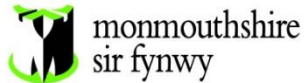


# Public Document Pack



Neuadd y Sir  
Y Rhadyr  
Brynbuga  
NP15 1GA

County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Tuesday, 8 July 2025

Dear Councillor

## CABINET

You are requested to attend a **Cabinet** meeting to be held at **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** on **Wednesday, 16th July, 2025, at 4.30 pm.**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP DUTY REPORT 1 - 14

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To seek approval of the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, setting out how the Council will build on existing practice, and work collaboratively with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

Author: Philippa Green, Head of HR

Contact Details: [philippagreen@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:philippagreen@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

4. VISION FOR SHIRE HALL TO BE REALISED 15 - 24

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To inform members of progress on the final stage of the Shire Hall Museum Monmouth which is a significant initiative for our authority, transforming Shire Hall into an accessible destination within Monmouth's historic heart.

To propose the next phased approach to the new provision with the adaption and refit of Shire Hall creating new galleries, learning and community spaces, and enhance the visitor welcome.

To approve the financial budget for the delivery stage of the project.

Author: Tracey Thomas – Head of Service Culture, Community Learning and Events MonLife

Stacey Jones – Performance, Finance and Resources Manager MonLife

Contact Details: [traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk)  
[staceyjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:staceyjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

5. MONMOUTHSHIRE PLAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AND PLAY SPACES AND PLAYGROUNDS CAPITAL FUNDING 25 - 182

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's, Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.

To similarly seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's All Wales Play Opportunities Grant Capital Funding programme for 2025/26.

Author: Nicholas John, Head of Leisure and Wellbeing.  
Rebecca Hall, Play Development Lead.

Contact Details: [nicholasjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:nicholasjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk)  
[rebeccahall@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:rebeccahall@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

6. FINANCIAL UPDATE REPORT 183 - 254

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with information on the Authority's final financial results for the 2024/25 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.

To update Cabinet on the early indicative progress against the 2025/26 revenue budget.

Author: Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance (Acting Section S151 officer)

Contact Details: [jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

7. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE - JULY 2025 255 - 298

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To provide the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context. The report outlines the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and the medium term and outlines the context for developing a balanced budget.

Author: Jonathan S. Davies Head of Finance (Acting Section 151 Officer)

Contact Details: [jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely,

**Paul Matthews**  
**Chief Executive**

### CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p><b>Leader</b> Lead Officers – Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse, Peter Davies, Will Mclean</p> <p>Whole Authority Strategy and Direction Whole authority performance review and evaluation, including DDAT Relationships with Welsh Government, UK Government and local government associations Regional Relationships including CJsCs. PSBs and cross boarder Emergency Planning</p>	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader</b> Lead Officers – Will McLean, Craig O'Connor</p> <p>Economic Strategy Skills and Employment Replacement Local Development Plan Placemaking and the development of market and affordable housing Placemaking and Transforming Towns Car parking and civil parking enforcement Development Management Building Control</p>	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Ben Callard	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Resources</b> Lead Officers – Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse</p> <p>Finance including MTFP and annual budget cycle Revenue and Benefits Human resources, payroll, health and safety Land and buildings Property maintenance and management Strategic procurement</p>	Llanfoist & Govilon
Martyn Groucutt	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Education</b> Lead Officers – Will McLean, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs/inclusion Post 16 and adult education School standards and improvement</p>	Lansdown



	<p>Community learning Sustainable communities for learning Programme Youth service School transport</p>	
Ian Chandler	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</b> Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children's services Fostering &amp; adoption Youth Offending service Adult services Whole authority safeguarding (children and adults) Disabilities Mental health Wellbeing Relationships with health providers and access to health provision</p>	Llantilio Crossenny
Catrin Maby	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment</b> Lead Officers – Debra Hill-Howells, Craig O'Connor, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Decarbonisation Transport Planning Highways and MCC Fleet Waste management, street care, litter, public spaces and parks Pavements and Back lanes Flood Alleviation Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and River health</p>	Drybridge
Angela Sandles	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</b> Lead Officers – Matthew Gatehouse, Ian Saunders, Jane Rogers, James Williams</p> <p>Community development, inequality and poverty (health, income, nutrition, disadvantage, discrimination, isolation and cost of living crisis) Citizen engagement and democracy promotion including working with voluntary organisations Citizen experience - community hubs, contact centre, and customer service and registrars, communications, public relations and marketing Leisure centres, play and sport Public conveniences Electoral Services and constitution review Ethics and standards Welsh Language Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Public Protection, and Licencing</p>	Magor East with Undy

Sara Burch	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing &amp; Tourism</b></p> <p>Lead Officers – Craig O'Connor, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Local Food production and consumption, including agroforestry and local horticulture</p> <p>Homelessness, Temporary accommodation, private sector housing, (empty homes leasing schemes, home improvement loans, disabled facilities grants and adaptive technology),</p> <p>Allocation of social housing</p> <p>Broadband connectivity</p> <p>Active Travel</p> <p>Countryside Access and Rights of Way</p> <p>Tourism Development and Cultural Services</p>	Cantref
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# 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.

