marmot Region.

Early help is vital to prevent children coming into local authority care. We have established a coordinated approach to early intervention in children's social services. We have increased capacity and reduced waiting times for early help services. Our evaluation has shown that 100% of people are reporting a positive outcome from our Building Stronger Families service.

We have produced a new strategy to develop more in-county residential and supported accommodation placements. So far, we are working to deliver the 32 placements we need and have commissioned two new residential homes. This will ensure that children can maintain local connections and much needed stability in their lives.

We are working with Age Cymru and NHS colleagues to ensure timely hospital discharge. However, delayed transfers of care from hospital in March 2024 were at the same level as twelve months earlier. We also want to help vulnerable older people regain their independence. We provided 331 reablement care packages in 2023-24, an increase of 80% on the previous year. In 70% of cases this mitigated or reduced peoples' need for long-term support. When people do need care, it can sometimes be hard to put this in place due to the limited availability of carers. We have addressed this through a number of solutions including support for self-employed 'micro-carers'. This has contributed to a 62% reduction in unmet care need from 804 hours to 306 hours per month. We have also opened a new purpose-built specialist care home for people living with dementia and have trained community volunteers to support those living with dementia in the community to increase their confidence and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

A learning place – **Our Rating: 4 (Good)**

Monmouthshire should be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential.

School attendance has declined since the pandemic. Our Education Welfare Officers have worked with vulnerable learners and we have a specific programme targeted at those with very low attendance levels. Attendance improved for 92% of pupils who participated. Overall primary school attendance improved between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years in primary schools but declined from 88.4% to 87.7% in secondary schools and remains below pre-pandemic levels.

We are introducing a phased approach to pupil well-being. We have increased the number of schools on the programme from 43% to 74%. We have seen a worsening of behaviours which is challenging for

schools, staff and learners. In response we delivered Trauma Informed Schools training to over 500 staff during the year. We recognise that we have more to do to develop our approach in this area.

We have worked with our regional school improvement service, called the EAS, to provide challenge, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Learners in our secondary schools score higher than elsewhere in Wales, on average 26% of pupils across Monmouthshire achieved 5 or more GCSE at levels A*-A, compared with 20.3% for Wales. We also have fewer pupils leaving school with no qualifications at 0.8%, compared with 1.4% of pupils across Wales. We evaluate schools against those of similar size and linguistic delivery across Wales. On that basis, two secondary schools outperform those similar in every category, and one outperforms in most categories (including literacy, numeracy, science, no qualifications, 5+ A*-A). One of our schools underperforms in most categories compared to similar schools.

We have been working with two of our schools who were placed in statutory categories following Estyn reviews in 22/23. Follow-up reviews were conducted during 23/24; these found that both schools have made significant progress in addressing the recommendations and have been removed from statutory categories. Two of our schools inspected have been selected by Estyn to produce good practice case studies.

Our work has a particular focus on vulnerable learners including those eligible for free school meals. This includes targeted support from education advisors and wider support as part of our community focused schools work. This is aimed at ensuring all pupils can succeed irrespective of their socio-economic background. There remains a gap in attainment equal to 1.5 GCSE grades and we recognise that we have more work to do in this area.

We have restructured our education inclusion service and have worked with all schools with targeted training and regular Q&A sessions. We recognise a need to improve the consistency of ALN provision for those with additional learning needs across the county and have established a new quality assurance system to improve how we identify and manage those with additional learning needs.

We are building a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny. This will be net zero with the capacity for over 1,800 learners, including those with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs. The school will open its doors from April 2025. We have also developed plans and secured funding to increase our Welsh medium provision.

How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities?

We have sound arrangements in place to enable and support service delivery. These include finance, workforce management, digital, asset management, performance and risk management. Nevertheless, the impact of an extended period of financial challenges on service delivery coupled with the rising cost-of-living and high levels of inflation has taken its toll.

We have faced increased demand for services, such as social care and homelessness, while inflation has contributed to rising costs in areas such as home to school transport. Therefore, the council has needed to draw on reserves to balance the budget for the first time in more than a decade. We are now revising our enabling strategies to respond to challenges and opportunities and align them with the Community and Corporate Plan.

How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes?

Partnership is core to how we work. The council has effective relationships in place with a range of stakeholders that help us achieve our purpose. These range from large scale strategic partnerships like the Cardiff Capital Region and the Gwent Public Services Board to bi-lateral shared services with other councils for services such as youth offending, procurement and revenues and benefits. We have positive working relationships in place with Welsh Government. We recognise that we can and must do more to develop and build on our relationship with community and town councils.

Areas for Development

Through the self-assessment, we have identified how well we are doing and what we can do better. We will look to build on and learn from the things we are doing and seek to improve areas where we can do better. We have developed an action plan that sets out how we will address the areas for development.

Measuring Progress

We use a wide range of performance measures to track our progress against our priorities. These are found throughout the assessment. We also track progress against a range of metrics that track outcomes at a population level. Key measures will be presented regularly to Cabinet and the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee so that we can actively manage performance and adjust delivery where we are falling short of our expectations.

What do you think?

We have included some of the feedback we have received from other organisations and would be delighted to hear your views to help us inform future assessments.

Please e-mail us: improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Self-assessment Report 2023/24

monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Version Control

Title	Monmouthshire County Council Self-Assessment 2023/24
Purpose	To self-assess the council's goals and arrangements as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Owner	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships
Approved by	Monmouthshire County Council
Date	05/08/24
Version Number	0.4
Status	draft
Review Frequency	Annual
Next review date	2025
Consultation	Cabinet Strategic Leadership Team Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Governance and Audit Committee

Contents

Introduction

We are clear about what we want to achieve, and this self-assessment is a critical tool in helping us achieve that. Our ambition for Monmouthshire County Council and the people it serves is set in our Community and Corporate Plan. We want to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. We will do this working with, and alongside, our communities. These are ambitious goals and it's vital that we track and evaluate our progress. This will make sure we can respond to changing circumstances and opportunities and, most importantly, be held accountable for how well we are doing.

Local councils deliver hundreds of different services. Every household will have some experience of waste collection and highways. You may never need support from social services but, with an ageing population, it is vital part of everyday life for many thousands of residents when they are at their most vulnerable. Other services, such those delivered by our environmental health teams, will be less visible but work hard every day to keep us all safe. This evaluation cannot cover every single service. We have scrutiny committees and business plans in place to allow our councillors to hold senior officers and Cabinet members to account for those. Instead, it focuses primarily on how well we have delivered the six well-being objectives described in the Community and Corporate Plan.

Our Community and Corporate Plan – at a glance

OUR PURPOSE

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life

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 report also evaluates some of the key governance aspects that underpin our work such as the effectiveness of our workforce planning, use of assets and our financial management arrangements. It dovetails with the Annual Governance Statement, which is coordinated by our Chief Internal Auditor on behalf of the leadership team, and draws on audit and inspection work carried out by regulators including Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales.

Like many public services we are facing real terms reductions in our budgets as a result of external economic pressures. We have made over £70M of savings in recent years. We sometimes have to take difficult decisions to balance our books. This Authority has a good track record of developing proposal to deliver within its budget. This evaluation helps us understand the impact of the changes we make and allows us to learn from these changes so we can strive to continually improve what we do.

Our Self-Assessment

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, requires councils to keep their performance under review through self-assessment. We need to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once every financial year. This report looks back over the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

Effective self-assessment helps the Council to continually learn and to achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce. This is focused on three questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What and how can we do better?

This is integrated with our annual reporting arrangements on the progress and impact we have made in meeting our well-being objectives, which is a requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Further details on the process of the self-assessment are shown in Appendix 2.

We welcome views from residents on this assessment along with any areas of our work that you think should be considered by the scrutiny committees that hold decision-makers to account, please get in touch:

🖱 improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk

✉ Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall, Usk, NP15 1GA

🐦 @MonmouthshireCC

Understanding our local place

Monmouthshire is a diverse county. As a council we need to ensure we are meeting the needs of a wide range of groups, from residents to businesses. We strive to better understand the challenges facing our residents.

The context that we operate in is complex. Having a clear and current understanding of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire is essential for the Council to inform its purpose and priorities.

Local place

How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities?	How do we know?
The Council has a good understanding of the well-being of its residents. We have access to and analyse a range of statistical information including but not limited to health, income levels and the local economy. We also get qualitative feedback about residents' perceptions of our area from the National Survey for Wales. Some services, such as social care, libraries and building control also gather feedback from service user surveys. However, we recognise that we do not have a comprehensive understanding of how well services and policies are meeting the needs of the people who use them given the breadth of services provided.	National Survey for Wales
	Customer Surveys
A study by Audit Wales concluded that, like other councils, we needed to do more to understand the impact of our services on residents.	Audit Wales Report - *Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes*
We have 46 ward councillors who represent the interests of their communities and bring forward local intelligence. This is supplemented by the use of a public open forum at scrutiny meetings and Council to allow residents to raise matters of concern.	Informational from the National Statistics Office and other sources
We also consult directly when we are planning service changes or considering action in a particular area, for example, we engaged with over 1,200 people to understand how we could make our communities more age friendly.	Population Needs Assessment
The Community and Corporate Plan sets a clear commitment to work with and alongside communities, empowering people to support each other and come up with long-term solutions.	Gwent Well-being Assessment & Plan
We have engaged extensively during the production of the replacement Local Development Plan. This will shape land use in the county. It will increase opportunities for the younger people to both live and work within Monmouthshire, creating a more balanced demography and socially and economically sustainable communities. We are also working in partnership on the production of town centre masterplans.	Community and Corporate Plan
	Replacement Local Development Plan
Once every five years we also conduct an extensive well-being assessment and population needs assessment with partners across Gwent. The Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) has engaged widely in the development of the well-being assessment and plan for the area.	Town centre masterplans

Our Outcomes

The Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 contains six well-being objectives which focus on the longer-term future of the county and aims to address complex challenges, in line with the Future Generations Act.

In assessing each of the areas for development from our previous assessment under the six objectives, we have considered the extent to which:

- Our goals contribute to the achievement of the seven well-being goals identified in the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- We are taking all reasonable steps to meet them.
- They remain consistent with the sustainable development principle the five ways of working. More detail on the how the five ways of working are applied is provided in the progress on each goal later in this report.

It is important that outcomes are not considered in isolation since they can affect each other and need to be considered in an integrated way. How they integrate with each other is shown in Appendix 1.

We have included the following icons to illustrate each objectives contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals:

 Prosperous Wales

 Healthier Wales

 Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

 Resilient Wales

 More equal Wales

 Wales of cohesive communities

 Globally responsible Wales

The long-term nature of some objectives means that the effects of some activity may not be clearly demonstrable over short timescales, and some activity will only have an impact over the longer term. Informed by the evidence gathered, we have assessed progress against each of our objectives on a scale of 1-6 based on the following principles:

Level	Definition	Description
6	Excellent	Excellent or outstanding – all performance measures have achieved the target set and all actions have been delivered
5	Very Good	Major strengths – a significant majority of actions and measures are on track. No more than one or two falling short
4	Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved
3	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses – the evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets
2	Weak	Important weaknesses – the majority of measures and actions have not been achieved
1	Unsatisfactory	Major weakness – in most areas, performance is assessed as moving in the wrong direction and the vast majority of actions have not been delivered

Objective template explained.

Evaluation Score: This provides our assessment of performance against the objective using the evaluation scoring mechanism

Why we focused on this?	
Why we are focusing on this objective to improve well-being in Monmouthshire.	
How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
Row 1 - This sets 'What we want to achieve' from the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	
Column 1 - This provides the self-assessment of our performance during 2023/24 based on 'what we want to achieve'	Column 2 - The evidence sources we have used to inform our assessment.

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment
These are specific conclusions from the self-assessment that inform our action plan.

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact
This provides an explanation of how our activity contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act well-being goals and ways of working. It also identifies the council's well-being objective(s) that were in place during 2022/23, revised well-being objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan were subsequently set in April 2023.
Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Comment
This provides an update using the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan.	Previous data is 22/23 unless otherwise stated	Latest data is 23/24 unless otherwise stated	This is the target we set for 23/24	Any further explanation on the performance measure

A Fair Place to Live

What we want to achieve:

- Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background.
- Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life.
- Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures.

Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire, on average, is a prosperous and affluent county. None of our communities are in the most deprived 10% in Wales, and we have some of the highest levels of disposable income in Wales. However, Monmouthshire has a high level of income inequality, and these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when seen alongside areas of relative wealth. We want to see improved life chances for people irrespective of their income or background. This is why we have gone above our statutory duty to provide breakfast and a healthy, freshly cooked meal at lunchtime to all primary school pupils to ensure everyone has access to a healthy meal, no matter their background. Wider economic issues including the cost-of-living are causing more people to fall into financial difficulties. 12% of people in Monmouthshire live in households in material deprivation. We do not want anyone to feel left behind. We're supporting our residents through our Money Matters campaign which signposts to additional sources of support, and we have also teamed up with Mind and Citizens Advice to set up cost-of-living support drop-in sessions across the county.

We want to make sure all our residents have equal opportunity in life chances. We have developed a Strategic Equality Plan which sets objectives that value, and aim to make the most of, the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are. We want to celebrate the diversity of our communities and make sure everyone feels Welcome in Monmouthshire. We're committed to becoming a county of sanctuary for anyone seeking sanctuary, and will meet these individuals with welcome and understanding. We're lucky to have excellent social capital with many community networks working to support the place they live, as shown by our high volunteering rate. We have continued to support our fantastic volunteers and are working with community groups to help them access small grants to fund projects that matter to them.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Fair Place to Live

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">A Fair Place to Live</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair place</td>
<td>Evaluation Score:</td>
<td>Level 4 Good - Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved.

We have increased the support we provide to residents to improve their life chances and enabled our communities to develop the places they live. We have set plans to deliver most of what we to achieve. Our assessment shows we need to ensure all our interventions to achieve this objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Why we focused on this?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. Many of our residents are prosperous and very capable of looking after themselves and their loved ones. However, this is not the case for all and in a rural county inequality is often more hidden than in urban places. We will increase the intensity of our work to help those who need support to live the lives they want.</td></tr>
</table>

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
What we want to achieve: Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background	
Support for residents and families on low income We have implemented universal free school meals for all 6000 primary school children in Monmouthshire. We have gone beyond the statutory requirements and are providing a breakfast and healthy freshly cooked meal at lunch time enhancing pupils' well-being and learning. Uptake of meals overall has increased from 64% of pupils accessing free school meals in April 2023 to 75% in April 2024. This has varied in different areas of the county and has been lower in more deprived areas. Schools who have some of the highest rates of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) (an average eFSM rate of around 30%) are seeing the lowest uptake rates of around 60%, whilst those with the lowest rates of eFSM pupils (around 5%) are experiencing the highest uptake at over 80%. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers that may face those in less deprived areas from accessing universal free school meals. This includes reviewing how meals are ordered, adjusting the types of food provided and assessing an opt-out rather than an opt-in approach to free school meals provision. We have continued to support those affected by the rising cost-of-living through a range of methods including the Money Matters campaign which signposts residents to sources of support; working with Mind Monmouthshire and Citizens Advice Monmouthshire to set up cost of living support drop-in sessions across the county which offer advice on ensuring people are getting all the money and benefits they are entitled to; and help and advice on getting back into work or more secure employment as well as emotional and well-being support. We have promoted the local advice and support from our Benefits service on Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Reduction so people get the maximum financial support they are entitled to. There has been a slight reduction in the number of	Universal free school meals roll out Money Matters campaign, drop-in sessions, help and advice Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Council Tax Reduction claims, which provides increased financial support to households. There remain some households who are still likely not receiving the full financial support they are entitled to.	
What we want to achieve: Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life	
Provide low-cost play provision We have supported pupils in the school holidays with free or low-cost play provision. In the 2023 summer holidays, 3,363 hours of play provision were provided, 10,605 sessions were attended of which 2,821 were children eligible for free school meals. These sessions provided play and physical activity opportunities to young people. Through the sessions 816 meals and 413 food parcels were provided to families, providing access to food through the summer holidays to some families who need it. We have delivered Food and Fun schemes in five primary schools across the county. The scheme provides healthy meals and activities for children during the summer holidays. Attendances have increased from 2,005 in 22/23 to 4,316 in 23/24 and 8,632 healthy meals were provided. Youth Centres provided access to healthy meals on days the centres were open in the summer, with take-home food parcels also available for those who needed them. This is part of our commitment to reduce food insecurity ensuring all children and young people have access to a healthy meal. We are working with headteachers to identify those pupils who will most benefit from free or low-cost provision. We have increased the number of schools we work with from 11 in 22/23 to 21 in 23/24 and have begun to provide secondary as well as primary school provision. The offer of school holiday play sessions and meals is not taken up for every pupil who may benefit from them. We need to understand the potential barriers and develop the offer to increase uptake. We are also reviewing how we capture feedback from these sessions to ensure we are meeting the needs of the children attending.	School Holiday Play provision Food and Fun scheme
Work with partners to reduce food insecurity, develop cultural and community services We have developed and opened the new £2.9 million Magor and Undy Community Hub in partnership with The Magor and Undy Community Hub project (MUCH). The development was based on extensive involvement of the community and is designed based on residents' feedback. The site provides spaces for community use and commercial events, as well as potential for small business growth. The MUCH group now occupies and manages the community hub for the direct promotion of community use including social, culture, leisure, sporting and other community activities. We held a Celebration of the Arts which showcased how artists, performers, musicians and others contribute to Monmouthshire's vibrant culture and economy. We have worked with artists from across the county to provide access to funding and locations to showcase their work, including developing a 'Creative Cluster' of local artists. This is supporting our creative industry to provide new perspectives on communities, place, and their history, and play a vital role in the local economy. This is part of our commitment to create a new cultural strategy. The feedback	Celebration of the Arts Cultural Strategy development

will inform its development. The strategy will provide a focal point for networking, support, and inclusion for cultural activity across our communities.	Community Fridges
We have developed approaches to local and community food growing, procurement of food and networks with local suppliers. Every primary school has a kitchen where freshly cooked, nutrition-rich meals are produced five days a week. We also support a countywide Food Partnership. An example of partnership working is Community Fridges which provide indirect support for those experiencing food insecurity. They currently operate in Monmouth, Abergavenny, Caldicot, Goytre, Chepstow and Magor with Undy. These provide local access to food and each fridge saves around 2 tonnes of food going to landfill per month. Around 540 people visit a community fridge each week; this is an increase of around 480 seen previously.	
We have identified that residents who are accessing services such as community fridges may not be receiving the wrap-around support they need. We have appointed a food security engagement officer who is signposting families to wider financial support services, gathering data on demand and working with community food projects to ensure their sustainability. We need to develop a joined-up whole-authority approach to sustain the impacts of our interventions. We must focus on the long-term sustainability of our land and nature, and the health and well-being of our communities. This will be a key focus of our tackling poverty and inequality Action Plan.	Number of people accessing community fridges
We have developed a Local Food Strategy that demonstrates the council's recognition of Monmouthshire as the 'Food Capital of Wales'. The strategy has been informed by evidence and consultation with the local experts, partners and stakeholders. It has three core themes: Improving local and ethical supply chains; Developing food as an economic sector; Community food: access, education, participation. It will enable a whole-authority approach focused on long-term sustainability and health and well-being.	Local Food Strategy
What we want to achieve: Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures	
Empowering citizens and communities	
We have implemented a small grant scheme, You Decide, which provided £80k to 75 local schemes to focus on projects they deemed important to their local areas. Around 7,000 citizens were involved, and projects included developing a small community growing area and addressing holiday hunger. We have reached out to communities of interest and provided support to build their own resilience. This includes supporting care leavers and young carers with £25k in funding and supporting diverse communities, which included members of Monmouthshire's Muslim and Ukraine communities, with £10k. We have worked with established community groups who have experience reaching 'hard-to-reach' groups; and provided £5k to support community activity including cost of living support and family fun days.	You Decide scheme
We ran the annual Make Your Mark survey that offered young people the chance to have a voice and make a difference in matters that affect them. Concerns raised included cost of living, health and well-being, climate change and loneliness. The youth service has worked with young people to understand and adjust provision to respond to the issues raised. Responses rates to the survey were lower than we targeted, with 43% of secondary school pupils taking part in the survey. We have identified recommendations to increase the response rate to the next survey including engagement with secondary schools and digital options to increase accessibility.	Make Your Mark survey Volunteering Good Practice Guide