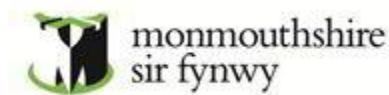
**Fairness.** We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did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





**SUBJECT: Social Partnership Duty Report**

**MEETING: Cabinet**

**DATE: 16 July 2025**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All**

## **1 PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, setting out how the Council will build on existing practice, and work collaboratively with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1. To approve the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, to enable the report to be published, under the statutory duty.

## **3 KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1. Social partnership is a collaborative approach where government bodies, employers, and trade unions work together to address economic, social, and workplace issues. It works on the principle that more can be achieved by employers and workers, predominantly through their trade unions, working together in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. Since devolution, the Welsh Government has suggested social partnership as a potential approach to addressing challenges in Wales. In 2021 the Welsh Government made a commitment to establish a statutory basis for social partnership in Wales, culminating in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.
- 3.2 To ensure compliance with the Under Sections 15, 16 and 18 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, Monmouthshire County Council must meet four statutory requirements, which will integrate social partnership principles into our activities and ensure that trade unions are actively engaged in decision-making processes, particularly in areas impacting the workforce. One of these statutory requirements is that the Council must prepare and publish an annual report detailing compliance with the Social Partnership Duty. This report also details the other three statutory requirements. The report must either have the agreement of recognised trade unions or explain why an agreement could not be reached.

- 3.3. Developing and agreeing a social partnership framework that encompasses guiding principles like cooperation, trust, and mutual gains will establish a consistent approach to fulfilling statutory duties under the Act. Monmouthshire County Council's Annual Report (2025) includes information on current partnership working arrangements and proposed developments in partnership working arrangements, including an action plan.
- 3.4. Trade union commitment to working in a different way will be important for implementation. Under the social partnership principles, early dialogue at a formation stage is required. Being part of the solution to proposing strategic plans will take time, given the long-standing arrangement whereby managers propose change to the trade unions, and they respond through acceptance or rejection of such change.
- 3.5. Failure to move to a model of involvement, as opposed to one of consultation, will lead to difficulty in fulfilling our statutory duty to report on progress.

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

- 4.1 Councils must engage with recognised trade unions when setting wellbeing objectives, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This includes enhanced involvement and collaboration, when making significant strategic decisions, particularly those that impact employees or relate to sustainable development.
- 4.2 Embedding the duty within the identified areas of the Council's work created the opportunity to improve decision-making and ensure a focus on the long-term. Enhanced involvement will benefit all employees, including those who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. No implications for safeguarding or corporate parenting have been identified at this stage of implementation.

#### **5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:**

- 5.1 The production of the report is a statutory requirement.

#### **6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

- 6.1 The Council must provide an annual report on how social partnership is being embedded in the organisation. These reports are to be submitted to Welsh Government's Social Partnership Council, who have a responsibility to write guidance which public bodies must have regard to. The content of the submitted reports will likely lead to amended guidance with additional requirements if the pace of change is not sufficient. The annual report has been presented to the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) and is available for scrutiny by the authority's committees.

**7. REASONS:**

- 7.1 To optimise collaborative working with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

**8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 8.1 The duty places additional responsibilities on officers, including additional reporting requirements. The majority of the activity can be delivered through existing mechanisms, such as regular Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meetings held between the trade unions and the authority. It is therefore anticipated that the duty can be delivered within additional resources. It will be necessary to review the arrangements after a period of time, to ensure the present arrangements for trade union facilities time allow enough time for colleagues on the trade union side to fulfil the expectations placed on them.

**9. CONSULTEES:**

Cabinet  
Strategic Leadership Team  
Trade Unions

This report has the agreement of recognised trade unions in Monmouthshire County Council.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

None

**11. AUTHOR:**

Philippa Green, Head of HR

**12. CONTACT DETAILS:**

Email: [philippagreen@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:philippagreen@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

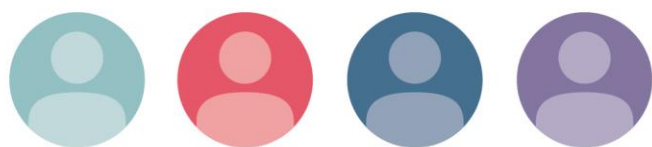
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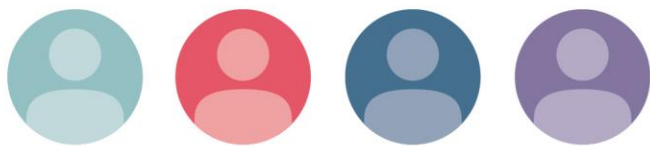
# Social Partnership Duty Report 2025



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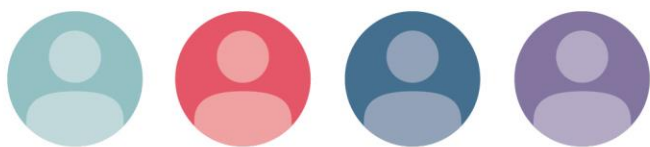
# 1. INTRODUCTION

Social partnership is a collaborative approach, designed to pursue mutual gains within the context of policy development and implementation, or operational change. It works on the basic principle that more can be achieved by employers and workers, predominantly through their trade unions, by working together in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration, to address economic, social, and workplace issues. Since devolution, the Welsh Government has suggested social partnership as a potential approach to addressing challenges in Wales.

There are many social partnership arrangements within and between individual organisations, sector-wide representative groups, and recognised trade unions, some with a long history. In the absence of any statutory underpinning, those existing partnership structures have developed voluntarily and organically over time, taking a variety of different approaches to partnership working. In 2021 the Welsh Government made a commitment to establish a statutory basis for social partnership in Wales, culminating in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Under Sections 15, 16 and 18 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, on 1 April 2024, the new Social Partnership Duty (“the Duty”) on public bodies came into force in Wales.

As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, the intended effect of the legislation is to improve the economic, social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of people in Wales by strengthening the role of social partnership within strategic decision making. Involving both employers and workers in key discussions regarding improvements to wellbeing recognises and values the unique contribution and expertise brought by those directly engaged in public service delivery when addressing shared challenges and seeking innovative solutions. The intended effect of these provisions is to promote cooperation, strengthen policy and improve outcomes, through dialogue between social partners, achieved in social partnership.

The devolved public sector is a significant employer in Wales. It directly shapes the experience of work for those who work within it, and it can also have an indirect influence throughout the public sector and wider economy through leading by example on progressive approaches to workforce matters. The ability of the devolved public bodies to perform that direct and indirect role will be strengthened by the Duty.



## 2. WHAT IS REQUIRED BY THE DUTY?

The Social Partnership Duty applies to the forty-eight public bodies listed in section 6(1) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, of which Monmouthshire County Council is one. Therefore, Monmouthshire County Council must meet four statutory requirements which will integrate social partnership principles into our activities and ensure that trade unions are actively engaged in decision-making processes, particularly in areas impacting the workforce.

### **Requirement 1: Social Partnership Duty**

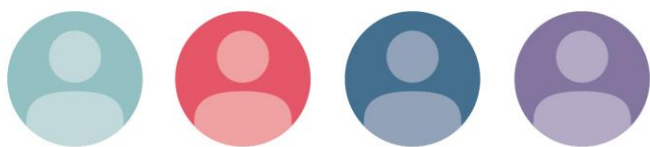
Councils must engage in social partnership with recognised trade unions when setting wellbeing objectives (in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and making significant strategic decisions, particularly those that impact employees or relate to sustainable development. This engagement requires efforts to seek consensus or compromise with trade unions, specifically at the formative stages of policy development or decision making. Councils must provide trade unions with sufficient information and adequate time to consider and respond to proposals.

### **Requirement 2: Reporting Obligations**

Councils must prepare an annual report detailing compliance with the Social Partnership Duty. This report should include actions taken to engage trade unions in relevant decision-making processes. The report must either have the agreement of recognised trade unions or explain why an agreement could not be reached. Councils are required to publish this report and submit it to the Social Partnership Council, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year, which may issue further guidance based on their content.

### **Requirement 3: Public Procurement Duty**

Councils are expected to ensure their procurement processes align with social partnership and fair work principles, which include engaging trade unions where procurement decisions affect labour standards. This duty includes ensuring that suppliers adhere to fair work practices, thereby promoting ethical standards and fair working conditions in contracts involving public funds.



#### Requirement 4: Adherence to Social Partnership Council Guidance

Welsh Ministers, through the Social Partnership Council, can publish guidance on social partnership practices, which councils must give regard to.

#### Seeking Consensus or Compromise

Section 16(2) of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, sets out several specific requirements relating to the Duty, which the Council must comply with when 'seeking consensus or compromise'. The requirements are intended to ensure that trade unions are fully and properly involved when the Council sets its wellbeing objectives, or when making strategic decisions about the reasonable steps the Council is taking to meet those objectives.

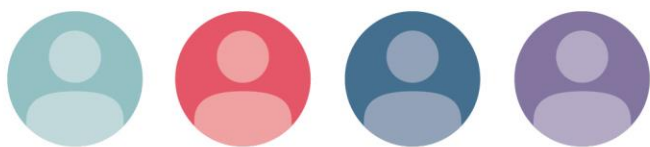
The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 states that '*in order to seek consensus or compromise, a public body must include its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (in particular):*

- (a) consulting them at a formative stage of the process, and*
- (b) otherwise involving them throughout the process by*

- (i) providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and*
- (ii) providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.'*

### 3. CURRENT PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The current partnership working arrangements in Monmouthshire County Council are mainly through workforce matters. There is already an approach to partnership working which provides more collaborative opportunities than the traditional consultation model. The current level of discussion is wide reaching and includes regular trade union meetings and interaction with elected members.