We have developed a Volunteering Good Practice Guide to enhance the growth of volunteers, provide continuous assistance, and to ensure a high-quality volunteering experience. We have run events and provided opportunities within our services, such as in museums. We have received over 100 responses to our annual volunteer survey. This has allowed us to identify what is working well, what improvements can be made and what additional resources we can provide to assist our volunteers in their roles. Volunteer programmes in the county have contributed to a range of benefits including reducing isolation, helping with mental health, educating visitors to the county, and providing volunteers with new skills. Latest data shows around 39% of residents in the county volunteer in some capacity, the second highest percentage in Wales. This demonstrates the commitment from residents in the county to provide their time in a whole range of volunteering capacity benefiting people, places and communities.	Annual volunteer survey Percentage of residents in the county who volunteer
Promoting Equality Council has approved a new Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2024-28. The plan sets objectives that value, and aim to make the most of, the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are. The plan includes the things we will do to contribute to national action plans including: The Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales; Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Action Plan and the Action on Disability Action Plans. We have held events in county hall including Iftar and Black History month celebrations to promote the diversity of our county and demonstrate to colleagues and the wider community that our workplace is inclusive and welcoming. We have made the disability confident pledge and have been accredited with Disability Confident Employer (Level 2) status. The Disability Confident 3-year action plan sits alongside the accreditation. This will be implemented and monitored by the Accessibility Inclusion Group who meet on a quarterly basis. We need to increase the employment opportunities within the council for disabled people. We committed in our Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 to encourage local firms to become accredited disability confident employers. The number of local employers who have made the disability confident pledge has increased from 24 (March 2023) to 59 (April 24). This is helping to reduce the inequalities experienced by disabled people in accessing employment in the county. We passed a motion in September 2023 committing us to formally becoming a county of sanctuary. We have submitted an application to the UK-wide City of Sanctuary network and are awaiting confirmation that we have met the criteria for accredited membership. We have been successful in helping those fleeing the war in Ukraine to find properties in the area. Hosting, under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, has remained stable, with residents going above and beyond what was initially asked of them. We have exceeded the 'population share' of refugees identified by Welsh Government. Recognising the challenges faced by this community, we have established a specialised team comprising two homeless prevention workers, two Community and Well-being Officers, complemented by dedicated translation and administration support. Our approach involves close collaboration with local landlords to cultivate strong local networks and access to properties, addressing concerns related to affordability and financial assessments. This is part of our commitment to ensuring Monmouthshire is a place where all feel welcome.	County of Sanctuary status Support for those fleeing Ukraine Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 Iftar and Black History Month Celebrations Disability Confident Employer Level 2 status achieved Number of local employers who have made the disability confident pledge

Supporting Welsh Language

We have provided opportunities for our staff to participate in Welsh language courses from beginner level to advanced level. We have 40 members of staff undertaking Welsh language courses. We completed a staff survey to determine the Welsh language skills of the workforce. This shows 323 members of staff have some level of Welsh language skills and use these to provide a service in Welsh to residents. We are using the survey to target the development of Welsh language skills in designated roles. This is contributing to our Welsh Language Strategy objective to increase opportunities for the public to interact with public services in Welsh.

Latest national data shows an increase in the percentage of the population in Monmouthshire who can speak Welsh at 18.4%, up from 16.6%. We will continue to evaluate our role in developing the use of the language in the county in our 2023/24 annual report on our Welsh language strategy and will further develop the strategy to continue the growth of the language.

Number of staff taking part in Welsh language courses

Number of Welsh speakers employed by the council

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

Carried over from the 2022/23 self-assessment: Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact.

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓		✓	✓		✓	

Well-being Objective: A Fair Place to Live

Adopting community-focused approaches promotes **collaboration** which in turn will support well-being. By working with communities, empowering people and ensuring they can access support we hope to **prevent** problems from occurring. Opportunities are plentiful in our county, so it is vital that everyone can be **involved** to maximise benefits to well-being. This should have a **long-term** benefit to individuals and communities. Our actions will have an **integrated** benefit for many aspects of the act, they will promote a Wales of cohesive communities and overall, help to create a more equal Wales.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous[1]	Latest[2]	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Number of children receiving universal free school meals[i]	2,583	6,064 (All primary school age children)	All primary school age children	↑	All primary school age children now have access to universal free school meals.
Number of attendances at MonGames[ii]	4,070	4,419	4,102	↑	
Number of attendances at Food and Fun[iii]	2,005	4,316	3,840	↑	
Number of attendances at Active Play[iv]	249	544	312	↑	
Percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area[v]	20	33	34	↑	Latest figure is for 2021/22, and the previous figure is for 2018/19 – this was not measured as part of the National Survey for Wales 2019/20 or 2022/23. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
The percentage of secondary school pupils who take part in the national Make Your Mark survey and Monmouthshire-specific ballot[vi]	71	43	72	↓	The reduction can be attributed to restrictions on carrying out the survey in one of our schools and difficulties in acquiring responses from sixth form students.
Percentage of people who volunteer[vii]	32	39	40	↑	Latest is 2022/23, previous is 2019/20. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Number of local employers who make disability confident employer pledge[viii]	24	59	50	↑	
Percentage of the population who can speak Welsh[ix]	16.6	18.4	16.9	↑	Previous is 2022/23, latest is year ending December 2023. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Number of Welsh speakers employed by the council	278	323	303	↑	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance
Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

---

[1] Previous data is 2022/23 unless otherwise stated.
[2] Latest data is 2023/24 unless otherwise stated.

Green Place to Live

What we want to achieve:

- Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint
- Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health
- Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce

Strategic Assessment

The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to life in Monmouthshire. We need to celebrate the outstanding beauty of our county, but also need to ensure we are doing all we can to protect and conserve it. The need for nature recovery in Monmouthshire is clear; 34% of species show a decline in their numbers. We're committed to addressing this issue. We have delivered 14 projects as part of Nature Isn't Neat which reduced mowing and let wildflowers grow in green spaces. The health of our rivers has suffered in recent years. Phosphate targets for the Usk are being failed at a rate of 88% and the Wye at 68%. We have worked with partners to address this and are installing phosphate stripping plants at two areas in the county to improve the health of our rivers.

Carbon emissions per head of population in Monmouthshire are above the average for the UK. We want to support residents to reduce their own emissions. Our circular economy projects are doing just this. Our Benthyg libraries have resulted in a carbon saving for residents of 9,755kg, and during this year alone our reuse shops have diverted 33 tonnes of waste from going to landfill. We have also continued to reach above target recycling rates, and thanks to the efforts of residents, we recycled over 71% of waste during the year.

We are committed to becoming net zero by 2030. We know that this is an important, but complex challenge. We're undertaking a range of work to better understand the scale of the issue, including commissioning costed decarbonisation plans for our estate. We have also refreshed our Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and have separated this into four clear action plans, including a decarbonisation plan. This better reflect the breadth of work being undertaken as we strive to meet our goal.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Green Place to Live

A Green Place to Live		
Green place (leaf icon)	**Evaluation Score:**	Level 3 - Strengths just outweigh weaknesses – the evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets. We have delivered specific projects that are contributing to achieving our objective, however we will need to do more and quicker to meet our ambition. The range of work that we are undertaking is helping us to understand the scale of the challenge and the path we need to take to reach our goal. We remain ambitious in our aim of becoming net zero by 2030. However, unless there is significant public investment, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our target will be extremely challenging.

Why we focused on this?

We recognise the outstanding beauty of Monmouthshire. As custodians of this stunning place we need to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy it, protect it and conserve it. The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to our tourism and visitor economy. We will work with others to promote access to our special places whilst protecting the environment, support nature recovery, reduce our carbon emissions, reduce the risk of flooding and promote the circular economy. We also recognise that these are complex issues and it will take decades rather than years to see the full impact of the changes we are making.

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
What we want to achieve: Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint	
Reduce the carbon emissions generated from the council's operations. We have implemented a range of measures to reduce emissions from our properties. Examples of schemes completed this year include outstanding solar car ports from Phase 1 (132kWp) and development of a large-scale roof mounted system being installed as a part of the new Abergavenny school project. We have completed surveys on a number of buildings to fit LED lighting, solar PV, and heat pump installation. We are developing the Refit phase 2 programme and progressed funding applications. This programme of energy efficiency works on our public buildings will make building under the scheme more energy efficient, reduce carbon emissions and save energy costs. We are sharing energy data with schools and leisure centres to monitor and forecast their energy use to inform changes to reduce their consumption. We are transitioning to Ultra Low Emission vehicles at the point of renewal and where services need and funding permits. We currently do not have the additional funding required to transition our fleet at the pace we planned. We have commissioned a costed decarbonisation plan for our built estate and fleet transition which will allow us to make evidence-informed decisions on the use of assets and financial investment to reduce our carbon emissions.	Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy Carbon emission reporting data

We have strengthened the way in which we communicate with our supply chains to support the achievement of our carbon reduction plans. We have worked in collaboration with councils across the Cardiff Capital Region and agreed a standardised approach to tender questions asked at selection and award stage. We have developed carbon reduction guidance and shared it with staff procuring goods in the council.	
We have achieved a 17.8% reduction in our own emissions in 2022/23 (44,248 tonnes of CO2 emissions) from the 2019/20 baseline (44,248 tonnes). This is largely due to a reduction in supply chain spend; indicative estimates show a reduction from 34,547 tonnes in 2021/22 to 29,780 in 2022/23. This method will not factor in any efforts to reduce supply chain emissions as an average factor is applied to each product group. Operational emissions for energy and fleet increased between 21/22 and 22/23 (13,889 tonnes to 14,527 tonnes). This can be attributed to the increase in the staff base and the inclusion of an additional reporting category for emissions arising from home working.	
We purchase our energy through a green tariff (100% renewable). In 22/23 we purchased 7,826,198 kWh of energy and generated 4,783,567kwh of renewable energy, 4,217,524kwh of which was exported to the grid. We avoided 1124 tonnes of CO2 through renewable energy generation, from solar panels on Council buildings and from the council's solar farm at Oak Grove Farm in Crick.	
We have developed and agreed an updated Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy. This includes an updated action plan on how we will reduce the council's carbon emissions. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group. The range of work that we are undertaking is helping us to understand the scale of the challenge and the path we need to take to reach our goal. We remain ambitious in our aim of becoming net zero by 2030. However, unless there is significant public investment, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our target will be extremely challenging.	
Support communities to reduce their carbon emissions.	
We have completed research to identify potential Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure requirements and assess on-street charging options. This will inform our future plans for electric charging infrastructure. We have made limited progress in installing electric charging infrastructure, partly due to a limited collective agreement on the best approach.	Carbon literacy training Circular economy projects Waste & Recycling rates.
We have increased the percentage of municipal waste in the county that was sent for recycling, reuse or composting in 23/24 to 71.7% (provisional data). This is above the statutory target of 64% and our own target of 70%. This is due to continued participation of residents with household recycling. The overall amount of waste generated per person has decreased from 125kg in 22/23 to 119kg 23/24 (provisional data). This shows the commitment of our residents to reducing our impact on the environment.	
We are a Bronze accredited Carbon Literate organisation. We have offered carbon literacy training to staff and elected members, with additional spaces being offered to community groups through the Community Climate Champions. During 23/24 we delivered carbon literacy training to 28 officers, 18 elected members and 5 residents. We have not been able to target businesses or wider residents due to limited officer capacity and resources. We need to increase the reach of our Carbon Literacy to allow more staff to gain a better understanding of what it means to be carbon literate. We are developing a Carbon Literacy training video to extend our reach.	
We have continued to support the running of 3 Benthyg library of things in the county. Since opening, these have lent 1,638 items to residents, resulting in a cost saving of £18.9k and a carbon saving of 9,755kg. We also supported three Repair Cafes run by our communities, and reuse	

shops which during the year diverted 33 tonnes of waste from going to landfill. These circular economy projects have contributed to our commitment to reducing the impact on our environment in the county. We have faced challenges finding key volunteers to support the running of these projects. We have achieved funding for two Circular Economy Project Officers to develop, expand and support our circular economy projects and the volunteers and community groups that drive them.	
What we want to achieve: Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health	
Enhance Nature recovery and biodiversity We delivered 14 projects across Monmouthshire for Nature Isn't Neat which reduced mowing and let wildflowers grow in green spaces. These mini meadows are vital for supporting biodiversity and give residents the chance to experience nature. We have faced some challenges in participation in nature recovery. We need to secure collective agreement on what needs to be done to preserve and support nature and biodiversity in Monmouthshire. We have reviewed our Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy to include a biodiversity and ecosystems resilience action plan. This sets out how we will maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems resilience through the council's operations. We have also reviewed our Green Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan. This guides how we will improve the health and well-being of our residents through enhancing our green spaces. We continue to lead the Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP). We have delivered £1.4m of work to improve and develop green infrastructure. This work is addressing nature and climate emergencies. We supported a range of work in Wye Valley AONB including green skills training and Youth Rangers. We are continuing to lead Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to share best practice and resources. This partnership developed the Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP). The action plan provides practical and achievable actions to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in the county.	Nature Isn't Neat project Gwent Green Grid Partnership Biodiversity and ecosystems resilience action plan
Improvements to river quality We have developed an action plan on how we will work in partnership to improve the health of our rivers and oceans. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group. We are a member of the Wye Nutrient Management Board Technical Advice Group which aims to identify and analyse options for delivering improvements for water quality. We are continuing our involvement with the Wye Catchment Partnership to protect water quality, water quantity and biodiversity. An Usk Catchment Partnership Core Group has been established. We have completed an Usk Catchment Farm Engagement Scoping Study and a review of partners resources to inform the Action Plan. A Knowledge Hub has been established with two council ecologists participating. We continue to assess Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) proposals associated with new developments requiring SuDS Approving Body (SAB) approval, against Welsh Government's National SuDS Standards. Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) announcement of water quality issues in Riverine Special Areas of Conservation, including the River Wye and River Usk, has significant implications for the progression of the RLDP. We have worked with partners to address this issue, which has caused	Rivers and oceans action plan Rivers partnerships

significant delay and restriction to development within the county. There is planned strategic phosphate mitigation work in the form of phosphate stripping being installed in Abergavenny and Monmouth to serve their settlements. This is enabling appropriate development to be permitted within these areas where it was previously restricted. A comprehensive review of the Environmental Permits of wastewater treatments across Monmouthshire has been complete; this will enable further development proposals to be permitted. We will ensure the candidate sites proposed within the Deposit Plan will not have an adverse impact on water quality within the River Wye or Usk.

Flood alleviation

We have continued to support our communities at risk of flooding. We have developed and updated emergency flood response plans for numerous sites across the county. We continue to respond to and investigate land drainage and flooding related issues daily and apply to Welsh Government for grant funding to deliver flood alleviation schemes in areas most at risk, with recent schemes completed in Tintern, Llantrisant, Llangwm, Llanbadoc, Shirenewton and Usk. We regularly engage with our communities through one-to-one sessions and community meetings.

We aim to take a proactive rather than reactive approach to flood management. We're working with partners such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to progress Natural Flood Management at three high priority sites in the River Trothy. We also conduct proactive land drainage inspections and forecasting/responding to regular tidal flooding at Tintern. This activity is helping to limit the impact of flooding on our communities.

We're developing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan. This will assess flood risk on a catchment-based approach and will identify Strategic Flood Risk Areas (SFRA). The Strategy will contain a County Wide Action Plan as well as specific Actions for each SFRA. This catchment-based approach will enable closer collaboration with wider flood risk management partners such as NRW.

<div align="center">

What we want to Achieve: Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce

</div>

Promote community growing and access to local produce

We have drafted a Local Food Strategy; the accompanying action plan sets out how we will facilitate access to council land for growing food, including continuing to work with Allotment Associations to bring empty plots back into use and create new plots through the Allotments Support Grant. We created 32 allotment plots in the year through our own land and through private sites. We need to ensure that the values of our Local Food Strategy are embedded across the organisation. For example, we recently re-tendered our contract for school milk when we were unable to secure all of our environmental policy aims through a collaboration with other councils.

We awarded 10 grants as part of the second round of Monmouthshire Food Partnership's small grants for community growing. These are providing community groups with resources to meet their ambitions. These include providing low-cost food, education and skills development and outdoor activity and well-being provision.

Local Food Strategy

Monmouthshire Food Partnership

We have launched a Monmouthshire Food Partnership website, providing an inclusive information resource on the local food system and activity across the county. A Spring Food Fair was held in March. The fair was attended by 20 local traders and around 1500 members of the public and promoted local produce available in the county.	
Support farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices We are committed to transforming our agriculture to be more regenerative and sustainable. We are supporting the Regen Ben mentoring scheme, with 3 farms receiving mentorship. This is helping participating farms to develop a plan to move their operations onto more regenerative lines, building soil health and improving water quality. Talk Farm Regen Monmouthshire continues to attract support from volunteers in the local farming community. We have worked with local farmers as part of the Welsh Veg in Schools pilot scheme to bring more local produce into schools. This has provided pupils in 10 participating schools with nutritious, local food no matter their socio-economic background. The project has also supported the development of new safety standards and new logistics. Growers are expanding their enterprises, and new farmers are diversifying into organic horticulture in order to participate. We continued to work in collaboration with Hartpury University as part of their TaLK UK SPF project which supports agricultural businesses increase productivity through Agri–Tech. During 2023/24, 94 businesses received support through this project.	Welsh Veg in Schools pilot Agri-tech collaboration with Hartpury university
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	

Page 65

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals						
Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
	✓	✓		✓		✓

Well-being Objective: A Green Place to Live

Monmouthshire is a beautiful place, with a stunning natural and built environment. We have a collective responsibility to ensure this is available for future generations to enjoy so our plans must be focused on the **long-term** and look to **prevent** problems from occurring in years to come. **Involvement** is required with partners and communities to maximise the potential of the environment within the county. Working in **collaboration** with organisations who can enhance our environment will provide expertise in all aspects of our work, for example this will allow us to trial the latest technologies in renewable energies. Creating a healthy and resilient area for people to enjoy demands the **integration** of this objective as the environment within Monmouthshire forms such an important part of achieving a range of goals.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Carbon emissions (kgCO$_2$e) from the council's assets and operations[x]	48,576	44,248	40,500	↑	Latest figure is 2022/23, previous is for 2021/22. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Capacity (MW) of renewable energy equipment installed on the council's estate	6.224	6.598	6.640	↑	Latest figure is 2023/24, previous is for 2021/22. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Percentage of municipal waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting[xi]	70.0	71.7	70	↑	Latest figure is provisional data for 2023/24.
The number of allotment plots created by the council and through private sites supported by the council	New measure	32	31	↔	We have refocused this measure to provide clarity on where the council can implement action.