The Head of HR and Strategic Director, Social Care and Health, for Monmouthshire County Council attended the Welsh Government Social Partnership event in July 2024, which provided helpful information regarding the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 and reassurance that Monmouthshire County Council can already evidence a strong approach to partnership working.

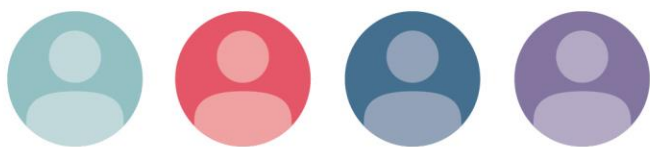
The arrangements the Council already has in place, which contribute to the four statutory requirements, are set out below. These support how social partnership principles are integrated into Council activities.

### **Requirement 1: Social Partnership Duty**

The range of activities already taking place, in which trade unions are actively involved and engaged, includes:

- Quarterly Joint Advisory Group Meetings (consisting of elected members, officers, including members of the Strategic Leadership Team, and trade union representatives):
  - Items brought to the Joint Advisory Group are determined by consensus and agreement from both the trade union and employer side.
  - Terms of reference for the Joint Advisory Group also include a commitment to gain consensus and agreement on all HR policies, which is not limited to contractual policies.
  - The Joint Advisory Group are involved in the statutory annual review of Monmouthshire County Council's Community and Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives.
- Monthly informal meetings between officer and trade union officials:
  - Held for both corporate and education trade unions, to raise organisational wide issues, ensure employee voice is represented and heard, and to consult on topics from both the trade union and employer side.
- Formal consultation arrangements with trade unions exist for budget setting processes, workforce planning and restructuring processes.





- Formal invite for trade unions to attend the weekly Job Evaluation Panel.
- Regular informal dialogue with the Leader/Cabinet Member and trade unions.
- Informal meetings between HR, Workforce Development and trade unions on new ways of working/improving processes for colleagues and managers.

## **Requirement 2: Reporting Obligations**

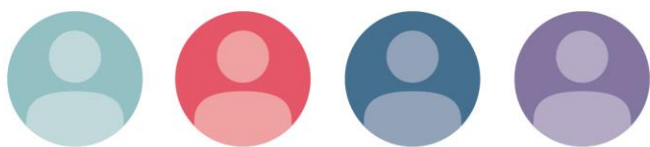
This Council has produced this annual report, the first under these requirements, detailing the current arrangements which are in place to comply with the Social Partnership Duty. The report also sets out proposed developments in partnership working arrangements, as agreed in consultation with trade union representatives, aimed at strengthening how the Council involves and engages trade unions on a broader scope of decision-making activity.

## **Requirement 3: Public Procurement Duty**

The Council has an established Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy. The strategy includes the objective to Improve Fair Work, Equity and Safeguarding practices adopted by suppliers. This aims to facilitate the Council to deliver against the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act and the principles of the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chain. An annual evaluation of the performance of the aims of the strategy is produced. An assessment of the effectiveness of the Council procurement arrangements is also incorporated in the Council's statutory annual self-assessment report, which trade unions are actively involved and engaged in through the Joint Advisory Group.

## **Requirement 4: Adherence to Social Partnership Council Guidance**

This annual report provides a mechanism for the Council to assess its arrangements in accordance with the requirements in the Social Partnership Duty. Including, adherence to any future Social Partnership Council Guidance published. The annual report will also be incorporated in the Council's statutory annual self-assessment of its wellbeing objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan.



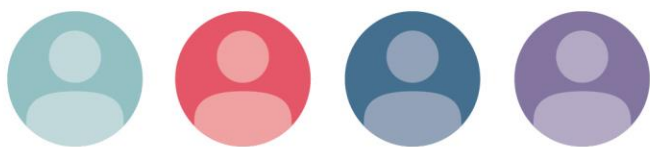
## 4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS IN PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, the Council is obligated to involve and engage trade unions on a broader scope of decision-making activity beyond that already underway. Specifically, as a minimum, consensus and agreement on setting wellbeing objectives should be gained, and trade union representative should have greater involvement in strategic decisions that have workforce or sustainable development implications.

Proposed developments in partnership working arrangements, as agreed in consultation with trade union representatives, include:

- Trade union representatives being involved to a greater extent in the statutory annual review of Monmouthshire County Council's Community and Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives, with the option of including a statement in the final self-assessment report to Council.
- Holding annual briefings by the Section 151 Officer, for all parties, on the public finance outlook, Medium Term Financial Plan assumptions and inviting all parties to put forward future saving proposals for consideration.
- Trade union representatives being involved/engaged at an early stage:
  - of any savings proposals that have workforce implications.
  - in the development and review of the Strategic Equality Plan.
  - in the development of staff survey questions and actions to respond to findings.
  - in the changes to/development of corporate staff induction arrangements.
  - in procurement developments, in accordance with the Ardal partnership arrangements.
  - in a review of the Facilities Time Agreement.
  - in leading the roll-out of the 'Social Partnership the Welsh Way' training module on Thinqi (online training platform), across the organisation.
- Trade union representatives being invited to attend an annual meeting to discuss social partnership arrangements.





## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Welsh Government has suggested social partnership as a potential approach to addressing challenges in Wales. Monmouthshire County Council already has an approach to partnership working which provides more collaborative opportunities than the traditional consultation model.

In order to involve and engage trade unions on a broader scope of decision-making activity beyond than that which is already underway, Monmouthshire County Council has developed and agreed a social partnership action plan (see Appendix 1), that encompasses the guiding principles of cooperation, respect, trust, voice and participation, and mutual gains, which will establish a consistent approach to fulfilling statutory duties under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

The Council is confident that, through delivery of the action plan, the benefits of social partnership working will be realised to an even greater extent than they are currently, and the organisation's values of openness, fairness, flexibility, teamwork and kindness will be strengthened.

**This report has the agreement of recognised trade unions in Monmouthshire County Council.**



## APPENDIX 1:

### SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN 2025-26

Number	The action to be taken	Who is accountable
1	Trade union representatives being involved to a greater extent in the statutory annual review of Monmouthshire County Council's Community and Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives, with the option of including a statement in the final self-assessment report to Council.	Chief Officer: People, Performance and Partnerships Trade Union Officers
2	Holding annual briefings by the Section 151 Officer, for all parties, on the public finance outlook, Medium Term Financial Plan assumptions and inviting all parties to put forward future saving proposals for consideration.	Chief Officers Section 151 Officer Trade Union Officers
3	Trade union representatives being involved/engaged at an early stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) of any savings proposals that have workforce implications.</li> <li>b) in the development and review of the Strategic Equality Plan.</li> <li>c) in the development of staff survey questions and actions to respond to findings.</li> <li>d) in the changes to/development of corporate staff induction arrangements.</li> <li>e) in procurement developments, in accordance with the Ardal partnership arrangements.</li> <li>f) in a review of the Facilities Time Agreement.</li> <li>g) in leading the roll-out of the 'Social Partnership the Welsh Way' training module on Thingi (online training platform), across the organisation.</li> </ul>	Chief Officer: People, Performance and Partnerships Section 151 Officer Trade Union Officers
4	Trade union representatives being invited to attend an annual meeting to discuss social partnership arrangements.	Chief Officer: People, Performance and Partnerships Trade Union Officers

**SUBJECT: VISION FOR SHIRE HALL TO BE REALISED**

**MEETING: Cabinet**

**DATE: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: DRYBRIDGE**

## **1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To inform members of progress on the final stage of the Shire Hall Museum Monmouth which is a significant initiative for our authority, transforming Shire Hall into an accessible destination within Monmouth's historic heart.
- 1.2 To propose the next phased approach to the new provision with the adaption and refit of Shire Hall creating new galleries, learning and community spaces, and enhance the visitor welcome.
- 1.3 To approve the financial budget for the delivery stage of the project.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 To note the progress of the Development Phase, which includes RIBA stage 3 (a developed design) incorporating the Monmouth Museum Collections and a Community Learning Facility.
- 2.2 To approve the final phase to realise the Shire Hall becoming a flagship sustainable cultural destination and community facility.
- 2.3 To approve a £300,000 capital contribution from capital match to facilitate the next phase of works.

## **3. KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1 Shire Hall, built in 1724, is Grade I listed as a building of outstanding national importance. It is one of the most important secular buildings in Monmouthshire, due to architectural quality and historic associations, having been site of the Chartist leader trials, 1840. It holds high social significance for the people of Monmouth, previously acting as a ballroom, theatre and meeting venue, it remains very important to local community pride.
- 3.2 The Shire Hall project is a significant initiative for our authority, transforming Shire Hall into an accessible destination within Monmouth's historic heart. The vision is

for Shire Hall to be a place where our communities and visitors can discover, celebrate, and share our diverse stories, incorporating inclusive and relevant displays, rooted in public participation. It will be an inspiring learning hub, incorporating visible object storage with improved conditions for our internationally significant collections.

- 3.3 Improvements to the heating system and energy efficiency will increase the Grade I listed building's environmental sustainability. Versatile spaces will be created to support income generation, providing a long term, financially resilient future for Shire Hall.
- 3.4 Volunteering, community participation and activity programming will result in an increased visitor base and widened audience profile, informing a strategy to reduce barriers to under-served audiences, making Shire Hall Museum a place where everyone's heritage can be enjoyed.
- 3.5 Investing in the Shire Hall project at this time provides opportunity to be involved in shaping future improvements to the town, benefit the project lifetime and beyond. These place making plans are being developed by MCC in partnership with its key towns to create spaces that attract town centre residents and visitors, contribute to the public realm increasing local economy. Should the project delay, Shire Hall will not feature in these plans.
- 3.6 There is opportunity for Shire Hall's vision to feature in the revised Destination Management Plan which guides the running of the county's tourism sector. MCC are currently consulting with businesses, services, tourists and residents on their views. It aims to develop a tourism economy that avoids negative impact on the environment while ensuring a positive experience for visitors and residents.
- 3.7 The project aims to create a modern, engaging museum space within Shire Hall, a Grade I listed building. The new museum will feature improved galleries, learning and community spaces, and enhanced visitor welcome, all of which will contribute to a better visitor experience.

## DEVELOPMENT PHASE

- 3.8 Initial discussion took place with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Council were successful in securing £349,928 in June 2023, MCC provided Capital Match funding of £116,643 to secure a Development Phase project of £466,571. This enabled completion of the development phase of the project. Through a parallel NLHF project MCC secured a further £241,697 to update our collections management systems and to work with communities to showcase local collections from Monmouth at the Shire Hall and at community venues.
- 3.9 Between August 2023 and January 2024, , the Shire Hall project team were appointed to take forward the development phase, and Purcell were appointed

as the main contractors for the development phase with Redman being the museum specialists who would design the exhibition spaces.

- 3.10 The overall development phase designs propose changes to make the approach to the building more open, the entrance foyer more transparent and welcoming, and a clearer visitor flow between the displays on each floor and the community learning facility. The scheme also creates a new, larger learning space for all ages, maintains flexible community spaces, continued accommodation for the Town Council and a larger shop / visitor information presence,
- 3.11 The proposals allow for a new visitor flow on the ground floor and subsequent floors, including community exhibition and learning spaces. The main displays on the first floor, would use the full room volumes and the circulation spaces. The community room will comprise open storage and will operate as a facility to be used by the community and visiting exhibitions. The project also fully integrates the historic courtroom and cells into the visitor journey; all intended to create attractive animated spaces for visitors and community use.
- 3.12 The proposed works will better announce the building, engage with, and animate its immediate space in Agincourt Square contributing to the public realm enhancements to draw visitors through the town centre.
- 3.13 As part of the development phase, further detailed work has been carried out to ensure museum standard environmental conditions are met and identify clear energy efficiency and security standards; to ensure the design details align with building conservation requirements.

4. Listed building consent was submitted to Monmouthshire County Council on Application DM/2024/01531 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024, planning committee approved Listed Building consent on the 11<sup>th</sup> March with full approval received from CADW on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025 to carry out refurbishment relating to environmental controls, acoustics, sinks and storage. Please note Planning Permission was not required.

## **DELIVERY STAGE**

- 4.1 To realise our ambitions for the Shire Hall and to secure its long term future, we submitted our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in February 2025.
- 4.2 Plans submitted as part of the development phase process and exploring the cost plan, current costs for the delivery stage are estimated to be in the region of £2,802,392. This will be funded through a variety of sources, external grant, fundraising, and both internal capital match and borrowing.
- 4.3 We have a good track record of securing external funding and are exploring several grant funders who can fund interim, delivery phase and long-term support to the Shire Hall Museum. [REDACTED]

- 4.4 There is a current grant application in place with SPF for £63,000, we have identified grants that we will submit under the Welsh Government Culture Capital grant for £200,000 and Esmée Fairbairn £30,000 - £100,000. Other grants of interest and potential application are The Clore Duffield Foundation Learning Spaces £200,000; Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund £60,000
- 4.5 We are exploring sponsorship with national companies with specific themes of Nelson, and Charles and Eleanor Shelley-Rolls through connecting with women in science.
- 4.6 We will undertake further work with our fundraising consultant to look to generate other grants, sponsorships or donations of £509,542 throughout the delivery phase of the project (as detailed in Appendix B). This leaves a funding gap of £300,000 that we are looking to fund through capital match over the two years of the project.
- 4.7 Notification of successful funding streams is expected late June 2025 with an anticipated Delivery Phase start date of August 2025. Major milestones are recruitment of delivery phase staff team; removal of current artifacts from Market Hall by December 2025; construction for new galleries, improved heating, security and reception layout by Spring 2026; installation of new exhibitions and displays and embedding the educational activity programme; reopening of Shire Hall Museum early 2027.
- 4.8 In terms of releasing the section of the Market Hall the museums currently occupy; this would be realised through moving to the next phase of delivery at the Shire Hall by the end of 2025. This will include using the new museum stores at Chepstow and Abergavenny museums and the offsite store to house the collections. Vacant space in the Market Hall is currently advertised for letting by MCC's Estates Department, and opportunities to repurpose will continue to be explored as relocation away from the property progresses

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

- 5.1 Creating a museum and community offer at Shire Hall better tells the Monmouth story, it addresses the need to improve facilities and the visitor experience and provides a framework for long term development of the offer and the engagement of new audiences improving people's wellbeing. Better facilities will support children and young people, lifelong learning, wider community engagement and involvement.