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance
Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

A Thriving and Ambitious Place

What we want to achieve:

- Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment
- People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business
- Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure

Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire has a strong local economy and is well placed for growth in Welsh terms. Employment in our county is strong, with an employment rate of 76.2%, higher than both the UK (75.7%) and Wales (74.1%). We also have a highly qualified population, with over half of Monmouthshire's working age population qualified to level NVQ4 and above. However, the lack of higher education establishments in the county, combined with high property and rental prices, results in many young people leaving the county. We are building relationships with schools, local colleges and local businesses to enable more of our school leavers to progress into opportunities with local businesses, including through apprenticeships. Ensuring our young people are entering the labour market with the skills they need is vital to the success of our economy. This is a key focus of our Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy.

Our towns and high streets have faced many challenges in recent years, including more recently the cost-of-living crisis. Our town centre vacancy rate currently stands at 13%. We are committed to supporting our local businesses through these challenges and promoting the creation of new business; we provided support to 165 pre-starts and existing businesses throughout this year. It's important that we support the amenities that attract people to our towns. We have continued to make improvements to the accessibility of our visitor sites as part of our Heritage Strategy, and are working to understand and address barriers for those not attending.

Public transport is limited in the county. This results in an over-reliance on cars, which results in barriers to accessing training and employment for those who do not drive. We have developed a Local Transport Strategy which sets a clear ambition for transport infrastructure in Monmouthshire. We're also continuing to develop and improve our active travel network, with access to town centres and key destinations across Monmouthshire sitting at its heart.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Thriving and Ambitious Place

A Thriving and Ambitious Place		
Thriving and ambitious place	**Evaluation score:**	Level 4 – Good Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved. We have developed our strategies to deliver the objective. We have provided support for residents and businesses to gain new skills, develop and grow and delivered projects to enhance connectivity. We are building from a strong economic and skills base. Our assessment shows we need to do to grow this base and provide targeted support and projects for people, business and places that need them most.

Why we focused on this?

Our starting point is a comparatively strong one. Monmouthshire has a strong local economy and is well placed for growth in Welsh terms. There is strength in a number of key sectors which are highlighted and supported at a national level. Employment rates are high, as are qualification levels. But more can be done. Monmouthshire can be more vibrant. The conditions exist to achieve this. We will work with national, regional and local partners to increase investment, improve connectivity and continue the development of an economy which is thriving, ambitious and enterprising.

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
What we want to achieve: Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment	
Support vibrant town centres We are working in partnership with town councils and other key stakeholders to drive and oversee the development of the placemaking plans in Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy. Initial discussions have taken place with local stakeholders about a new placemaking plan for Caldicot. Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding has been secured to support the development of the plans. There remains a challenge to resourcing the delivery of the full ambitions of these plans. We are focussing delivery on specific projects, in agreement with partners, within the resources available. We undertook a detailed audit of town centre vacancies in Chepstow and Monmouth to understand factors affecting higher vacancy rates in these areas and how the council and partners can best give support to minimise vacancies. This found that 13% of premises were vacant. We are working to decrease this figure through the town centre building improvement grant scheme which is being used to help bring empty/underused properties back into use. We are also working with Usk Town Council on the development of proposals for public realm improvements in Bridge Street and Twyn Square.	Placemaking plans Audit of town centre vacancies

There is limited employment land remaining within our existing LDP. This is limiting the opportunities available for businesses to settle and grow in Monmouthshire. We have allocated 43 hectares of employment land within our Replacement Local Development Plan to ensure and encourage business growth and opportunity within the county.	
Continue to support the tourism sector We are implementing our Heritage Strategy. As part of this we are committed to improving the accessibility of our sites. We have commissioned an accessibility audit of Monlife attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements at visitor attractions and events in Monmouthshire. We are also developing pre-visit access information for all MonLife attractions to make it easier for people with specific access needs to check whether a certain site is accessible to them. We need to do more to attract visitors to our heritage sites. We have completed a visitors' survey to understand how we can make the experience better for those attending and understand the barriers to why some do not attend. This will inform action moving forward. We continue to provide concessionary prices at our attractions, including for foster carers, to reduce the financial barriers to attending. We have supported our visitor economy businesses to access UK and overseas group travel and travel trade markers to help them even out peaks and troughs in demand and provide a source of advanced bookings and guaranteed income. The number of FTE jobs supported by tourism has increased by 7.6% between 2019 and 2022 (3,356); visitor numbers also increased by 2.3% (2.34m) and the economic impact of tourism increased by 3% (£285m). This demonstrates the tourism sector has continued to grow beyond the challenges of the pandemic and the importance of the tourism sector in supporting employment and the economy in the county. We need to continue to assist the tourism sector through difficult economic times and ensure an excellent experience for visitors.	Heritage Strategy Accessibility audit Visitor's survey Tourism impact data
What we want to achieve: People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business	
Provide employment support and advice for businesses We continued to provide support to anyone interested in starting their own business via the Business Monmouthshire Project, making our residents more prepared for the challenges and equipping them with the knowledge they need to start a business. 165 pre-start and existing businesses were provided with assistance in 23/24, above our combined target of 160. This includes 80 potential entrepreneurs, which was above our target of 30, and 85 existing businesses in the county, which is below our target of 130. We have also improved our competitiveness index, increasing from 94.6 in 2019 to 96.3 in 2023. There is a decreasing number of self-employed people in our county; the current self-employment rate is 9.4%, compared with 14.1% pre-pandemic. We need to increase the uptake of support for those wishing to start or grow their own business to ensure a thriving local economy. We are developing a customer relationship management system that will enable us to strengthen our relationship with local pre-starts and existing businesses and ensure that they are aware of the range of support that is available and how they can access this.	Entrepreneur and business assistance Self-employment rate Employment support

We work with a range of partners to promote innovation and share best practice. The Leader and Chief Executive of our Council continue to play an active role in the Western Gateway. This partnership is helping us to collaborate with local government, business and academic partners to drive the local economy and promote our collective goal of net-zero. The Leader also oversees matters relating to Research and Innovation as part of the Cardiff Capital Region. A range of projects across a number of these are also being delivered through the Marches Forward Partnership, including development and the visitor economy, led by Monmouthshire. We have provided employment support to individuals who are economically inactive, ready for work or those in work looking to upskill; 115 people have been supported into employment throughout this year. Ready for work (Communities For Work+) has supported 108 people in to work and 36 people to gain qualifications, which has improved their economic chances. We have also provided counselling for 38 residents who are economically inactive and facing mental health barriers into work. Following support we need to improve the pathway to employment opportunities. This is a focus of our Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy. We continue to support Monmouthshire's food and drink business network and facilitate networking events every 8 weeks. Businesses attending have reported they appreciate the talks and networking opportunities to share challenges and learning and to make new connections. We provided support to 54 enterprises during 23/24, and 50 people have attended training or information sessions focusing on collaboration, business growth and routes to market.	
Support residents to gain the skills they need We are continuing to support our residents to gain the skills they need; during this year, 720 achieved new skills or upskilled. The Multiply programme has helped 146 participants to gain new numerical skills and is currently supporting 40 individuals to gain a GCSE mathematics qualification. We have also focused on vocational training, establishing weekly drop-in sessions to support those looking to gain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card – we have supported 30 people to gain one throughout the year. Budget constraints are limiting further courses that we can fund to meet demand. We are strengthening relationships with training providers to ensure residents can access more in-county training opportunities. We need to improve the pathway to employment in sectors facing regular recruitment challenges such as construction. This is a key focus of our Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy. We are building relationships with schools and local businesses to enable more of our school leavers to progress into opportunities with local businesses, including through apprenticeships. We have developed a STEM strategy that draws together the new STEM curriculum with the skill needs of current and potential businesses, and are working with these to further develop vocational opportunities and pathways. We have developed a Post-16 Transition Guide to share with our schools which provides an overview of transition for every young person in Monmouthshire and includes ideas around post-16 transition activities that schools and post-16 settings can do to enhance the experience for our young people. This guide aims to help prevent young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education Training or Employment). We have revised our Early Identification Tool, which helps us to identify those pupils most at risk of becoming NEET and cross references high risk young people across caseloads to ensure that provision and support is in place. This has been shared with schools and with teams supporting vulnerable learners. We have continued to work with Coleg Gwent to support our local NEET prevention partnership, Keeping in Touch Group. We	Skills programmes NEET strategy

carried out engagement with all local colleges as part of our Youth Engagement & Progression Framework responsibilities. Monmouthshire has a significant number of colleges as post-16 destinations; we need to develop strong relationships with partners to support post-16 transition. The percentage of school leavers not in education, employment or training has remained unchanged at 1.8%, slightly above our 1.6% target. We need to use our learning to develop our NEET strategy.

Our Care Leavers support workers regularly attend Keep in Touch meetings to ensure that any care leavers who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) and in need of support can access it via NEET prevention programmes. The percentage of care leavers who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training since leaving care was 52.5% in 23/24. We will improve our engagement with care leavers to reduce the number who become NEET.

What we want to achieve: Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure	
Support the development of a sustainable transport system We have developed a Local Transport Strategy which sets out a clear ambition for transport infrastructure in Monmouthshire over the next five years. We will develop a future facing integrated transport network that meets the transport needs of our communities in a sustainable way, with needs of both our residents and the environment at its heart. We know that having a transport system that meets the needs of our communities is vital in addressing the isolation and inequality that can occur as a result of the rural nature of our county. We are improving bus stop infrastructure as funding becomes available, with the aim of providing frequent core bus services that are designed to best fit our towns. We want to ensure services that are reliable and direct with improved journey times to get people where they need to be. Lower frequency secondary, on-demand and community services will be formed around this core network. We are lobbying Network Rail to make train stations physically accessible for all, supporting the South Wales Metro proposals, and continue to campaign for enhanced services frequencies. We endorse proposals for a new station at Magor and service frequency to two trains per hour to Chepstow. We are lobbying for the proposed Magor walkway station and working on proposals to improve bus access to Abergavenny, Chepstow, and Severn Tunnel Junction stations. We are working with a provider to explore options of implementing a pool car pilot that will improve access to pool vehicles. Procurement is being undertaken to launch an initial scheme of 10 electric/hybrid vehicles. This scheme will help to reduce the carbon emissions produced in county and to help those facing difficulties in travelling around the county. We have continued to maintain our key highways and ensured that the travelling public has a safe and efficient strategic road network. Throughout this year, 100% of planned programme maintenance was achieved. There remain a considerable number of backlog pressures for our highways infrastructure that we cannot afford to fund in our capital budget. These have varying levels of risk associated with them and impact on the condition of our road network. Independent condition assessments of key highways infrastructure are completed as required depending on condition, and these inform prioritisation of available capital budget to fund maintenance.	Local Transport Strategy Highway planned programme maintenance

Develop active travel routes	Number of active travel routes created or enhanced
We have expanded our active travel network this year through the utilisation of £500k core funding and an additional £6.9m of funding achieved through the active travel fund. This is the second year in a row we have leveraged the most funding in Wales. We have utilised this to make improvements around the county, including dropped kerb installation to improve the active travel network. We also created or enhanced 20 active travel routes throughout the year, achieving above our target of 18. We currently have over 100 active routes in place and an additional 20 in development. This is increasing the opportunities to use active travel in the county and supporting residents and visitors to walk and cycle. An active travel live counter dashboard is now fully operational, with 6 live counter sites uploading information twice daily. We now have baseline data measurements and will be able to monitor the usage of our network in comparison. Countryside counters have also been incorporated to provide a single source of foot and cycle traffic within MonLife. We are working to ensure future Local Development Plan sites have maximum active travel potential prior to habitation, with access to town centres and key destinations across Monmouthshire sitting at the heart of active travel development.	

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Well-being Objective: A Thriving and Ambitious Place

This goal is aimed at the **long-term** viability of Monmouthshire as a thriving place to live, work and visit. The location of Monmouthshire as the gateway to South East Wales means we must embrace working with neighbouring areas to maximise opportunities. Keeping Monmouthshire thriving and well-connected promotes **integration** and impacts on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the county. This requires **collaboration** with local businesses and other organisations, and **involvement** from the local community to maximise opportunities. Considering the global well-being of Wales is also important and this goal focuses on ensuring decisions are made with future generations in mind and takes a **preventative** approach to enable the retention of young people.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Annual economic impact of tourism (£)[xii]	182.79m	285.08m	3.8% growth pa	↑	Latest is 2022, previous is 2021. 2023 data will be added once available.
Number of pre-starts and existing businesses assisted during the year by the local authority and its partners	55	165	160	↑	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Number of working age people supported into employment during the year through action by the local authority	142	115	90	↓	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Percentage of school leavers not in education, employment or training[xiii]	1.8	1.8	1.6	↔	
Percentage of care experienced young people who have completed at least three months in education, training or employment	-	52.5	74.5	Newly adjusted measure	Measure amended in line with Welsh Government Performance Improvement Framework to include care leavers up the age of 21 from 19. Target will be revised in line with this change.
Percentage of local authority vehicle fleet which is ultra-low emission	8.4	10.2	9	↑	
Number of active travel routes created or enhanced	17	20	18	↑	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Number of active travel routes in development[xiv]	16	20	16	↑	

A Safe Place to Live

What we want to achieve:

- Increased supply of good quality affordable housing
- Reduce the number of people who become homeless
- A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint
- Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other

Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire is a really good place to live, but not for everyone. We are working with our partners to make sure everyone has a safe place to live. House prices here are some of the highest in Wales, with the average house price over £350k and 9 times average earnings in the county. This makes it difficult to buy or rent in Monmouthshire. That's why affordability is at the heart of our ambition in our proposed replacement Local Development Plan for our county. The delays in adopting this plan have limited the progress we have made in increasing the supply of affordable homes.

High property prices, a shortage of affordable private rented accommodation and the rising cost of living have all contributed to a rising homelessness problem in the county. Working collaboratively with housing partners in the county we have implemented a Rapid Rehousing, which has increased homeless prevention. We have worked with social and private landlords and started to re-purpose our own properties to increase the availability of temporary and settled homes for homeless households which has led to reduced use of use of B&B accommodation.

We want everyone to feel safe in Monmouthshire. Residents have voiced concerns about safety and rates of anti-social behaviour have increased slightly. We have worked with young people to address their concerns about knife crime and anti-social behaviour and have extended public space protection orders to prevent anti-social behaviour. We have worked with the Police and partners across the region to develop a strategy aimed at preventing the most serious types of violence across Gwent.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Safe Place to Live

Objective: A Safe Place to Live		
Safe place	**Evaluation Score:**	Level 4 – Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved. We have drafted our ambition for development in the county and implemented projects and support to deliver our objective. Our assessment shows that the delay in progressing our plans has limited the impact we have made to deliver our objective in the short term.
Why we focused on this?		
For most people, Monmouthshire is a really good place to live, but not for everyone. This needs to change. We will work with partners to create a safe place that people are proud to call home, increase the availability of good quality affordable housing, reduce homelessness and promote approaches to help homeowners to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.		
How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?		**How do we know?**
What we want to achieve: Increased supply of good quality affordable housing		
Produce a Replacement Local Development Plan We have drafted our Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) which will set the ambition for development within our county. We have ensured affordable housing sits at the heart of this plan by allocating 50% affordable housing on each site and introducing enabling policies which will allow for further affordable housing developments to come forward. This includes facilitating more single person accommodation in the county which is currently extremely limited and is a factor contributing to high numbers of homelessness. We have refreshed the Local Housing Market Assessment 2022-37 that has identified a net need for 499 additional affordable homes per year until 2027. The continued delay in progressing the RLDP has meant that the delivery of affordable housing has been limited in the short term due to limited remaining development land; just 46 affordable homes were approved during 23/24. We are focused on ensuring the RLDP can address as		Draft RLDP Local Housing Market Refresh 2022-37

much of this identified need as possible within wider policy constraints, whilst also being flexible to adjust to the needs of the market as they adapt. There is a risk that we will be unable to proceed with the Deposit RLDP if appropriate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites are not identified. Three sites have been identified for consultation by Cabinet following assessments by officers of council owned land. Cabinet's decision on which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites will be included in the Deposit Plan and will be informed by the findings of this consultation.	
Work with partners to develop more empty properties back into use We have increased action to reduce the number of empty properties across the county and have taken an approach which seeks to positively engage with owners to offer advice and support to help and encourage them to bring their home back into use. This includes letters advising of various grants and loans available, including the Empty Homes Grant. These efforts have resulted in 36 applications to the Empty Homes Grant and 4 enquiries on leasing a property as temporary homeless accommodation. We have also introduced more formal mechanisms to help tackle high numbers of empty properties within the county. This includes a Council Tax Premium on long-term vacant properties. Overall, our approach has reduced the number of recorded long-term empty homes from 541 to 447 as at the 2024/25 billing stage; of these, 366 have been recorded as vacant for over 12 months and will now be subject to the council Tax Premium.	Number of applications received to Empty Homes Grant and temporary housing use Number of long-term empty homes
What we want to achieve: Reduce the number of people who become homeless	
Prevent homelessness through rapid rehousing Through Rapid Rehousing we have facilitated increased resources into homeless prevention, for example through additional staffing and the availability of the Homeless Prevention Fund. We are working with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Shared Benefit Service to support more people at risk of homelessness. A total of 261 awards were given during the 2023-2024 financial year to both households at risk of homelessness to help tackle arrears/debt and households experiencing homelessness to enable them to remain in their current accommodation or access alternatives. We have remodelled our Housing Support service to include dedicated substance misuse support, temporary accommodation support and re-settlement support. This also includes dedicated support for young people with higher need through the recent expansion of the Housing First scheme with Pobl and the introduction of MoYo – dedicated housing floating support for young people. These initiatives have contributed to the increase in the percentage of homeless applications who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless from 50% at year-end 22/23 to 71% at year-end 23/24. There is demand for further support we need to meet, particularly for younger people and those with mental health and substance misuse needs. We need to address remaining challenges including the lack of temporary, supported and permanent accommodation. The focus of our RLDP on affordable housing provision will help us to address some of this need, particularly the demand for single person accommodation, of which there is a limited supply. We are striving to provide more settled accommodation for the increasing number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, of which there were 161 at year-end 23/24.	Number of grants awarded Homelessness data

We collaborate across council services to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. We regularly hold a Corporate Parenting Panel with a range of teams from across the organisation that coordinate and provide support to care leavers. Some care leavers are still experiencing homelessness. During the year, 8 care leavers experienced homelessness within 12 months of leaving care, an increase from 5 the previous year.	
Reduce the use of B&B accommodation We are increasing the availability of both temporary and settled homes for homeless households through a range of means including partnerships with private landlords through Monmouthshire Lettings and more homes through new build developments and acquisitions. We have worked with housing association partners to make additional general needs social housing available for homeless households, and the proportion has increased from 47% in 2021/22 to 57% at year-end 23/24. We need to determine how much scope there is to allocate further social housing to homeless applicants without being overly detrimental to other housing need groups. We have started to acquire accommodation for temporary accommodation use and the first approval has been given to re-purpose a Council owned agricultural property. We have developed a proposal to re-purpose Severn View residential home for temporary accommodation. The increased support for those at risk of homelessness, combined with the increase in availability of both temporary and settled accommodation, have contributed to the reduced use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation; the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation has decreased from 92 at year-end 22/23 to 46 at year-end 23/24. The number of 16 and 17 year olds in B&B accommodation has remained at 0 for 23/24.	Homelessness data
What we want to achieve: A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint	
Work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock We continue to support low-income households access grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. We are working with partners to promote Eco4, a scheme which provides funding to allow low-income households and individuals living with medical conditions worsened by damp or cold to access energy efficiency improvements. We have completed the first round of installer procurement and during 23/24 we provided 10 Eco4 declarations confirming eligibility for the scheme. We are working with ABUHB to identify residents with respiratory or immune suppression illnesses who may be eligible for this scheme to ensure that they are able to get the maximum support to which they are entitled. We have drafted the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) which will set the ambition for development within our county. Each home developed under this plan will be net zero carbon. This will not only help to lower our carbon emissions but will also help to reduce energy costs for our residents.	Number of people supported to access Eco4
What we want to achieve: Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other	
Work with partners to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)	

We are working to improve the relationship between young people and local police by regularly inviting police to our youth centres to engage with young people and understand what is important to them. We have been working with young people in Monmouth to address concerns of knife crime and anti-social behaviour in the area; £10k of grant funding has been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office to target young people involved in ASB. The rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population has increased from 10.6 to 13.1. We extended three Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Bailey Park, Abergavenny Lower and Monmouth Town to further tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour in the area to ensure our towns are safe and welcoming environments. We have worked with partners to develop a Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Strategy 2024/25. This has helped in identifying and addressing the serious violence priorities across the county of Monmouthshire. The Safer Monmouthshire Group is working with key partners and agencies to ensure interventions and activity are delivered across the county. This includes understanding the causes of serious violence to enable us to focus on preventing violence. There are data and intelligence gaps that have limited the development of the delivery plan. Addressing these is a priority and the strategy will be refreshed for 2025 onwards, informed by further evidence gathered. A Gwent regional violence against women and domestic sexual violence (VAWDASV) strategy has been developed and agreed. The strategy is now being implemented through partnership arrangements.	Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Strategy VAWDASV strategy
Work with communities to keep our county clean We, along with Town and Community Councils, held a dog fouling awareness day at Abergavenny and Goytre to reinforce the messages for dog owners to clean up after their pets. We developed and consulted on a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling, that provides several controls to protect everyone's enjoyment of open spaces and all public land in Monmouthshire. Informed by the consultation we have agreed and introduced stricter dog controls in public spaces across the county to help tackle dog fouling. These are supporting our public spaces to be clean, with limited impact on the environment. We investigated 619 Environmental Protection incidents (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc) during 2023/24, responded to 84% of them in 3 days. This included investigating 276 cases of fly tipping to gather evidence and inform proactive action to reduce fly tipping affecting our local environment. Evidence gathered resulted in one fixed penalty notice being issued and a cross-border prosecution case which included 4 fly tipping incidents in Monmouthshire. We worked with community groups and Keep Wales Tidy to provide support for local litter picks and implement litter picking hubs. We worked with the Keep Abergavenny Tidy litter campaign targeting businesses in Abergavenny; six businesses signed up to be a Litter Free Zone.	PSPO orders Environmental Protection incidents
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
	✓		✓	✓		✓

Well-being Objective: A Safe Place to Live

It is important the council **collaborates** with partners and **integrates** with their plans to reduce homelessness and ensure people can stay in their own homes and communities wherever possible. **Involving** and working with partners and community members is essential to develop communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other. The Replacement Local Development Plan has a focus on **long term** and has affordable housing and a well-connected net zero carbon development at its heart. A focus on **preventing** problems occurring is essential to creating a safe place that people are proud to call home.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Number of affordable homes granted planning permission in year	50	46	N/A	↓	This is an annual target with the latest figure reflecting land availability in the legacy LDP and limitations resulting from phosphates. This target is currently under review to ensure alignment with the RLDP.
Average time (months) homeless households spend in Band 1 with a homeless duty before moving on to settled/permanent accommodation	10.2	11.5	<10	↓	
Percentage of homeless applications who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless	50	71	55	↑	
Number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation	92	46	75	↑	Data as at 31st March.

35

Number of 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation	0	0	0	↔	Data as at 31st March.
Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation	117	161	176	↓	Data as at 31st March.

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

A Connected Place Where People Care
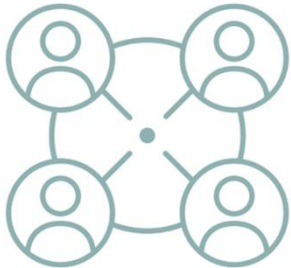
What we want to achieve:

- High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms
- A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded
- A professional and passionate social care workforce

Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire has a track record of delivering innovative approaches and rich partnership working in health and social care. Working in this way remains vital to meet pressures on health and social care services, that will only grow with a forecast increase in the older population in Monmouthshire. We have worked to ensure timely hospital discharge, helped vulnerable older people regain their independence, developed a longer-term strategy for domiciliary care and opened a new purpose-built specialist care home. These have already increased the availability of care for residents who need it and set out our path for a longer-term strategy to meet increased demand. We have also developed a recruitment and retention strategy to maintain the social care workforce we need.

Early help is vital to prevent children coming into local authority care. That's why we have been establishing a coordinated approach to early intervention in children's social services and overseen a reduction in the number of children looked after. We have produced a new strategy to develop more in-county residential and supported accommodation placements. This will ensure that children can maintain local connections and much needed stability in their lives.

People live for longer and are healthier here than in most other places in Wales. Healthy life expectancy is above both the average for Wales and the UK. This hides inequalities at a local level with a gap in healthy life expectancy between those living in the most and least affluent parts of the county. We know that there are many factors that affect our health and well-being. For this reason, we committed to work with others across Gwent and the Institute of Health Equity to tackle these by becoming what is known as a Marmot Region. While we have continued to deliver schemes to support residents to be physically active and access healthy food, particularly targeted at those who need it the most.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Connected Place Where People Care

A Connected Place Where People Care		
Connected place	**Evaluation Score:**	Level 4 – Good Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved. We have increased access to care and support in the county and provided services to support health and well-being of residents. Our evidence shows we are supporting higher levels and greater complexity of demand. Resourcing the preventive approaches required while meeting existing demand is a challenge to the delivery of our objective.

Why we focused on this?
Monmouthshire will be a place where people's contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others. The health and social care system is facing significant challenges, and statutory services across the UK are struggling to cope with the volume and complexity of demand. Monmouthshire has a track record of delivering innovative approaches and rich partnership working. We recognise that well-being is about far more than treating people when they get sick. There are many factors that can affect our health including the environment, housing, what we do for work, how much we earn, our lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These wider determinants of health, sometimes called the social determinants, can affect physical and mental health in either a positive or negative way.

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
What we want to achieve: High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms	
Provide early help and preventative services for families	

We have established a co-ordinated approach to early intervention and prevention in Children's Social Services providing support to children and families who need it as soon as possible. Our multi-agency panel arrangements provide a co-ordinated approach to referrals. Support offered includes community-based services such as School Based Counselling and The Integrated Families and Community Together teams. Support also includes a clear pathway to accessing emotional and mental health support for young people. A recent Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children's services identifies there is a coherent approach to early help and prevention to support children and families. This enables families to receive support and provide their children with the safety, nurture and care they need. Services have developed that enhance the support available for children, young people, and their families. The report also identifies some areas for improvement to strengthen prevention in children services. Demand remains high across all early help services. We have put significant effort in to reducing waiting times. This includes volunteers and students being used to build capacity and resilience, and group work approaches being used to reach more young people. We have increased capacity and reduced wait times. For example, Building Stronger Families has reduced the waiting list from around 6 months to a few weeks. Evaluation and feedback of family support services indicates clear and positive outcomes for families. For example, during 2023/24, 100% of families reported a positive outcome following a Building Stronger Families team intervention. Early help services are the foundation for our long-term strategy to prevent and reduce the need for children to come into care. We have seen an ongoing reduction of children looked after that indicates the potential impact of preventative services. A lot of our prevention work is grant funded. We continue to review demand and work with partners to provide accessible and coordinated early help support.	Early help service evaluations Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children's services
Increase placements available for children requiring support We have developed a Placement Development Strategy which sets out our planned expansion and development of in-county children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements. The strategy is based on an analysis of current and predicted need. This sets out our plan to support the transition to not-for-profit care for children in Wales and our response to associated risks and challenges, including a national shortage of residential placements. The number of children who are placed outside of the county is increasing. We need to support children to remain closer to their communities. We review demand for placements on a regular basis. We predicted we need 32 additional residential and supported accommodation places on current demand. We have commissioned two children's residential homes this year and a further residential home for 16-18-year-olds to support their independence. This will help to ensure children and young people can remain close to their communities and the benefits this brings with maintaining local connections. There remains a shortage of suitable placements for children who require them, especially those who require additional support or who are not able to be placed with foster carers. We have recruited 7 new foster carers during 2023/24. We have improved our offer for foster carers through aligning our allowances with other local authorities in Wales and through offering further financial support. However, our offer remains lower than other local authorities in Wales. This can make increasing the number of in-house foster carers in Monmouthshire challenging. There has been a decrease in the percentage of	Placement Development Strategy Children Social care performance data Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children's services

Page 82

placements of children who are looked after with in-house foster carers to 36.5%. We need to reshape our thinking about what support foster carers need both now and in the future as an integral part of providing placements in the county. A recent Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children's services recognised we are developing more opportunities for residential and supported accommodation placements and are working to recruit and retain foster carers.	
Support adults to return and stay at home We have worked with partners in both primary and secondary health to both prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and to support timely discharges. The regional Home First team provides support at the hospital front-door wherever possible. In Monmouthshire we have extended this and piloted an integrated practice approach between ward staff and community practitioners to promote discharge planning earlier in the patient's journey following admission. We are working with Age Cymru Gwent to pilot a new model for hospital discharge which focuses on shorter term intervention, seeking to enable individuals to return to live at home with no support (or the same level of support as pre-admission). This model is helping to reduce unnecessary re-admissions and to avoid delays in hospital discharge, while also allowing those who leave hospital to regain their independence. Despite these measures, ensuring well-coordinated and timely discharges and managing the pressure within the hospital system remains challenging. We convene weekly multi-disciplinary meetings to try to identify and unblock delays when they arise. The number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons varies during the year. In March 2024, 15 patients were waiting, the same number as in March 2023. We are growing the use of reablement wherever possible to support people to relearn how to do daily activities and to reduce their need for further support. Reablement provides intensive short-term interventions to support people to retain their independence. We provided 331 packages of reablement throughout this year, a significant increase on 184 for 22/23. Of the packages we delivered last year, nearly 70% of cases reduced or mitigated the person's need for support, 14.2% reduced the need for support, whilst 55.3% mitigated the need for support.	Hospital discharge monitoring information Reablement service performance information
Ensure timely assistance is available for adults requiring support We have multi-disciplinary professionals available as the first access point for people who contact adults' social care. We received a slight decrease in reports for adults' social care (8,085 contacts) last year, although this remains high. Almost three quarters of these (5,951) were from people not already in receipt of care and support. These professionals provided advice and assistance to 3,635 contacts or, where appropriate, a decision was made for further assessment to be undertaken by the most relevant practitioner. Feedback from adults' social care services users shows 77.6% of adults reported that they received the right information or advice when they needed it; this is an increase from 75% for 22/23. We have focused on reducing the hours of unmet need in Adults' Social Care through a range of activities and support working with care providers and our partners. For example, we have developed a micro-care project to increase the availability of care in the county. The project supporting self-employed carers to develop their businesses as well as providing the opportunity for greater oversight and governance of self-employed care	Adults Social care performance information Micro-care project Strategy for commissioned domiciliary care

workers operating within Monmouthshire. The number of micro-carers is steadily increasing. There are currently 24 carers registered (an increase from 9 previously), and these are supporting 81 people in their local community, delivering 368 hours of care and support in total each week. There has been a significant reduction in the hours of unmet need from 804 hours in March 2023 to 306 hours in March 2024 (this equates to 3.5% of the 8,714 hours of care provided each week). This reduction is due to a combination of our activities and external factors resulting in the demand and market for care at home stabilising across the region. This has improved access to care and support for those who need it. Feedback from adults' social care services users shows an increase in the percentage of adults happy with their care and support from 83.5% in 22/23 to 84.6% in 23/24. There remain challenges to respond to all people's care and support needs in as timely a manner as we would want due to continuing pressure across the social care and health system. We have analysed our existing commissioned domiciliary care arrangements, assessed future need and explored future options for development. We have an ageing population in Monmouthshire with an increased risk of comorbidities that will pose challenges to meeting and financing future care demand. Informed by this, we have developed a 10-year strategy for commissioned Domiciliary Care. We are focused on supporting the provider market and at the same time ensuring that wherever possible our in-house provision is supported for reablement as this is where we utilise our expertise to support residents to retain independence. The strategy supports developing place-based care through meeting the varying requirements in differing localities. This aims to support carers and those receiving care to be more engaged in their local community. The strategy will need to be regularly evaluated. We have completed a review of the My Day, My Life Service to inform how we support adults with a diagnosed learning disability to access day opportunities and activities. We used the recommendations from the review report, the comments made from people involved in the service and the wider public to develop a vision for the future development of the My Day, My Life Service and an implementation plan. There was a strong response from residents highlighting the need for, and importance of, services and support for people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people. The changes are being implemented with people with learning disabilities and their families being central to how services are developed. We committed that people using the My Day, My Life service have access to a home base and a full range of meaningful day opportunities. We have agreed a new base for the My Day, My Life service in Monmouth and Abergavenny.	My Day, My Life
What we want to achieve: A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded	
Support residents living with dementia We have developed and opened in March 2024 Severn View Park, a specialist care home for people living with dementia. The home provides 32 bedrooms for long-term support and short-term support in the form of respite based on a relationship-centred care model. The new care home aims to maintain connections with the surrounding community. By creating opportunities for the residents through events and shared spaces, residents can maintain a sense of personal identity and inclusion.	Severn View Park Care Home National Exercise Referral scheme participation

We have delivered two programmes as part of the National Exercise Referral scheme to support the well-being of people living with Dementia and their carers. We have trained 12 community volunteers to deliver object reminiscence and memory cafes for older people and people living with Dementia. This has helped to reduce feelings of loneliness and has increased the self-esteem and confidence of those living with dementia.	
Work with partners to develop the social determinants of health We, as member of the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB), have formally agreed to become a 'Marmot Region', and to work in partnership with the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) to use the social determinants of health approach as the basis for the response to well-being and health inequalities in Gwent. The Gwent PSB has adopted the eight Marmot Principles as the framework for action to reduce inequalities across Gwent as part of the Gwent PSB Well-being Plan**.**	Building a Fairer Gwent Report Gwent PSB Well-being Plan.
Develop the county's early years offer We are working to grow our early years offer to ensure families can access good quality childcare. Since April 2023, three new full day care providers have been registered, offering an additional 109 places for children under 5. Two of these settings have registered with Flying Start and are offering funded places for eligible two year olds. Many of our existing settings have also signed up to offer Flying Start childcare places and we currently have 4 maintained settings, 28 non-maintained settings and 6 childminders approved to offer Flying Start childcare places across Monmouthshire. This increased provision has resulted in all children eligible for Flying Start childcare who wish to take up the offer being able to access childcare in a setting of their choice. It also means that working families are now able to access Flying Start provision in day nurseries, enabling them to take up provision and continue/return to work. Children are often able to stay in the same setting for their early education and wrap around childcare, resulting in fewer transitions. We need to continue to grow this offer to keep up with increasing demand.	Childcare Sufficiency assessment
Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity. We have developed and implemented schemes to support residents to be physically active and access healthy food for those who need it. The National Exercise Referral scheme has provided pathways to positive lifestyle and exercise choices. Case studies of those participating has shown a positive impact, with reports of increased mobility, improvements in mood and a reduction in anxiety. Through the year 1,084 referrals were made to the scheme; 72% of those referred took up the scheme and the latest data shows 64% of people who took up the scheme continued until the 16-week review. The take up and continued participation rate in the scheme has fluctuated through the year. We have not been able to complete more interventions to increase continued participation in the scheme due to capacity constraints. We will continue to work with healthcare professionals to explore ways of increasing participation in the scheme. We supported over 145 members of the 60+ programme in Monmouthshire with a FIT4LIFE membership that includes gym, fitness classes and swimming. The Members on 60+ programme have reported that thanks to attending they have met friends and created social networks, as well as improve their health.	National Exercise Referral scheme participation FIT4LIFE membership Food and Fun scheme attendance Youth Service provision

We provided 91 youth service sessions throughout the summer with 407 hours of engagement achieved. During these sessions, which included open-access sessions at our four youth centres, trips, events, residentials and outreach sessions, the Youth Service made 2598 contacts. This service provided young people, including vulnerable young people, with the opportunity to foster social connections, try new skills and find new hobbies.	
Support carers and young carers' needs We support a total of 168 carers and young carers and continue to work with them to understand their needs and how best to support them. We're working with regional partners across Gwent as part of the Bridging the Gap Gwent (BTGG) programme to provide a short-term respite service to carers; referrals have increased, particularly among parent carers and young carers, partly due to increased promotion. This service allows carers of all ages to have a short break from their caring responsibilities. We need to do more to engage with our young carers, particularly those under the age of 14 who are not able to receive emails directly and so are sometimes missing out on information or events. We will use all forms of social media available to us to promote our young carers' events to ensure we reach the maximum number of young carers.	Carers and Young Carers service
What we want to achieve: A professional and passionate social care workforce	
Develop our social care workforce We have developed a recruitment and retention strategy for our social care workforce, with a particular focus on addressing areas where there is high demand. There remains volatility in the workforce market; however, we have decreased the number of vacancies across social care from 53 in March '23 to 23 in March '24. We are prioritising recruitment to essential posts in social care, although recruiting to social care roles in both adults' and children's social services remains a challenge. We are contributing to the development of a Gwent workforce strategy, aligned to which we are developing a five-year Monmouthshire workforce plan. This is vital to ensure we have a workforce to deliver the care that our residents require.	Social care workforce recruitment and retention strategy
Uplift fees for care providers We have provided an uplift in fees for care providers as part of our budget setting process to increase the placements available for people who require care. We allocated £2.7 million to recognise the budget pressure from the review of care provider fees across Children's and Adults' social care. This ensures that providers can continue to pay the real living wage to attract and retain key staff to meet increasing demand. We need to ensure our fee rate remains a viable and attractive option for care home providers. This aims to ensure that residents have the opportunity to choose the best support for them. We need to evaluate whether residents are able to access the care they need.	Fees for care providers
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	
Ensure early and help prevention services are effectively able to meet current and prevent, as far as possible, future demand	
Increase the focus of council activities on improving the social determinants of health	

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals						
Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
		✓	✓	✓		

Well-being Objective: A Connected Place Where People Care

Adopting community-focused approaches promotes **collaboration** which in turn will support well-being. By working with communities, we hope to **prevent** problems from occurring. Opportunities are plentiful in our county, so it is vital that everyone can be **involved** to maximise benefits to well-being. This should have a **long-term** benefit to individuals and communities. Our actions will have an **integrated** benefit for many aspects of promoting a healthier Wales. They will promote a Wales of cohesive communities and overall, help to create a more equal Wales. There is also strong integration with our responsibilities under the Social Services & Well-being Act.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Percentage of adult service users who have had the right information or advice when they needed it [xv]	75	77.6	77.5	↑	
Percentage of child assessments completed within statutory timescales	92.3	95.9	92	↑	
Percentage of families reporting a positive outcome following a Building Stronger Families team intervention	87.5	100	88.1	↑	
Number of new in-house foster carers recruited in the year	1	7	5	↑	
Percentage of placements of children who are looked after by the local authority made with in-house foster carers	42.2	36.5	42.9	↓	

Number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons (measured on an agreed census date each month)	15	15	14	↔	As at Census date
Percentage of people successfully completing the exercise referral scheme at week 16[xvi]	48	64	50	↑	
Percentage of adult service users who are happy with the care and support received [xvii]	83.5	84.6	90	↑	
The percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support/ achieved a positive outcome	57.6	55.3	60	↓	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance
Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

A Learning Place

What we want to achieve:

- Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils
- The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning
- A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs
- Continue our programme of school modernisation

Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire should be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential. The pandemic caused significant disruption to the education of our pupils. We are still seeing the consequences of this today. School attendance has declined since the pandemic. Our Education Welfare Officers have worked with vulnerable learners and we have a specific programme targeted at those with very low attendance levels.