- 5.2 The adaption and refit of Shire Hall will create new galleries, learning and community spaces, and enhance the visitor welcome. The proposed works will better announce the building, engage with, and animate its immediate space in Agincourt Square contributing to the public realm enhancements to draw visitors through the town centre.
- 5.3 The inherent purpose of MonLife is to make the best possible contribution to improving the quality of life for all the communities, aligning to Community and Corporate Plan, Public Service Board priorities from the Well-being Plan and Assessments. The positive engagement and activities with communities, customers and staff will enable a focus on investment in key aspects of this new visitor attraction to ensure the culture and business thrives and that it contributes to the economy, add vibrancy to the town centre and support artistic, cultural, heritage and tourism activity.
- 5.4 The improvement to the heating systems and changes to how we store our collections will improve our environmental sustainability record.
- 5.5 The Shire Hall has lift access to all floors and will ensure more people can view future displays and exhibitions.
- 5.6 The safeguarding responsibilities of the Authority and partners are fully integrated into the identification of appropriate actions and reflected within MonLife's culture and documentation for these services.

## 6. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefit	Risks	Comments
Not to proceed with next phase of Shire Hall Museum Monmouth	None	<p>Does not allow for further development of the Shire Hall to create a sustainable community facility that supports culture and economic benefits to the town</p> <p>Does not allow for future use of the current museum accommodation in Market Hall and therefore puts our collections at risk including the Nationally Significant Nelson Collection</p>	Does not progress the ambitions set out in the Museum Forward Plan

To proceed with phase 3 and finalise the internal designs of the Shire Hall and	<p>Establishes a new accessible destination within Monmouth's historic heart.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to create a community facility at Shire Hall in an integrated, engaging and more sustainable way.</p> <p>Allows future options for Market Hall to proceed.</p>	<p>Sufficient resources need to be secured to ensure that the phase 3 offer meets public expectations and maintains Museum Accreditation standards.</p> <p>The risk of increased costs of supplies and other collections work which are dependent on attracting external funding, therefore not proceeding in a timely way.</p>	Supports the case for external grant.
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## 7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 7.1 Progress will be evaluated against the relevant MonLife Business and Service Delivery Plans, and through the Shire Hall Project Board. The framework will incorporate performance indicators including visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction, learning outcomes and income targets.
- 7.2 Interim milestones will be set by funders to see progress being made and final outcomes of the delivery phase of the project.

## 8. REASONS:

- 8.1 The provision of a contemporary offer in Monmouth is identified within the MonLife Business Plan and provides a way to better tell the Monmouthshire story in an integrated, engaging and more sustainable way.
- 8.2 The project will create a high-quality public facing offer for the community and visitors of the town and county. It will be a prominent community asset that offers learning, cultural experiences and shared spaces for activities and events. Investing in key aspects of this visitor attraction will increase footfall, contributing to tourism and the local economy, add vibrancy to the town centre and support artistic, cultural, and heritage activity.
- 8.3 The creation of a new cultural resource at Shire Hall will contribute to the emerging Cultural Strategy; Destination Management Plan objectives of developing the county's cultural product offer and increasing tourism footfall, and key aspects of the Community and Corporate Plan 'Our towns will need constant and creative re-imagining if they are to retain their role as retail centres, visitor attractions and motors of our county's economy.' The Shire Hall project links strongly to this.



- 8.4 During the Development phase the project team at the Shire Hall successfully engaged with 19 different local groups. This included the town council as a tenant of the Shire Hall; the Chamber of Commerce; a local visually impaired group (MONVIG); Monmouthshire Housing Association; local parents; a youth group, local Ukrainian residents; a local dementia group; MAGIC and a local LGBTQIA+ group.
- 8.5 An Activity Programme has been developed based on the ideas and activities that emerged during the public consultation process throughout the development phase. Responding to feedback from both long-standing supporters and previously underserved groups will instil confidence in our stakeholders that their views matter.
- 8.6 Our vision is that **Shire Hall will be an accessible destination within Monmouth's historic heart where our communities and visitors can discover, celebrate and share our unique stories.**

Through effective collaboration and communication between stakeholders and partners, we will:

- I. Remove the barriers that our communities and visitors face in order to widen our audiences
- II. Give our communities and visitors a greater opportunity to explore, discover and learn through a programme of activities and events designed by and for them
- III. Improve the wellbeing of our audiences through engagement with our collections and activities
- IV. Use our stories, collections and activities to enable our audiences to try something new
- V. Create the best possible visitor experience that makes people want to come and visit
- VI. Champion the environment to help change attitudes and behaviours

We will create an offer that will draw in our priority groups of Local residents, Adults on lower incomes, Families on lower incomes, Schools in lower income areas, Individuals living with dementia and their carers, Neurodiverse audiences - alongside our more general visitor audiences.

8.7 The successful implementation of the above aims will help ensure the long-term sustainable future of Monmouth's culture and heritage offer.

## 9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 9.1 The estimated costs of completing the delivery phase are **£2,802,392**. This includes construction costs of £2,024,941, External Professional Fees £334,835 and Project team, training, fees, digital, marketing and recruitment of £442,616.