We are seeing an increase in need for mental health and emotional well-being support for children and young people. There has been a rise in behaviours that challenge in our schools, with permanent exclusions becoming more common. This has required us to evolve and grow the learning and well-being support for our children and young people. We have restructured our education inclusion service and have worked with all schools with targeted training and regular Q&A sessions.

We provide monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Learners in our secondary schools score higher than elsewhere in Wales. Our disadvantaged learners continue to experience lower attainment than those less disadvantaged, an achievement gap that was worsened by the pandemic. We have developed targeted support for these learners from education advisors and the wider community focused schools approach. This is aimed at ensuring all pupils can succeed irrespective of their socio-economic background.

The environment children and young people learn in is important to their development and well-being. We have been building a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny, and we have also developed plans and secured funding to increase our Welsh medium provision.

Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Learning Place

A Learning Place		
Learning place	**Evaluation Score:**	Level: 4 (Good) Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved
		We have developed our approaches and increased our support to schools and pupils to achieve our objective. Our evidence shows the demand and complexity of support children and young people require, particularly vulnerable learner, has grown. Our assessment identifies the need to further adjust, develop and target our support to achieve our objective.
Why we focused on this?		

Monmouthshire will be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential. The pandemic has had a substantial effect on schools and pupils. The two years of uncertainty and significant disruption to learning have inevitably left a legacy. Before the pandemic we knew that our disadvantaged learners did not achieve the outcomes we would wish. The pandemic has worsened the learning experiences of many vulnerable students such as those eligible for free school meals. The emotional and mental well-being of pupils was often affected, with many experiencing increased uncertainty, anxiety and loneliness. In line with our guiding principles, it is vital that we develop more opportunities to listen and learn from our pupils and students. Since schools have reopened the education system in Wales has continued to evolve with reforms and developments including the new curriculum for Wales and the introduction of a new additional learning needs act.

How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
What we want to achieve: Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils	
Improve attendance and reduce exclusions We have focused on improving school attendance following a decline due to the pandemic. We have implemented a range of measures to improve attendance across our schools. For example, Our Education Welfare Service continues to offer a holistic approach to improving overall attendance in our schools. Education Welfare Officers are working with vulnerable pupils to bring them back into the educational setting, where possible, and are holding attendance consultations with schools regularly to promote attendance and provide bespoke support to families. We continue to grow Inspire Outreach to deliver support to young people identified with attendance of less than 50%. We have also supported 17 pupils throughout the year through the re-engage programme, which resulted in improvements in attendance for 92% of pupils engaged. This has resulted in an improvement in overall the attendance level which means more children and young people are being provided with learning and support within our schools. Attendance in primary schools is increasing steadily; during 22/23 attendance was 92.9%. At the end of the Spring term 2024, attendance was 93.9%. This is near to pre-pandemic levels; we aim to increase this further. Secondary school attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels and has not increased in the last academic year. Attendance during 22/23 was 88.4%; at the end of the Spring term 2024 it was 89.1%. This is significantly below the pre-pandemic figure of 95.1%. We need evaluate our attendance support and develop our activity to improve secondary attendance. Attendance figures for those eligible for free school meals (eFSM) has also been significantly affected by the pandemic. During 22/23, attendance of eFSM pupils was 5.7 percentage points lower than pre-pandemic figures in primary schools, and 11.3 percentage points lower in secondary schools. The low attendance of those eFSM has been identified by Estyn as an area for concern in one of our secondary schools. We need to increase attendance for those eFSM to ensure no pupil is left behind. We have appointed a Vulnerable Learner Lead to provide a more focused universal offer of advice, guidance and monitoring to managing exclusions and supporting learners at risk of exclusion and supporting their inclusion and admissions. We need to further develop and resource this offer to ensure a consistent approach to supporting vulnerable learners at risk of exclusion, to prevent exclusions as far as possible. The number of permanent exclusions is increasing. During 22/23 there were 12 permanent exclusions across our secondary and primary schools, an increase from 5 for the previous year.	Education Welfare Service School Attendance and exclusions
Support pupils' well-being	

We have implemented the whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being which helps schools to understand how they are best placed to promote well-being. We have introduced this in a phased approach and increased the number of schools engaged in the approach from 43% to 74%. This is increasing the support available for the well-being needs of our pupils and has a significant effect on children's attendance and achievement in school. All schools and settings are engaged with Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), and we currently have 67 practicing ELSAs who access regular supervision, operating across all bar one school in the county, making a positive impact on the Emotional Literacy of pupils.	Whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being
We have delivered Trauma Informed Schools Training to over 500 staff during this year. This approach focuses on understanding children/young people presenting with behaviours of concern, and raising the awareness and capacity of adults supporting vulnerable pupils. We have also developed and shared a Children Looked After (CLA) and former CLA policy with schools to ensure clarity in our approach to supporting CLA learners. These are helping us to deepen our understanding of what vulnerable learners need and to ensure an aligned and strengthened approach to supporting them. There has been an increase in episodes of behaviours that challenge in schools as a result of the continuation of trends that first emerged during the pandemic. This is challenging for schools, staff, and learners. There is a risk that this will also result in a worsening of educational attainment. We need to continue to develop and evolve our support to reduce and prevent behaviour that challenges.	Trauma Informed Schools Training

What we want to achieve: The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning

Support excellent teaching and learning We have worked with the Education Achievement Service to provide challenge, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools. All schools are provided with a bespoke support package that complements the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs), in line with the levels of support they require. These are regularly reviewed, and support is adjusted if required. Learners in our secondary schools score higher than elsewhere in Wales, on average. 26% of pupils across Monmouthshire are achieving 5 or more GCSE at levels A*-A, compared with 20.3% for Wales. We also have fewer pupils leaving school with no qualifications at 0.8%, compared with 1.4% of pupils across Wales. When schools evaluate their own performance, they assess this against similar schools. This is a more informative and detailed assessment of attainment and wider progress, given the varying make up and individual plans of schools, than comparing against Wales averages. When comparing our comprehensive schools with those of similar size and linguistic delivery across Wales, 2 schools outperform those similar in every category, and 1 outperforms in most categories (including literacy, numeracy, science, no qualifications, 5+ A*-A). One of our schools underperforms in most categories compared to similar schools. We have been working with two of our schools who were placed in statutory categories following Estyn reviews in 22/23. Follow-up reviews conducted during 23/24 found that both schools have made significant progress in addressing the recommendations set out by Estyn and have now been removed from statutory categories. Two of our schools inspected have been selected to produce case studies for dissemination by Estyn, the first on its approach to developing the Curriculum for Wales and the integration of the specialist resource base, and the second on its promotion of the Welsh language within the school community and beyond. We recognise the importance of listening and learning from our pupils. We are developing a participation policy and toolkit to fully involve children and young people and their parents or guardians in ALN developments, initiatives and evaluations. A Pupil Panel has been established in all	Attainment data School Development Plans (SDPs) Estyn inspection reports Participation policy and toolkit Pupil Panel

secondary schools and parental engagement activities have been completed. These are supporting pupils to contribute to teaching and learning approaches in schools.	
Develop opportunities for children and young people to learn and speak Welsh

We are working with childcare providers to expand the availability of Welsh medium childcare provision. We have improved the range and quality of information available on the benefits of a Welsh language education, to allow parents to make more informed decisions. We have worked with Welsh medium childcare settings in Monmouthshire to make Welsh Flying Start places available at all settings, which has expanded the offer for parents. We need to expand the reach of our promotion on the benefits of the Welsh language and the opportunities available to our young people.

We have established an immersion class at Ysgol Y Ffin and have secured funding to grow this provision across the county over the next three years. By opening Welsh medium education to all primary aged pupils through the provision of an immersion class, parents can choose a Welsh medium education for all their children with confidence, in the knowledge they will be well supported to develop their Welsh language skills. At the end of April 2024, 23 pupils have benefitted from Welsh medium immersion provision. This immersion class is also having a positive effect on the number of applications to Welsh medium schools; in April 2024, Ysgol Y Ffin allocated 26 pupils to the reception class, the highest number for the school. | Welsh language promotion

Flying start places |
| **What we want to achieve: A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs** | |
| **Supports all learners to achieve their potential**

We have restructured our inclusion services to create a broader Inclusion Team. This has supported the delivery of the Additional Learning Need (ALN) Strategy, which aims to build sustainable and resilient provision. Our Inclusion support is now embedded as part of interconnected strategies and related toolkits, resources and policies for ALN, relationships, children looked after and reducing exclusions. We have worked collaboratively to ensure all schools and early years settings were prepared for their new responsibilities under the ALN Act through targeted training and regular online Q&A sessions. A framework is being developed for the management of specialist resource bases (SRB) provision which will ensure a consistent, equitable approach across all settings.

We are developing our Inclusion Strategy. This will outline our collective principles, approaches and service offer, and will help us to ensure consistent, high-quality delivery of inclusion services across Monmouthshire.

We have established an ALN Quality Assurance system for mainstream schools to support excellent practice in the identification and management of pupils with ALN. An ALN Quality Assurance task and finish group has been established, protocols agreed, and training provided. We need to further develop the consistency of ALN provision across the county. | Additional Learning Need (ALN) Strategy |
| **Improving outcomes for children eligible for free school meals**

We have worked with the Education Achievement Service to provide challenge, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools. This has particular focus on vulnerable learners, which includes those eligible for free school meals. There remains a gap in attainment between those pupils eligible for free school meals and those not. Latest data shows that, on average, pupils eFSM are performing below their peers not eFSM by | Attainment data

School Development Plans (SDPs) |

Page 98

over 1.5 GCSE grades. This is a significant gap. We need to do more to support pupils eFSM and ensure that each pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed no matter their socio-economic background. Our Community Focused Schools lead continues to provide a vital role in working with schools and partners to develop activities and relationships for the benefit of the whole school community. This has included building relationships, signposting to support and benefits entitlements, poverty proofing schools and providing cost of living support. We are working with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) on Tackling All Aspects of Poverty and developing a whole authority strategy on supporting disadvantaged learners.	Community Focused Schools
Improve accessibility of adult education courses We are reducing financial barriers to our adult education courses to make them more accessible to our residents. We have reviewed our course funding model and have shifted to a grant subsidised model; this now means that all our community education courses are directly subsidised. We have also continued our partnership with Coleg Gwent to offer low-cost foundation-level learning, costing £10 for access to all franchise courses provided in Monmouthshire. We recognise the importance of removing any barriers to involvement in adult education and the effect it can have on adults gaining new skills and knowledge; in 23/24, 937 learners enrolled in our community education courses, an increase of 377 on 22/23 and above our target of 718.	Adult education courses participation
What we want to achieve: Continue our programme of school modernisation	
Build a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny We are progressing with construction of the new King Henry VIII all-through school in Abergavenny. The new building will be net zero in line with our commitment to decarbonise our operations. The school replaces Deri View Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and will have the capacity for 1,200 secondary school age pupils, 420 primary age pupils and 200 places for post 16 education. There will also be suitable accommodation for 71 pupils with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs within the school. It is anticipated that the development of this school will reduce the number of pupils attending an out of county secondary school. The school is scheduled to be completed by April 2025.	King Henry VIII all-through school
Increase Welsh medium primary school provision We are expanding our provision of Welsh medium education. We have secured a new site for Ysgol Y Fenni which will increase the capacity of the school from 210 to 420 pupils. We have secured funding and a site in Monmouth for a new Welsh-medium primary school. We have continued the development of this school which will open to Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils in September 2024. We were unable to open a satellite class in September 2023 due to low numbers of applications and difficulties in securing staff, particularly a head teacher. To continue the expansion of our Welsh medium provision, we need to focus on promoting Welsh medium education and securing appropriate staff to ensure a high-quality education for our young people.	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
Develop a strategic review of all schools and their catchment areas	School Catchment areas

49

We have reviewed secondary school catchment areas which were in place for the latest admission round, and we are undertaking a review of primary school catchment areas across the county. Both reviews have resulted in young people in Usk having improved access to attending a primary and secondary school within the county.

We have engaged with staff and pupils to establish the most appropriate way to develop education in the Chepstow area. We have developed a masterplan for the education estate in Chepstow, and with feedback from those attending, have created a vision for a new building on the Chepstow School site as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. We will continue to engage regularly with Chepstow cluster headteachers to review options for consideration, and will also engage with residents to understand their views on education provision in the area.

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

Develop the support offer for schools and pupils to reduce and prevent exclusions

Develop the support offer for disadvantaged learners to achieve their potential

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	**Healthier Wales**	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓		✓	✓		✓	

Well-being Objective: A Learning Place

The **long-term** nature of this goal is intrinsic to its success. Working with and **involving** children and young people, as early as possible, to identify their needs will give them the best chance of achieving their maximum potential. **Preventing** problems before they start will provide our young people with the best chance to develop. Using a **collaborative** approach and aligning services provides a rounded resource that works in harmony for the young person. Overall, this approach **integrates** the needs of our young people, ensuring they have the best opportunity to achieve their goals.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Percentage pupil attendance at primary level (figure for those eligible for free school meals shown in brackets)	91.8 (88.1)	92.9 (89.3)	94.6 (92.6)	↑	Data measures in academic years. Previous is 2021/22 academic year. Latest is 2022/23 academic year.

				🟧	Target is for 2022/23 academic year.
Percentage pupil attendance at secondary level (figure those eligible for free school meals shown in brackets)	88.4 (80.9)	87.7 (78.7)	91.2 (82.4)	🟥 ↓	Data measured in academic years. Previous is 2021/22 academic year. Latest is 2022/23 academic year. Target is for 2022/23 academic year.
Number of permanent exclusions across primary and secondary schools	5	12	<5	🟥 ↓	
Total number of enrolments by adult learners on community education courses including Coleg Gwent franchise courses	560	937	718	🟩 ↑	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

Using Our Resources

The council needs to remain relevant and viable for the next generation, while continuing to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses in the here-and-now. To support the delivery of our goals, we must make sure that all aspects of the council are working efficiently, effectively and in line with the sustainable development principle set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Act specifies core areas in an organisation that need to adapt to meet the changing demands on our services and ensure their longevity and sustainability. We have evaluated our arrangements for these areas and included digital and data as another important enabler of how we deliver the council's services. The areas we have assessed are:

- Corporate planning, performance and risk management
- Financial planning
- Workforce planning (people)
- Procurement
- Assets
- Digital & Data
- Democracy & Scrutiny

Annual Governance Statement

The council has a governance framework, our Code of Corporate Governance, for the year end March 2024. The framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

We have produced an Annual Governance Statement for the year 2023/24 that demonstrates that we have appropriate governance arrangements in place to meet the governance principles and that a review has been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of those arrangements. The draft statement was presented to Governance & Audit Committee in July 2024. This self-assessment of our resources integrates with the findings from the Annual Governance Statement and will also contain further actions and recommendations related to these arrangements.

How effective is corporate planning?	How do we know?
We have developed and agreed a Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28. This sets a clear direction for the council. An Audit Wales review of our objective setting in the Community and Corporate Plan has found 'The council has set its well-being objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle and is aligning its key strategies and business plans to support their delivery, but it could further strengthen its approach by increasing the diversity of citizen involvement in future'.	Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 and measurement framework.
We have developed an accompanying performance measurement framework. This is allowing us to measure our performance on areas that can be directly affected by the council and the progress of wider outcomes that are not directly in the council's control. We have set targets against these measures that demonstrate the ambition of the council to residents. This is allowing us to be held to account for performance and identifies where services are not performing as planned. We need to develop the measurement framework to increase the focus on outcomes, where possible. An Audit Wales review on our use of performance information found 'The council provides some performance information to enable senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users, but information on outcomes is limited restricting their ability to manage performance effectively.'	Audit Wales reports Enabling strategies
Supporting and Enabling strategies are being developed to ensure they are fit for purpose and support the new policy aims and objectives set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. These will be important to enable the delivery of the ambitions of the plan. We need to ensure there are clear mechanism and arrangements to monitor the impact of these strategies and regularly evaluate performance against outcomes.	
How effective is performance management?	**How do we know?**
The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. This has been embedded in our performance management framework. Regular reporting on performance has allowed performance to be held to account by officers, scrutiny and cabinet and demonstrated progress to residents. The Self-Assessment process has been embedded in the council's performance management framework. The self-assessment process has facilitated the completion of a robust evaluation of performance. These performance management arrangements have helped to clearly identify areas of progress and areas for development. The performance of the council objectives has been assessed as 'good' for five objectives and 'adequate' for one objective.	Community and Corporate Plan progress report Draft Self-assessment report
Service Business Planning principles, supporting templates and guidance are in place and regularly reviewed. Service Business plans are facilitating services to plan for the next three years, assess what went well, learn from what did not and measure the impact their service has made on people and places of Monmouthshire. Service business plan completion rates and quality have improved. Although these remains varied and require improvement. Latest monitoring shows 50% were updated within timescales and there is an increase in compliance with principles. Quality assurance on service business plans has shown that managers do not always	Service business plans & quality assurance

consistently apply a self-evaluative mindset when updating service business plans. Strengthening self-evaluation within plans will be vital to information gathering to inform the self-assessment report.

How effective is risk management?	How do we know?
We have developed an updated strategic risk management policy and guidance. This defines the approach, process and responsibility for managing strategic risk in the council. This also defines risk tolerance and a risk appetite for the council. The revised policy received positive endorsement from Governance & Audit Committee. The policy is being implemented in a phased approach to develop and strengthen risk management arrangements. The strategic risk register is updated regularly and available to all members and officers to view at any time. There are arrangements to formally review the whole strategic risk register and report it six monthly to scrutiny, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet. This facilitates and demonstrates that risk management is embedded in the council and strategic risks facing the council are being robustly identified and managed. The risk assessment in service business plans is not always fully completed. This limits the ability of services to use their service business plans to robustly manage and mitigate risks and may impact the escalation of risks onto the strategic risk register.	Strategic risk management policy, appetite statement and guidance. Strategic risk register
How has the area for development from the last report been addressed? Embed the delivery of the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 within the council's performance framework.	How do we know?
The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. Our self-assessment of our performance framework shows the actions in the Community and Corporate Plan have mainly been embedded in the performance management framework. This also shows there is a need to further strengthen the alignment in some service business plans.	Community and Corporate Plan progress report Service business plans & quality assurance
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	
Increase the focus on outcomes in the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan	

Financial Planning – Evaluation Score: Level 4 Good

How effective is financial monitoring?	How do we know?
We have closely monitored our finances at regular intervals throughout the year. Cabinet received an early financial update in July 2023 indicating significant pressures on the budget of £2.6 million. We implemented a structured approach to tackling the deficit through budget recovery proposals developed by services. Our financial monitoring at Month 9 indicated an overspend of £314k, due to a combination of a shortfall in services being able to meet their budgeted savings and pressures across frontline directorates. Improvements in service budget positions, driven by the budget recovery action enacted by services during the year, as well as improvement in the costs of capital financing as areas of the capital programme have experienced delays, have resulted in a net revenue budget surplus at outturn of just over £1.7m. This has resulted in less needing to be drawn from reserves to support the budget than budgeted. 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 overspend 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. At outturn, no capital schemes reported material over or under spends that require additional financing from the Council's own resources. Capital slippage requests totalled over £28m. An Audit Wales review of our capital programme management found that our monitoring arrangements focus on budget and timescales with limited consideration of impact or learning. There is variability in the quality of our budget monitoring and forecasting across service areas. We have also not always completed budget forecasting reports in a timely way during the last year. This has impacted on the effectiveness of our in-year budget management.	Financial monitoring reports Audit Wales reports
How effective is financial planning?	**How do we know?**
We established a clear process and timetable to set a budget for the 2024/25 financial year. Our financial modelling identified an initial budget gap of £14.4m that needed to be addressed. We developed a range of proposals in line with a set of budget principles. The proposals were subject to public engagement, robust scrutiny and an assessment of their potential impact. This informed the development of the final budget proposals. This planning resulted in us setting a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year which included accommodating £13.5 million of budget pressures, making a planned £10.8 million of savings and introducing a council tax increase of 7.80%. Our capital planning is based on an established prioritisation process informed by evidence and assessment of risk to develop a programme within the financial constraints on the council. We have reviewed and agreed a current and forward capital programme for £35million of expenditure in for 2024/25. The core capital programme is being sustained and sets planned investment in the council's infrastructure. There remains a considerable number of backlog pressures that sit outside the core capital programme.	Budget setting reports 2024/24 Audit Wales reports

These have varying levels of risk associated with them. An Audit Wales review of our capital programme management found that planning arrangements are generally robust, but the capital programme lacks clear outcomes. Despite setting a balanced budget, current and future budget pressures pose a risk to the deliverability of our objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan. The one-off use of revenue reserves to support the 2023/24 budget means our reserves are at minimum prudent levels to provide sufficient cover. We need to strengthen our financial modelling and develop our financial planning over the medium term. This will assist us to develop a proactive plan to address ongoing budget pressures and align our budget, as far as possible, with our objectives.	
How has the area for development from the last report been addressed? Develop a financial strategy and robust Medium Term Financial Plan which identifies how we will address the budget shortfall of £23m by 2026/27	**How do we know?**
We have developed a Medium-Term Financial Strategy that aligns with delivering our commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. This was presented to Council for approval in July 2024. The medium-term financial plan to deliver the strategy will subsequently be developed and will inform the 2025/26 budget setting process	Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	

Page 100

Workforce Planning – Evaluation Score: Level 3 Adequate

How effective is workforce management?	**How do we know?**
We have a loyal, dedicated and talented workforce that continue to deliver our services and objectives for residents. This is demonstrated by our performance in 2023/24 and feedback we received in engaging on our recent people strategy. We have an established set of policy and procedures that guide our Human Resources function. These support standards and behaviours we expect employees to deliver. They also allow flexibility and opportunity for our workforce to develop their careers in Monmouthshire. If employees do not meet these standards, we have arrangements to manage and resolve these issues. We have strong well-being offer, including the 'Go To' group, Leaders Q&A, Digital Cwtch, free counselling and a well-regarded occupational health service. We have received feedback this supports the well-being of those who use these services. Our sickness figures are broadly unchanged in recent years, although these are marginally above industry average. 25% of absences were down to mental health in 2019-20 compared to 24% in 2022-23. We need to understand if our well-being services are accessed by everyone who needs them. We also need to ensure our workforce management support is targeted and applied consistently to support our colleagues.	People Strategy Workforce management data

56

We lack a coherent approach to staff appraisal and mechanisms to assure these are happening consistently. This means some colleagues may not have a clear understanding of their contributions to the delivery of our priorities and a mechanism to feedback their views. We have learnt that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective for the varying services the council delivers. We also need to capture the outcome of these appraisals to give us a clear understanding of training and development needs. We are applying this learning to develop a new approach to staff appraisal.

How effective is workforce planning?	**How do we know?**
We have a flexible approach to workforce planning to attract and retain people to roles in the council. This long-standing agile working arrangements, for jobs that do not require employees to travel to their base every day and targeted recruitment campaign for certain jobs. These have had some success for example a reduction in vacancies within our social care workforce. We do not yet have all the arrangements in place to facilitate the organisation to plan the workforce it needs to meet current and future demands. The development and delivery of our new People Strategy identifies the action will take to improve the effectiveness of our workforce planning. We are experiencing recruitment challenges in specific sectors, most of which match wider national recruitment issues. We need to evolve our recruitment process to become a genuine talent acquisition process. We are developing an e-recruitment system, based on feedback from our recruiting managers. This will benefit recruiting managers who want speed, simplicity and agility. Our turnover was higher in recent years than we have typically seen. We need to understand the reasons for this and use this to develop our workforce planning. We need to develop our training offer to equip the workforce with the skills its needs for now and the future. We have implemented a new learning management platform in the social care directorate. This has improved the effectiveness of training management in the directorate. We have experienced technical and capacity restraints in rolling this out to other directorates. This has restricted our ability to improve how we plan, deliver and manage training consistently across the organisation.	People Strategy Workforce management data
How has the area for development from the last report been addressed? Develop a people strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	**How do we know?**
We have developed a People Strategy that creates the framework for us to support and develop our colleagues so that everyone's contribution can be maximised. The strategy highlights the opportunities and challenges we face. It also describes the things that need to be in place for our colleagues to thrive and succeed.	People Strategy
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	
Strengthen arrangements that support workforce planning and management	

Procurement – Evaluation Score: Level 3 Adequate

How effective is strategic procurement?	How do we know?
We have developed a Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-28. The strategy sets an enabling platform for the development of progressive policies that will achieve greater and more targeted social, economic, environmental, and cultural gains through working with our supply chains. We have not yet developed the supporting policies and procedures needed to set clearer expectations of what we require from our staff and suppliers to meet our ambitions in the strategy.	Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-27
We are developing a Socially Responsible Procurement Policy in collaboration with Cardiff City Council to implement our ambitions in the strategy. We need to accelerate its completion to provide clear guidance to officers and our supply chains when undertaking Socially Responsible Procurement. The policy will provide a well-being framework to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of 'Socially Responsible Procurement' that encapsulates UK and Welsh Government legislative requirements and the council's priorities. It will identify several measures to allow us to evaluate progress within each well-being theme.	Draft Socially Responsible Procurement Policy "Buying Responsibly" Guidance
We need to develop the knowledge and skills of officers procuring goods, services and works so they deploy the necessary thinking and processes that are required to ensure value for money in procurement and deliver the aims of the strategy. We are providing a series of workshops and training for officers. We are also putting together a series of guidance notes. These will develop the thinking and processes officers require around the principles of "Buying Responsibly" and ensuring value for money procurement outcomes. We have commissioned a procurement technology review to automate and standardise as many manual interventions as possible. To achieve this will be a complex process and will require agreement on direction and resources to deliver it.	Procurement technology review

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

Strengthen arrangements that support officers undertaking procurement to meet the ambitions of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

Assets – Evaluation Score: Level 4 Good

How effective is strategic Asset Management?	How do we know?
We have developed an Asset Management Strategy 2023-2027 that informs the way decisions and day-today management of council land and property is undertaken. It sets five clear objectives for land and property to deliver the council's objectives. It also establishes the supporting policy framework from which the strategy is implemented. The Asset Management Strategy is supported by an Asset Management Plan which identifies the actions to deliver the strategy. This will need to be evaluated annually to assess progress and impact.	Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan Severn View Park
We have completed significant building projects in the last year improving services to residents and supporting community activity. For example, we have developed and opened in March 2024, Severn View Park, a specialist care home for people living with	Magor and Undy Community Hub

dementia. The care home provides a bespoke environmental design, based upon innovating best practice standards for people with dementia and a relationship-centred care model. How effective is operational Asset Management. We have also developed and opened the new £2.9 million Magor and Undy Community Hub in partnership with The Magor with Undy Community Hub project (MUCH). The development was based on extensive involvement of the community and is designed based on resident's feedback. The site provides spaces for community use and commercial events, as well as potential for small business growth. The MUCH group now occupy and manage the community hub for the direct promotion of community use including social, culture, leisure, sporting and other community activities.

We need to strengthen our governance arrangements to deliver the strategy to improve decision making and take a more proactive approach to our management of assets. Revised and updated governance arrangements set out in the strategy need to be implemented. We also need to evaluate the outcome and impact of our capital programme, as identified by Audit Wales.

How effective is operational Asset Management?	How do we know?
We are undertaking feasibility studies, technical assessments and surveys on property, infrastructure, and assets. These are informing our capital budget planning and maintenance schedules in line with established processes. Decision making on managing our assets will need to be strengthened in line with the mechanisms established in our asset management strategy. We have considerable number of maintenance pressures for our assets, including property and highways infrastructure and public rights of way, that sit outside any potential to fund them within the capital medium term financial plan. These carry significant risk. We have improved the coordination of property and facilities management activity in the organisation. For example, in developing agricultural cottages to alternative accommodation. Collaboration between departments can be further strengthened, and expectations managed to coordinate property and facilities management across council service areas.	Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan Capital medium term financial plan
How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?	**How do we know?**
Develop an updated asset management strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	
We have developed an updated Asset Management Strategy. The strategy is supported by an Asset Management Plan which outlines the actions to be undertaken in accordance with the strategy. The Asset Management Plan includes the agreed actions and objectives relating to the land and property functions and portfolios, including the governance arrangements under which the Investment Portfolio will continue to be monitored and evaluated. The Asset Management Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to provide the appropriate assurance that value for money and best consideration is being achieved.	Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	

Digital & Data – Evaluation Score: Level 3 adequate

How effective is the development of digital?	How do we know?
We have followed our digital roadmap to deliver digital projects that are focused on improving services for residents and customers. For example, we have developed an Assistive Technology Services to provide technological solutions to support and enable people to live comfortably and securely in their own homes.	Digital Service Business Plan
We have strong partnership arrangements in place for digital with the Shared Resource Service (SRS), neighbouring Local Authorities and national partners. These have led to the development of five collaborative digital and data projects led by the SRS, focused on customer services, use of Artificial Intelligence and data insight. These projects are utilising the knowledge and skills within this field in our partnership network and enabling sharing of learning on common issues across Local Authorities.	Digital and Data Strategy
We have not been able to fulfil all our digital ambitions in the year, particularly due to reductions in our digital team's capacity. We have ambitions to use digital solutions as a means to transform the way we work and deliver our ambitions in the Community and Corporate Plan. We are developing a digital and data strategy to focus our strategic direction to deliver our actions. An Audit Wales, review identified 'The council does not have a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital'. We also need to strengthen how we priorities projects based on the outcomes they can achieve and how we subsequently evaluate impact of digital, including efficiency and effectiveness.	Information security and governance arrangements.
We have established Information Security & Technology arrangements ensuring that information held by the council to ensure that information remains confidential, maintains its integrity and is available to those who need to access it as part of our work. We actively support, advise, and train our workforce. Mandatory training is provided for GDPR and Cyber Security, alongside comprehensive guidance, and policies for all aspects of data management.	
We have developed a range of training for officers to improve digital literacy across the organisation. These included an essential skills framework for foundational digital skills and a digital induction which will be rolled out on our corporate training platform. We know that continuous development in digital skills is essential to achieve our ambition. We need to continue to develop digital training resources to allow staff to continue to improve their digital skills.	
How effective is the development of data?	
We have followed our data action plan in the year to deliver data projects that are focused on providing insight using our data to inform our service delivery and policy development. For example, we have developed performance dashboards for each directorate and our Community and Corporate Plan. We have also developed data analysis on poverty and inequality, workforce, our budgets, and energy use. We have supported the use of geo-spatial to be automatically updated from internal systems and external sources through our Geographical Information Systems (GIS). These are providing data insights to inform future planning and service delivery.	Performance & Data Insight Service Business Plan
We have not been able to fulfil all our data ambitions in the year. We need to further harness and connect data as council wide asset. We also need to improve our data maturity across the organisation. We have ambitions to use data to inform how we transform the	Digital and Data Strategy

way we work and deliver our ambitions in the Community and Corporate Plan. We are developing a digital and data strategy to focus our strategic direction to deliver our actions. We also need to strengthen how we priorities projects based on the outcomes they can achieve and how we subsequently evaluate impact of datal, including efficiency and effectiveness.

We do not have all the skills we require to deliver our actions within the council. We need to build on existing partnership working and further develop our collaborations to achieve our digital aims. We have developed training for officers to improve data skills. These include training on the use of business intelligence tools. We need to continue to develop training resources to allow staff to continue to improve their data skills.

How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?	How do we know?
Develop a Digital Strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	
We have developed a Digital and Data Strategy that sets our integrated ambition and priorities for using digital and data to improve services and outcomes for residents. It sets our longer–term aims and initial actions to deliver them. Our approach will grow in line with advancements we make and developments in the digital and data field.	Digital and Data Strategy
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	
Strengthen the capacity and capability to deliver the ambition in the digital and data strategy.	

Democracy & Scrutiny – Evaluation Score: Level 4 - Good

How effectively are resources being used?	How do we know?
The use of remote attendance at Council, Cabinet and committee meetings is fully embedded. This brings positive benefits for those with work or family commitments who are able to participate in meetings they would otherwise not be able to attend. Attendance at meetings was 94% in the 22-23 civic year compared in 86% in the previous year and 86% during the first year of the previous council term. Revisions to the changes of scrutiny committees have reduced duplication, for example budget and performance reports are now presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee rather than having the same report presented to four separate meetings.	Attendance Figures Annual Governance statement
Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment	

Our work with others

To deliver the outcome required for the county we need to work together with a range of partners, stakeholders and our communities. The council will not have all the answers to solve the challenges facing the county and we will not be able to deliver the outcomes required on our own. Working collaboratively with others increases the likelihood of us developing effective and sustainable solutions.

Stakeholders and partnership working

How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
Working in partnership is one of the ways we can achieve our objectives while delivering value for money. We enter into collaborative arrangements thoughtfully and with a clear articulation of how they can help us achieve our objectives. Regionally we work with many large organisations in partnership including Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region, Regional Partnership Board and the Gwent Public Services Board to fulfil our commitments on, for example, decarbonisation, transport, health and social care, housing and regeneration. An Internal Audit review identified a reasonable level of assurance was in place for the authority's governance arrangements based on a sample of partnerships. The audit identified we need to strengthen our guidance on the arrangements that partnerships need to have in place and assure ourselves these are subsequently adhered to. We have developed a partnership toolkit and need to complete its implementation. The audit focussed on assessment and planning. Our lead council officers for partnerships need to evaluate if the expected outcomes of the partnerships are being realised. The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) was given the legal responsibility for preparing Regional Strategic Development Plans, Regional Transport Plans and for doing whatever is deemed necessary to enhance or promote the economic well-being of the area. The committee is made up of the leaders of the ten local authorities in South East Wales. All governance papers are published on the Cardiff Capital Region website. The arrangements are overseen by a joint committee comprising representatives from the ten local authorities with additional regulatory activity undertaken by Audit Wales Partnerships and collaborations of all scales and important to deliver improved outcomes in the county. We are committed to strengthening our collaboration with community and town councils and lean into the expertise and enthusiasm of the many volunteers and community groups that make this county so special.	Internal Audit review of Partnerships and collaborations.

Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment
Evaluate if the expected outcomes of partnerships are being realised and impact on delivering the council's objectives.

Our Actions

Through the self-assessment, we have identified how well we are doing and what we can we do better. Identifying these is not the end of the self-assessment process. We will look to build on and learn from the areas that are going well and address areas that we can do better.

The action plan focuses specifically on what and how we can do better for the significant conclusions of the assessment. All of the findings will inform the development of the council's well-being objectives and delivery plans. They will inform how internal processes and procedures should change to support more effective planning, delivery and decision-making to drive better outcomes, and ways to deliver the council's functions. These also integrate with further actions identified in the council's Annual Governance Statement 2023/24.

The actions will be monitored through the year as part of the council's performance management arrangements. The next self-assessment report will also include an assessment of the progress made on these actions.

Progress with 2022/23 Actions?

We have provided an update on progress against the actions we identified in the 2022/23 self-assessment report. A more detailed assessment of these arrangements is provided in the relevant section of the report.

Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
Outcomes	Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact	Develop clear plans to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	A poverty and inequality action plan is being developed to provide a clear focus for the council's activity to deliver the Fair Place to live objective. This is due to be completed in December 2024. This action will be carried forward to the 2023/24 action plan.
Outcomes	To accelerate the delivery of the council's Decarbonisation Strategy	Revise the council's plans to deliver its commitment to be net-zero by 2030.	A revised Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy has been developed, aligned with the Community and Corporate Plan. The strategy will be delivered by four action plans on decarbonisation, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Rivers and Oceans and Community climate change.

How the strategy will be evaluated has been established. Our self-assessment concludes there are challenges to meeting our decarbonisation aims. The progress and impact of the strategy will need to be evaluated regularly. |

Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
Outcomes	Use economic analysis commissioned to inform the development of an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy	Develop an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	An Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy and Action Plan has been developed, aligned with the Community and Corporate Plan. How the strategy will be evaluated has been established. The progress and impact of the strategy will need to be evaluated regularly
Outcomes	Clearly articulate and evaluate plans to deliver high quality Adults and Children's social care	Develop clear plans to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	Plans have been created for significant parts of our Social Care provision that required development. These include a strategy for commissioned domiciliary care 2024 – 2034, including implementation plan and the approach for developing children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements. The Chief Officer for Social Care, safeguarding and health also produced an annual report evaluating performance in Children and Adults Social Care and setting priority action for the future. The progress and impact of these strategies and priorities will need to be evaluated regularly.
Outcomes	Ensure the delivery of the action plan which aims to address recommendations identified by Estyn	Deliver and assess progress on the Estyn recommendation Action Plan	The themes from the inspection included pursuing excellence, creating a holistic vision and strategy for learners with additional learning needs, securing better outcomes for our learners eligible for free school meals (FSM) and improving the way we use data in our evaluations. The action plan to address the recommendations from the Estyn inspection is being implemented. The Community and Corporate Plan now provides a clear framework for action and evaluation of services to ensure that we are working most effectively in the areas of need. The progress against the Estyn recommendations will be included as part of the Chief Officer for Children & Young People annual report. It is harder to form an overall view against our Estyn recommendations

64

Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
			due to their areas of focus: progression of FSM learners and excellent standards requiring more extensive access to schools to understand and evidence their progress. This action will be carried forward to the 2023/24 action plan.
Resources	Clear enabling strategies aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	Develop Enabling strategies aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	Enabling strategies have been developed. The enabling strategies developed are the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, People Strategy and Digital & Data Strategy. These are aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28. A further customer strategy is being developed.
			The progress and impact of these strategies will need to be evaluated regularly in line with the reporting arrangements established in the strategy.
Resources	Embed the delivery of the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 within the council's performance framework	Embed actions within service business plans.	The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. Our self-assessment of our performance framework shows the actions in the Community and Corporate Plan have mainly been embedded in the performance management framework. This also shows there is a need to further strengthen the alignment of some service business plans.
		Review the self-assessment process to inform the development of service business plans and the next self-assessment report	The Self-assessment process has been embedded in the council's performance management framework. The self-assessment process has facilitated the completion of a robust evaluation of performance. Quality assurance on service business plans has shown that managers do not always consistently apply a self-evaluative mindset when updating service business plans. Strengthening self-evaluation within plans is a continuing action, this will inform evidence in the self-assessment report.

Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
Stakeholder and Partnership	Strengthen how we work with and alongside communities in line with the commitments in the Community and Corporate Plan.	Develop a clear plan for involvement aligned to the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	We have developed a portal that seeks to set out some of the key interfaces and ways that every citizen affected by what the Council does has the ability to shape and influence their community and County to work together for a fairer, greener, more successful County.

Our self-assessment identifies many areas where we have involved residents in delivering our community and corporate plan in the last year. For example, we have engaged extensively during the production of the Replacement Local Development Plan and we are also working in partnership on the production of town centre masterplans.

We recognise that we still need to strengthen involvement and co-produce a different approach to public participation. |

What and how can we do better 2023/24?

Section	What can we do better	How	Who	When
Outcomes	Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact	Develop a poverty and inequality action plan to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	Chief Officer Communities & Place	December 2024
Outcomes	Ensure early and help prevention services are effectively able to meet current and prevent, as far as possible, future demand	Complete an evaluation of the performance of early help and preventive services, as part of the Director of social care annual report and use the findings to inform future action	Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	November 2024
Outcomes	Increase the focus of council activities on improving the social determinants of health	Use the recommendations in the Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health equity and the social determinants report to inform the council's service planning	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	April 2025

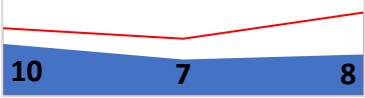|				
Outcomes	Ensure the delivery of the action plan which aims to address recommendations identified by Estyn	Deliver and assess progress on the Estyn recommendation Action Plan	Chief Officer Children & Young People	As per action plan
Outcomes	Develop the support offer for schools and pupils to reduce and prevent exclusions	Develop an Inclusion Strategy for delivery of inclusion services across Monmouthshire	Chief Officer Children & Young People	November 2024
Outcomes	Develop the support offer for disadvantaged learners to achieve their potential	Developing a whole authority approach on supporting disadvantaged learners, including working with the EAS.	Chief Officer Children & Young People	November 2024
Enablers	Increase the focus on outcomes in the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan	Review and revise the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	September 2024
Enablers	Strengthen arrangements that support workforce planning and management	Develop and deliver the action plan in the people strategy	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	As per action plan
Enablers	Strengthen arrangements that support officers undertaking procurement to meet the ambitions of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy	Develop consistent guidance, training, and support for officers undertaking procurement	Chief Officer Communities & Place	October 2024
Enablers	Strengthen the capacity and capability to deliver the ambition in the digital and data strategy.	Develop and deliver the action plan in the Digital and Data Strategy	Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Resources	As per action plan
Stakeholder and Partnership	Evaluate if the expected outcomes of partnerships are being realised and impact on delivering the council's objectives.	Implement the partnership toolkit to facilitate lead council officers for identified partnerships to evaluate if the expected outcomes of the partnerships are being realised.	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships & Partnership lead officers	March 2025

Performance Measures

The use of performance measures is one of the important mechanisms we use to assess our performance. Each of our goals has specific performance measures set to monitor progress. Some further relevant performance indicators we use to assess our services' performance are set out in this section.

National indicators have been set as part of the Future Generations Act for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the well-being goals in Wales as a whole. While the national indicators will not measure the performance of individual public bodies or public services boards, it is important that they are considered to track the progress being made to improve well-being in Monmouthshire. Some of the national indicators that are relevant to the objectives we have set, where an update is available at a county level, are included in the table below.

Longer term measures in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28
Alongside the specific measures included under each objective The Community and Corporate Plan also includes measures for each objective that we want to track because they will inform our work. We want to see positive movement in these measures, but they are things where our input is only part of a much bigger picture. The latest update of the measures can be seen below. The red comparator line in some graphs seen below displays the Wales average data, where available.

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend [3] (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
A Fair place to live		
Percentage of children living in relative low-income families[xviii]	12 11.5 13.5 17.4	17.4
Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation[xix]	10 7 8	8
Difference in average pay between men and women working in the county (£)	8.8 53 135.3 89.5 100	100
A Green place to live		
Food waste captured from the waste stream and sent to Anaerobic Digestion (tonnes)	4405 5287 5062	5,062

---

[3] Annual trend data for the previous 5 years, where available. Some dips in data trends are a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Page 112

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend [3] (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Average annual residual waste produced per person (kilograms)[xx]	143 → 125	125.39
Average level of nitrogen dioxide pollution in the air (µg/m3), measured at Air Quality Management Areas in Monmouthshire[xxi]	8 8 6 6	6
Number of properties at medium or high risk of flooding [xxii]	Trend data not available	1825
Percentage of the Special Area of Conservation river catchment waterbodies that fail the phosphorus targets [xxiii]	Trend data not available	88 for Usk 67 for Wye
A Thriving and Ambitious place		
Average hourly town centre footfall[xxiv]	292 257 288	288
Percentage of vacant town centre premises[xxv]	10.2 11.6 8.8	8.8
Number of rail passengers using Monmouthshire train stations[xxvi]	1.04m 1.01m 198k 625k	625,374
Motor vehicle traffic by local authority (million miles) [xxvii]	938 955.3 705.1 802.6 896.1 947	947
Gross disposable household income per head (£)[xxviii]	20,... 22,... 21,... 22,.	22,720
A Safe Place to Live		
Median house prices compared to median workplace-based earnings[xxix]	8.74 8.59 10.26 9.96 9.22	9.22
Rate of households unintentionally homeless and in priority need per 10,000 households	4 4 19 60 67	67
Percentage of social housing allocated to homeless households	20 39 46.7 62 57	57

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend [3] (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Average carbon emissions per capita in Monmouthshire (tonnes)[xxx]	9.7 9.7 8.7 9.1	9.1
Rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population	10.56 31.03 13.89 10.56 13.1	13.1
Number of rapes and sexual offences committed[xxxi]	99 182 200	200
Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling[xxxii]	81 57 75	75
Percentage of homes that have an energy efficiency rating of C or above[xxxiii]	43.4 49.2 50.5	50.5
The percentage of those referred to the youth offending service who subsequently re-offend	35.90% 15.80% 18.60% 18.40%	18.4
A Connected Place Where People Care		
Percentage of children supported to remain living with their family (not including children looked after)	57.5 58.6 59.8 61.1 60.2	60.2
Number of children who are rehabilitated after a period of being looked after	18 19 15	15
Percentage of people who are lonely[xxxiv]	17 11 13 12	12
Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need[xxxv]	79 88 86	86
Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live[xxxvi]	92 84 95	95

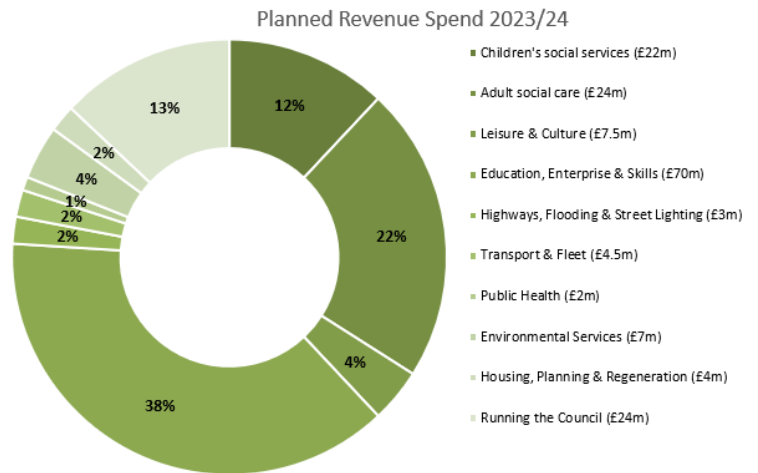| Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend [3] (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Healthy life expectancy at birth (women)[xxxvii]	66.1 69.3	69.3
Healthy life expectancy at birth (men)[xxxviii]	66.4 68.7	68.7
Life expectancy at birth (women)[xxxix]	84.4 84.6	84.6
Life expectancy at birth (men)[xl]	81.5 81.6	81.6
Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week[xli]	38 36 42 43	43
Percentage of people who attend or participate in arts culture or heritage activities three or more times a year[xlii]	85 76 79	79
Number of carers and young carers supported by the carers team	131 203 168 164	164
Number of job vacancies in social care workforce	53 23	23
A Learning place		
Rate of fixed term exclusions of less than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Primary Pupils [xliii]	16 15.3	15.3
Rate of fixed term exclusions of less than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Secondary Pupils	123.7 194.6	194.6
Rate of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Primary Pupils	0.6 0.3	0.3
Rate of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Secondary Pupils	2.2 5.2	5.2

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend [3] (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Percentage of adults with qualifications at Level 4 and above of the National Qualifications Framework	47.9 48 48.5 52.6	52.6

The use of mechanisms such as the Office of National Statistics' Measuring National Well-being programme (diagram 7 in What Citizens Said section below) are ways in which we are trying to broaden our understanding of well-being in Monmouthshire, in addition to service specific performance measurement.

What we spent in 2023/24

In 2023/24, the council's planned spend was £168 million to provide services for Monmouthshire residents.

The proportion of our spending on different services in 2023/24 is shown in the diagram. These services are paid for by a combination of central government grants, council tax, non-domestic rates and a contribution from the council Fund.

Planned Revenue Spend 2023/24

- Children's social services (£22m)
- Adult social care (£24m)
- Leisure & Culture (£7.5m)
- Education, Enterprise & Skills (£70m)
- Highways, Flooding & Street Lighting (£3m)
- Transport & Fleet (£4.5m)
- Public Health (£2m)
- Environmental Services (£7m)
- Housing, Planning & Regeneration (£4m)
- Running the Council (£24m)

How our revenue spend compares with other areas

The graphs below show how much we spend per head of population in some of our priority areas. In 2022/23, we had the lowest gross revenue spend per head of all councils in Wales and spent less per head on education services. However, we have increased our per head social services spending to above the Wales average and continue to spend above the average on planning and economic development. We have continued to work hard to make sure this money goes where it matters. For 2023/24 we received an increase in core funding, however our budget settlement from Welsh Government continues to be the lowest per head of population of councils in Wales.
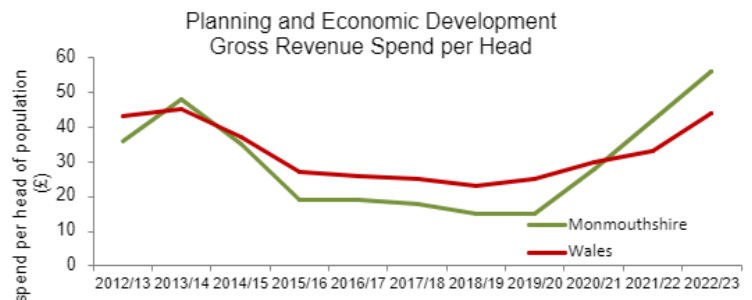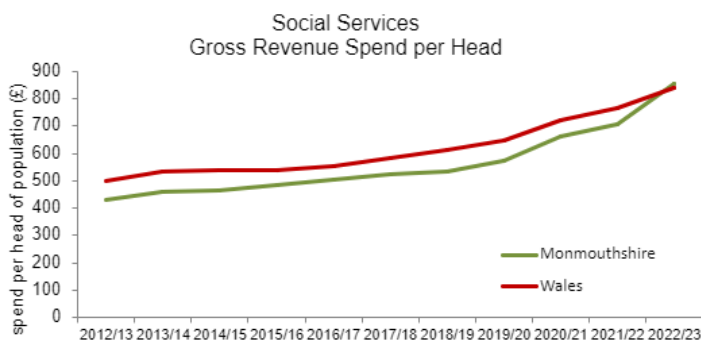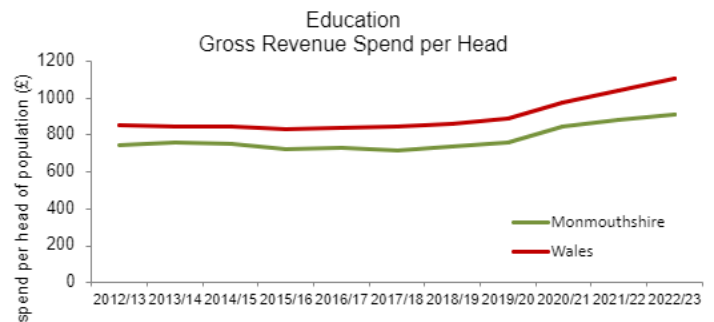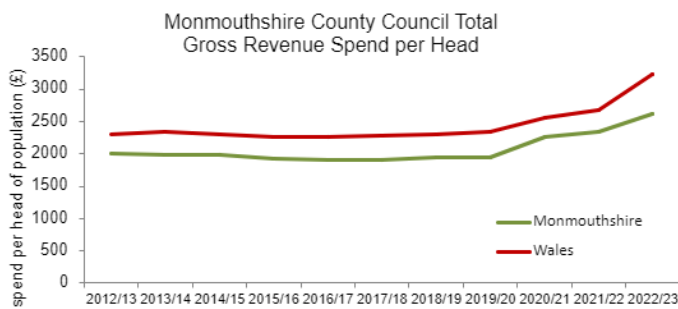
What citizens said

Involvement and working together with residents and communities in Monmouthshire is essential to develop and deliver solutions to achieve outcomes and ensure residents are involved in the decisions that affect them.

Through our self-assessment we have used the views of service users and residents to inform our assessment. Some of the specific engagement exercises we undertaken to involve citizens this year include:

Budget engagement: Monmouthshire County Council launched its draft budget proposals for 2024-2025 in January 2024. Monmouthshire's communities were invited to share their views on these possible changes in an open consultation process. A range of information on the proposals and their potential impacts was shared. Face-to-face budget consultation events took place, as well as online budget sessions. For those unable to join the livestream, the session was uploaded to the website to watch after the event. As part of the consultation process, residents were also asked to share their thoughts via a feedback survey on the budget proposals, which were shared across our social media platforms.

Regeneration Proposals: We are working in partnership with town councils and other key stakeholders to drive and oversee the development of placemaking plans in Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy, and a Transforming Chepstow Masterplan. To inform these plans a range of consultation events were held including face-to-face engagement opportunities, displays were held in the local area on plans and designs and surveys provided. Initial discussions have taken place with local stakeholders about a new placemaking plan for Caldicot. We have invited expression of interest from eligible businesses in Monmouthshire town centres for the Monmouthshire Town Centre Property Improvement Grant. This is funded through the Welsh Government's Transforming Town Placemaking Grant and Monmouthshire County Council. The grant provides financial support for improvements to properties in the designated town centres of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth.

Education Provision: We recognise the importance of involving residents and partners in discussions around the education provision for our young people. We engaged with residents as part of our review of primary school catchment areas, which has allowed more of our children and young people to attend a school within the county. We also engaged with residents as part of our proposals to relocate Ysgol y Fenni to the Deri View site which will double the capacity of the school; almost 90% of responders were in support of the proposal. 145 individuals engaged with us as part of our consultation to establish a new Welsh medium primary school in Monmouth. This included children and young people, teachers, governors, parents and partner organisations.

Age-Friendly Monmouthshire: We have committed to working towards Monmouthshire becoming an Age-Friendly County and joining the World Health Organisation's global network of Age-Friendly Communities. We invited all residents aged 50 or over to participate in a survey, sharing their experiences

and thoughts on everyday life in Monmouthshire and attended sessions at community hubs across the county to discuss the experience of residents. We have engaged with over 1,200 people. This voice of our older residents will be at the centre of efforts to create an age-friendly county. We will be working with local businesses, third sector organisations, statutory partners and the wider community to foster healthy and active ageing, making Monmouthshire more attractive to people of all ages, whether they be residents or visitors

Local Transport Strategy: Ensuring residents and stakeholders are involved in the development of strategies that will affect them is incredibly important. We held a public consultation for our draft Local Transport Strategy between November 2023 and January 2024 to allow residents and stakeholders to feed back on the proposed vision, objectives and strategic framework for the future development of Monmouthshire's transport network. The consultation received 336 responses, and found that in most cases, the majority of respondents agreed with the policy ambition set out in the draft strategy. The needs of our communities sit at the heart of the Local Transport Strategy and will drive the ambition moving forward.

Strategic Equality Plan: Making Monmouthshire a fairer place to live is a key priority for the organisation and sits at the heart of all we do. Throughout this year we developed our Strategic Equality Plan which sets out the seven key objectives we will focus on to ensure out county is a fair place to live for all. This draft strategy was subject to public consultation during January and February 2024. As well as a website survey, the consultation was sent to local groups with members possessing protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010. Responses received were largely supportive of the objectives and actions proposed.

Customer Complaints and Compliments: We monitor and learn from feedback received from customers. These are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. Issues included the length of time we can take to respond to people. Not only is it important to deal with complaints effectively, investigating and putting things right for the complainant where necessary, it is also vital to learn from them to minimise the chances of the same problem occurring twice. Twelve complaints were referred to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales in 2022-23, the last year for which data is available, a decrease from twenty during 2021-22. Monmouthshire has one of the lowest levels of complaints reported to the Ombudsman at 0.25 per 1,000 residents. This ranges from 0.17 to 0.49 with an average of 0.33.

Measuring Individual well-being

The Office of National Statistic's Measuring National Well-being programme also assesses personal well-being as part of the Annual Population Survey. The survey asks the questions:
- **Life Satisfaction** – overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- **Worthwhile** – overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- **Happiness** – overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- **Anxiety** – on a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

- The latest full annual results for Monmouthshire (from 2022/23) for these questions are shown in diagram below alongside the UK and Wales averages. This shows that the responses from Monmouthshire residents score slightly better than both the UK and Wales for almost all

Average Life Satisfaction Score

UK	Wales	Monmouthshire
7.45	7.4	7.63

Average Worthwile Score

UK	Wales	Monmouthshire
7.73	7.69	7.98

Average Hapiness Score

UK	Wales	Monmouthshire
7.39	7.35	7.64

Average Anxiety Score

UK	Wales	Monmouthshire
3.23	3.3	3.23

measures.

Staff engagement

As part of our process to collate the self-assessment, we held directorate and enabling-service workshops to provide an opportunity for staff to directly feed into the self-assessment via identification of their own strengths and areas for development. Workshop attendees were presented with evidence packs, collated from existing information sources such as scrutiny reports, external regulator feedback, and service business plans, and were facilitated to self-assess their performance. A range of evidence was gathered from the workshops, both in terms of successes and areas for development associated with our strategic goals and our enabling functions, but also on how to strengthen the self-assessment process.

We have also used evidence gathered from a range of staff events and groups. These include the Digital and in-person 'Cwtch' staff engagement sessions, along with fortnightly People Leaders Q&A session and the engagement on the development of our People Strategy. The use of networks and digital communication, surveys and feedback loops to senior managers, has extended the reach of contact with the workforce.

Businesses

We have established stronger engagement networks with businesses in our area since the pandemic and are working to maintain and improve these connections. We have a better understanding of the types of businesses in our area. We have continued to engage with businesses through our new customer relationship management system which acts as a database of Monmouthshire businesses and a tool to promote the advice and guidance services that we can provide to pre-starts and existing businesses. Our Business Data & Communications Officer has continued to improve our links with businesses and has helped to improve feedback loops with businesses to ensure we are capitalising on the conversations that

are taking place and can improve our service as a result. This feedback will continue to inform our self-assessment.

Trade Unions

We engage well with Trade Unions to achieve our outcomes. We have briefed them on the process we undertake to complete our self-assessment and shared our initial findings with them as part of our self-assessment process.

What Regulators and Inspectors Said

We work closely with our regulators and inspectors to quality-assure our activities as this is vital to ensuring improvement. Their feedback is valued, and we use their assessments to help us focus on the things we need to improve across the council.

Each year, Audit Wales publishes an Audit Plan setting out the work they plan to undertake at the council. As part of the plan Audit Wales have undertaken a range of audits during the year. These included:

- Well-being Objective Setting Examination: The report concludes the Council has set its well-being objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle and is aligning its key strategies and business plans to support their delivery, but it could further strengthen its approach by increasing the diversity of citizen involvement in future.
- Use of Performance Information, Service User Perspective and Outcomes: The report concludes the council provides some performance information to enable senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users, but information on outcomes is limited restricting their ability to manage performance effectively.
- Capital Programme Management: The report concludes capital programme management arrangements demonstrate some strengths but lack focus on outcomes and impact. This conclusion was reached because: planning arrangements are generally robust, but the capital programme lacks clear outcomes; and monitoring arrangements focus on budget and timescales with limited consideration of impact or learning.
- Digital Strategy Review: The report concludes the Council does not have a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital. The report recognises the Council currently does not have a digital strategy and its current digital work is detailed within individual service business plans and some project work. It also acknowledges the Council intends to develop a new digital strategy to help clarify the role that digital technology will play in the Council. We have now developed a digital and data strategy for 2024-2027.
- Assurance and Risk Assessment work in the council during 2023/24. This focused on the council's financial sustainability, capital programme management and governance arrangements.

We have developed responses to the recommendations in these reports and the progress in delivering these is regularly reported to the council's Governance & Audit Committee. Reports produced by Audit Wales are available to download on their website (www.audit.wales/publications). This includes local government national reports.

We underwent an Estyn Inspection into Local Government Education Services in February 2020. The inspection recognised the clear vision and strong focus on ensuring 'the best possible start in life' and also identified the commitment to partnership working that has resulted in a good track record of improvement. It also identified areas for development, such as the performance of children eligible for free school meals, and a lack of clarity in how services for learners with special educational needs will be strengthened. The progress in addressing the four recommendations in the report has been evaluated in the Children and Young People's Chief Officer's Report 2023/24, with all four being assessed as making 'good progress'. The progress report can be found here Children and Young People's Chief Officer's Report 2023/24 (monmouthshire.gov.uk). The full Estyn report, and other Estyn reports related to Monmouthshire and schools in the county, can be found on www.estyn.gov.wales

Care Inspectorate Wales carried out a performance evaluation inspection of children's services in the council in February 2024. The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, on behalf of Welsh Ministers. The findings recognise strengths and areas for improvement:

- Strengths recognised include, family support, and children's participation. Positive leadership and good morale within the service were also highlighted and the inspection confirmed that the service had a good understanding of its relative strengths and difficulties.
- Aares for improvement identified included the impact of increased demand; ensuring that a strengths-based approach informs the initial stages of child protection process when appropriate; ensuring that direct work with children forms part of the case record and strengthening quality assurance.

We are taking action to address the areas for improvement and CIW intend to monitor progress through routine engagement with the service.

The full inspection report, and other inspection reports about Monmouthshire social services by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), can be found on www.careinspectorate.wales

Equality and Diversity

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. Our fourth Strategic Equality Plan, produced under the Equality Act 2010 sets the council's objectives to ensure we deliver better outcomes for people with protected characteristics. This is clearly aligned with the evidence provided by the Well-being Assessment, and evidence provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report "Is Wales Fairer 2018".

As well as this, it is important to us as it is the right thing to do. We produce annual monitoring reports that provide updates on progress on the action plan in the Strategic Equality Plan and evidence good practice being carried out across the council departments. These can be found here.

The Welsh Language

The Welsh language is central to the goals introduced as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, particularly for our contribution to a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also makes an important contribution to the Welsh Government goal of having a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and accompanying Welsh Language standards, place a legal duty on councils to treat Welsh and English equally, to promote the Welsh Language and provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. The are 176 standards that apply to the council. This is a significant challenge, but systems have been put in place comply with these. We have a Welsh Language Strategy for 2022-2027, which identifies a vision of how the language will look in Monmouthshire in five years and is accompanied by targets to help achieve it. Our annual monitoring report 2023/24 reflect our progress against our Welsh language commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards. The report can be found here.

Appendix 1 – Self-assessment process

Legislation

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act") provides for a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. The Act replaces the previous improvement duty for councils set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', that is the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively; it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; its governance is effective for securing these.

The performance and governance provisions in the Act are framed within the context of the well-being duty in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which sets out a legally binding common purpose for public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Self-assessment will be complemented by a panel performance assessment once in an electoral cycle, providing an opportunity to seek external insights (other than from auditors, regulators or inspectors) on how the council is meeting the performance requirements.

Why?

Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. It is about the council being self-aware, understanding whether it is delivering the right outcomes, and challenging itself to continuously improve. It needs to be embedded as effective self-assessment helps the council to continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce.

The WLGA have identified draft principles for self-assessment for councils to ensure that they have arrangements in place that:

- demonstrate self-awareness derived from evidence-based analysis that focuses on outcomes;
- are owned and led at a strategic level and are not an exercise in compliance;
- further develop a culture of challenge to facilitate improvement as part of an ongoing process;
- are integrated as part of the council's corporate planning, performance and governance processes; and
- enable an organisation-wide assessment rather than an assessment of individual services.

Further developing this culture and embedding an evaluative mindset will be a key development point through the continued production of the self- assessment report.

Process

The council has developed a process to undertake its third self-assessment under the Act, assessing performance in the 2023/24 financial year. The main component parts of the process and timeline are:

April - May	May - June	June - July	July - September	September
Desk-based evidence gathering	Directorate self-assessment Workshops	Council self-assessment report drafted	Draft report to Scrutiny and Governance & Audit Committee	Self-assessment agreed in line with council process.

This timeline ensures that the self-assessment can inform and be informed by the policy direction of the council and how it uses its resources efficiently and effectively, particularly the budget setting process.

Evaluative evidence to inform the assessment has been compiled at a directorate level. Most of the evidence has been collated by using intelligence already held corporately in an insightful way; this includes, for example, the Annual Governance Statement, audit and inspection reports, and service level business plans.

The evidence gathered has been explored further, and challenged where necessary, at directorate and enabling function based self-assessment workshops, to determine if the objectives (outcomes) of the council are being achieved.

Self-assessment workshops

Directorate workshops	Enabling functions workshops
Children & Young People	People, Performance & Partnerships – Performance, Data, Scrutiny & Workforce planning
Social Care & Health	Resources – Financial planning, Assets & Digital
Communities & Place	
MonLife	

The workshops were facilitated through the following questions:

- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes? (Community & Corporate Plan objectives)
- How do we know? (Evidence)
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities? (Enablers)
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes? (Partnership working)
- What could we do better? (Actions – including a review of actions from the previous report)

The full evidence and conclusions from workshops have been collated and will be used by directorates and enabling functions to inform their services business plans.

Following the workshops, the evidence has been reviewed, further challenged, and collated into a corporate level evaluative self-assessment. This has been integrated with the council's requirement to

report on the progress it has made in meeting its well-being objectives for the preceding financial year (2023/24) under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The report is structured under these headings:

- Understanding our local place
- Outcomes (progress against our objectives):
    o How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?
    o How do we know?
    o Areas for development
- Enabling functions
    o Corporate planning, performance and risk management
    o Financial planning
    o Workforce planning
    o Procurement
    o Assets
    o Digital & Data
    o Democracy & Scrutiny
- Our work with partners
- Our Actions (including progress against previous actions)

The self-assessment report will be scrutinised by the council's Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee. A draft of the self-assessment report will be made available to Governance and Audit Committee to review the draft report in line with the requirements of the legislation. The self-assessment will be presented for approval at a meeting of full Council.

i This measures primary school pupils who receive Universal Free Primary Schools rather than the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals

ii MonGames is a skills and sports activity programme, usually run in the school holidays, aimed at children aged between 5-11

iii This is externally grant funded so risk that this model could change or stop

iv Active Play is a two-hour programme designed for children aged between 5-11 where they are able to take part in a range of physical activities and also arts and crafts

v National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

vi Make Your Mark: Monmouthshire's Local Ballot is an annual consultation for young people ages 11-25. See https://www.monlife.co.uk/connect/youth-service/make-your-mark/make-your-mark-monmouthshire/ for more details

vii National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

viii Disability Confident is a UK Government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions.

ix Measured by the Annual Population Survey for Wales. While this is not considered as accurate as the Census, it has the benefit of being updated more frequently allowing the authority to track progress.

x This includes both emissions from the council's operations and land-based and supply chain operations

xi Amount of municipal, or 'everyday' waste, set to be recycled, reused or composted as a percentage of total waste generated. Annual reuse/recycling/composting rates by local authority (gov.wales)

xii Measured using the STEAM which is a tourism economic impact modelling process

xiii Percentage of Year 11 school leavers who are NEET. Pupil destinations | Careers Wales (gov.wales)

xiv Active travel means getting about in a way that makes you physically active, like walking or cycling. It usually means short journeys, like walking to the shops or school or cycling to work.

xv Adult Social Care Service User Questionnaire

xvi The National Exercise Referral Scheme is an evidence-based health intervention incorporating physical and behavioural change to support clients to make a lifestyle change to improve both health and well-being

xvii Adult Social Care Service User Questionnaire

xviii Relative low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year

xix Material deprivation is a measure of living standards. A person is considered to be living in material deprivation if they are unable to access a certain number of goods or services. Further information can be found here: Material deprivation and low income | GOV.WALES

xx Annual residual household waste produced per person (kilograms) by local authority (gov.wales)

xxi Air Quality Indicators, by Local Authority (gov.wales)

xxii Measures combined numbers at risk from rivers, tidal and surface water. Source: https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Flooding High Risk; Greater than or equal to 1 in 30 (3.3%) chance in any given year. Data in baseline is for 2019.
Medium Risk; Less than 1 in 30 (3.3%) but greater than or equal to 1 in 100 (1%) chance in any given year for rivers and surface water flooding and less than 1 in 30 (3.3 per cent) but greater than or equal to 1 in 200 (0.5 per cent) for the sea.
Low Risk; Less than 1 in 100 (1%) for rivers and surface water flooding and 1 in 200 (0.5 per cent) for the sea but greater than or equal to 1 in 1,000 (0.1%) chance in any given year.

xxiii Compliance Assessment of Welsh River SACs against Phosphorus Targets Report No: 489. https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/water-reports/compliance-assessment-of-welsh-river-sacs-against-phosphorus-targets/?lang=en

xxiv https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring/retail/

xxv https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring/retail/

xxvi Measure of entries and exits. Source: https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage

xxvii
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144656/tra8902.ods

xxviii Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) is the amount of money individuals or households have for spending or saving. Gross Disposable Household Income by area and measure (gov.wales)

xxix House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

xxx Includes territorial emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4) and nitrous oxide (N2O). Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2020

xxxi Source: Gwent Police

xxxii National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

xxxiii Energy efficiency of Housing, England and Wales, local authority districts - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

xxxiv National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

xxxv Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/access facilites and services they need (gov.wales)

xxxvi National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

xxxvii Healthy Life Expectancy is the number of years lived in self-assessed good health

xxxviii Healthy Life Expectancy is the number of years lived in self-assessed good health

xxxix Source: https://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/healthandsocialcare/generalhealth/tabular?viewId=47&geoId=1&subsetId=

xl https://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/healthandsocialcare/generalhealth/tabular?viewId=47&geoId=1&subsetId=

xli National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

xlii National Survey for Wales - https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales

xliii Exclusions are split by the length/type of exclusion, into 3 categories: i) Fixed term exclusions: 5 days or less; ii) Fixed term exclusions: over 5 days iii) Permanent exclusions. These are measured for all pupils and those eligible for free school meals. Further detail can be found at https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2022/10/4/1666254621/permanent-and-fixed-term-exclusions-schools-september-2020-august-2021.pdf

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024-25

29TH APRIL 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 15th April 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 17th April 2024
Pre-meeting – 19th April 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 19th April 2024
Despatch by committee section – 19th April 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Terms of reference category				
		Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
Audit Wales Work Programme: Council Progress Update	Richard Jones		✓			
Effectiveness of Strategic Risk Management Framework	Richard Jones		✓			
Internal Audit Plan 24/25	Jan Furtek				✓	
Implementation of Internal Audit agreed recommendations	Jan Furtek				✓	
Proposed future delivery model for the Internal Audit Service	Peter Davies				✓	
Audit Wales Performance Data Review	Charlotte Owen					✓

6TH JUNE 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 17th May 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 21st May 2024
Pre-meeting – 23rd May 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 28th May 2024
Despatch by committee section – 29th May 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Terms of reference category				
		Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
Draft Freedom of Information (FOI) & Data Protection Act (DPA) Breaches & Date Subject Access Request (DSARs)	Sian Hayward		✓			
CPR Exemptions - 6 monthly update to 31st March 2024	Jan Furtek				✓	
Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24	Jan Furtek				✓	
2023/4 Treasury Outturn report	Jonathan Davies	✓				
Draft Financial Strategy	Jon Davies/Peter Davies	✓				
People Strategy	Matt Gatehouse		✓			

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
Annual Audit Plan 24-25	Audit Wales					✓
Audit Wales Capital Programme Management Review	Audit Wales					✓
Audit Wales MCC Annual Audit Summary 2023	Audit Wales					✓
Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable quarterly update - March 2024	Audit Wales					✓

10TH JULY 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 21st June 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 25th June 2024
Pre-meeting – 27th June 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 1st July 2024
Despatch by committee section – 2nd July 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
		Terms of reference category				
Financial Strategy	Jon Davies/Peter Davies	✓				
Draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24	Jan Furtek				✓	
Internal Audit Plan and Annual Report for Shared Resource Service (SRS)	TCBC IA Team				✓	
Governance & Audit Committee Annual report 2023/4	Chair – Andrew Blackmore		✓			
Audit Wales Digital Review	Charlotte Owen					✓

31st July 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 9th July 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 11th July 2024
Pre-meeting – 15th July 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 22nd July 2024
Despatch by committee section – 23rd July 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
		Terms of reference category				
2024/5 Q1 - Treasury report	Jon Davies	✓				
2023/4 Draft WCF/Mon Farm Statement of Accounts	Jon Davies	✓				
2023/24 MCC Draft Statement of Accounts	Jon Davies	✓				

5TH SEPTEMBER 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 2nd August 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 6th August 2024
Pre-meeting – 8th August 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 27th August 2024
Despatch by committee section – 28th August 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
			Terms of reference category			
Initial assessment of corporate risk control arrangements	Richard Jones		✓			
Internal Audit Quarterly progress report (Q1)	Jan Furtek				✓	
Draft Self Assessment Report	Richard Jones		✓			

17TH OCTOBER 2024

Reports to be with Peter by – 1st October 2024
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting – 3rd October 2024
Pre-meeting – 7th October 2024
Finalised reports to committee section – 8th October 2024
Despatch by committee section – 9th October 2024

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
			Terms of reference category			
Anti Bribery Risk Assessment	Peter Davies		✓			
The Ombudsmans's Annual Letter - 2022/23	Annette Evans			✓		
Audit Wales Work Programme and timetable quarter 1 update	Audit Wales					✓
Audit Wales Work Programme: Council Progress update	Richard Jones		✓			
Audit Grants report	Audit Wales - Rachel Freitag					✓
Audit Wales Financial Sustainability Review	Audit Wales					✓
Annual Audit Plan 22-23 Welsh Church Funds	Rachel Freitag					✓
Internal Audit quarterly progress report (Q2)	Jan Furtek				✓	

28TH NOVEMBER 2024

Reports to be with Peter by –
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting –
Pre-meeting – 18th November 2024
Finalised reports to committee section –
Despatch by committee section –

Report Title	Report Author	Terms of reference category				
		Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
24/25 Q2 Treasury report	Jon Davies	✓				
2023/24 MCC Statement of Accounts Final	Jon Davies	✓				
ISA260 response to accounts	Rachel Freitag/Jon Davies					✓
Effectiveness of Strategic Risk Management Framework and summary of wider arrangements	Richard Jones		✓			
CPR Exemptions - 6 monthy update to 30th September 2024	Jan Furtek				✓	
Whole Authority annual complaints report	Annette Evans			✓		

16TH JANUARY 2025

Reports to be with Peter by –
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting –
Pre-meeting – 6th January 2024
Finalised reports to committee section –
Despatch by committee section –

Report Title	Report Author	Terms of reference category				
		Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
2023/4 WCF/Mon Farm Statement of Accounts Final	Jon Davies	✓				
ISA260 for trust funds	Rachel Freitag/Jon Davies					✓

20TH FEBRUARY 2025

Reports to be with Peter by –
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting –
Pre-meeting – 10th February 2024
Finalised reports to committee section –
Despatch by committee section –

		Terms of reference category

Report Title	Report Author	Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
2024/25 Q3 Treasury report	Jon Davies	✓				
Statement on the robustness of the budget process and the adequacy of reserves	Peter Davies	✓				
2025/26 Capital Strategy and Treasury Strategy	Jon Davies	✓				
Cyber Security	Sian Hayward		✓			
Self Assessment of Performance Management arrangements	Richard Jones		✓			
Internal Audit Quarterly Progress report (Q3)	Jan Furtek					✓

13TH MARCH 2025

Reports to be with Peter by –
Reports to be with Wendy Barnard/Chair prior to pre-meeting –
Pre-meeting –
Finalised reports to committee section –
Despatch by committee section –

Report Title	Report Author	Terms of reference category				
		Financial Affairs	Risk, Internal Control, Performance & Corporate Governance	Complaints	Internal Audit	External Audit
Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025/26	Jan Furtek				✓	

TO BE PUT ON A FUTURE MEETING AGENDA BUT DATES NOT YET CONFIRMED
Presentation on Global Internal Audit Standards/Update of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
Review of MCC Internal Audit Charter
MCC Fraud Risk Assessment and NFI Self Assessment

This page is intentionally left blank

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Governance and Audit Committee held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Wednesday, 31st July, 2024 at
2.00 pm**

PRESENT: Andrew Blackmore (Chair)
County Councillor Tony Easson (Vice-Chair)

Lay Members: Colin Prosser and Rhodri Guest

County Councillors: Sara Burch, John Crook, Malcolm Lane,
Phil Murphy and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jan Furtek	Acting Chief Internal Auditor
Richard Jones	Performance and Data Insight Manager
Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance
Rachel Freitag	Audit Wales Officer
Ruth Donovan	Assistant Head of Finance
David Jarrett	Accountant

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Peter Strong
Martin Veale

1. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

2. **Public Open Forum**

No members of the public were in attendance.

3. **To note the Action List from the previous meeting**

The action list from the previous meeting was noted.

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=fE8g9hDsT9q1D0Pq&t=69

1. Update on the 3 ISA260 recommendations: OPEN

4. **2024/5 Q1 - Treasury Report**

The Head of Finance presented the Quarter 1 Treasury Report 2024/25. Following this,
Committee Members were invited to comment and ask questions:

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=jvd9Ie_0-ebgYMuF&t=318

As recommended the Governance & Audit Committee reviewed the treasury
management activities and the performance achieved in the first quarter of 2024/25 as

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Governance and Audit Committee held
at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Wednesday, 31st July, 2024 at
2.00 pm**

part of its delegated responsibility to provide scrutiny of treasury policy, strategy and activity on behalf of Council.

5. Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24 – Charitable Trust Funds

The Head of Finance presented the Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24 – Charitable Trust Funds. Following presentation of the report, questions were invited from Committee Members:

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=SIDzMqeM69GaExDN&t=898

As per the report recommendations, the Governance & Audit Committee reviewed the 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts for the above bodies and had the opportunity to provide comments or proposed amendments which will be considered alongside the external audit process and prior to publication of final accounts.

6. 2023/24 MCC Draft Statement of Accounts

The Head of Finance presented the draft Monmouthshire County Council Statement of Accounts 2023/24 and sought feedback and comments from the Committee.

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=kucQj7JIEqTLG4wq&t=1276

As in the report recommendations, the Governance & Audit Committee:

1. Reviewed the 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts and highlighted any queries and comments; and

2. Noted that following the completion of the external audit process, the audited Statement of Accounts for 2023/24, alongside the outcome of the external audit process, will be presented to this Committee.

7. Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan

The Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Plan was noted.

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=H4NrGlQkU4HlLZMU&t=3255

8. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

https://www.youtube.com/live/ujpU5nZXJIc?si=7SCGFNSJA1UpPWwt&t=3280

9. Date of Next Meeting

5th September 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.59 pm.