	Budget £
<b>Purcell Riba Stage 3</b>	<b>1,271,824</b>
<b>Redman Riba Stage 3</b>	<b>942,476</b>
Object Repairs	120,000
QS (Internal MCC/Alliance Leisure)	25,476
Digital	7,400
Project Team (Staff, Training, Travel, Fees Other)	399,166
Recruitment	1,000
Publicity	2,000
Evaluation	20,000
Other	13,050
	<b>2,802,392</b>

### **Proposed Financing**

	£
MCC Capital	234,000
WG Transformation Grant (Approved)	228,850
Wolfson Grant (Approved)	30,000
National Heritage Lottery (Approved)	1,500,000
Capital Match (In Application)	300,000
Grants and Fundraising	<b>509,542</b>
	<b>2,802,392</b>

### **Grants and Fundraising**

	£
<b>In Application</b>	
SPF	63,000
WG Culture Capital	200,000
Esmee Fairbairn	100,000
	<b>363,000</b>
<b>Other Grants and Fundraising</b>	146,542
	<b>509,542</b>



9.3 There is risk associated with the grants and other funding of £513,542, of which £363,000 is at grant application stage or will be by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025, we have sufficient levels of confidence of being able to generate the funding identified in these bids. We will look to fund the remaining funding gap of £150,542 through other grants, fundraising and sponsorship. If this is not achievable any future funding will require a further decision on how this funding will be met. We have collaborated closely with a fundraising consultant to explore the opportunities available to MCC. After analysing the comprehensive fundraising strategy, it is understood that other grant opportunities will be our top priority initially for securing additional funding. The directorate has been extremely successful over the past few years in securing grant funding. Consequently, we have approved the creation of a part-time fundraising position, which will focus on initial grant bids and relationship building with potential sponsors and donors. This will position us optimally to achieve the funding required to complete the delivery phase.

9.4 It is not anticipated that there will be any additional revenue consequences on the combined Shire Hall and Monmouth Museum budgets.

## **10. CONSULTEES:**

DMT Customer Culture and Wellbeing  
SLT  
Cabinet  
Ward / Monmouth members  
Performance, Finance and Resources Manager  
Monmouth Town Council

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Appendix A - Equality and Future Generations Evaluation  
Appendix B – Shire Hall Museum Business Plan  
Appendix C – Shire Hall Fundraising Strategy 2025  
Appendix D – Museum Design Report (3) Redman

## **12. AUTHORS & CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Tracey Thomas** – Head of Service Culture, Community Learning and Events MonLife  
Email: [traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk)  
**Stacey Jones** – Performance, Finance and Resources Manager MonLife Email: [staceyjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:staceyjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Monmouthshire Play Opportunities for All and Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital Funding</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> July</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>AFFECTED:</b>	

## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's, Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.
- 1.2 To similarly seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's All Wales Play Opportunities Grant Capital Funding programme for 2025/26.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve Monmouthshire's Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.
- 2.2 To receive an annual update of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan.
- 2.3 Approve the proposed prioritised schemes to benefit from the All Wales Play Opportunities grant 2025/26 Capital Grant for Play Spaces and Playgrounds across Monmouthshire.

## 3. KEY MESSAGES:

- 3.1 The Council's Community and Corporate Plan has as one of its six objectives the aim for Monmouthshire to be a "*connected place, where people feel part of a community and are valued*". As part of that the Council strives for Monmouthshire to be a healthy and active place where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded.
- 3.2 Play positively impacts on children and families who are vulnerable. The provision appeals to families who benefit from early preventative systems. Play is a vital element in children's development and something that can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives.

- 3.3 Recognising the importance of play and its statutory guidance Monmouthshire has undertaken Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022.
- 3.4 The 2025 – 2028 PSA (**Appendix 1**) sets out in more detail the background, progress and proposed areas for actions for the next three-years. The actions aligns to those of the Corporate and Community Plan objective of A Fair Place and the action within the plan contributes to *promoting healthier lifestyles, which reduce health inequalities, through increased physical activity, nutritious food and access to open spaces*.
- 3.5 Monmouthshire Play Strategy group is responsible for the PSA and action plan. The group's membership includes cross-departmental offices and is supported by WGLA & WG officers.
- 3.5.1 Membership of the Play Strategy Group: Active Travel; Community infrastructure; Community Focused schools; Community and Wellbeing team; Early years and Childcare; Flying Start; Sport and Community; Play Development; Leisure Services; Children's Disabilities team; Youth service and Neighbourhood services officers.
- 3.5.2 It has been recognised by Welsh Government that Monmouthshire is sector leading in its approach to cross departmental collaboration. It is noted that in so many areas play fits heavily within agendas. This is particularly noted in Active Travel, Heritage and Culture and Sport Development.
- 3.6 Using the 'playing out survey', officers attended every primary school in Monmouthshire. The survey was delivered through the PlayMakers Award program. The playmakers (young children) at each school supported their peers to complete the survey. Further information was gathered on children's views on play in schools.
- 3.6.1 To gather parents and carers thoughts on play for their children, we used the Play Wales parent survey. Further opportunities were available at the councils' main facilities through QR codes and paper copies, if requested.
- 3.6.2 The responses from both surveys have been considered within the assessment. However, questions regarding spaces locally for children to

play, asked to parents did not marry with the same question asked to children.

3.6.3 The annual Play Action Plan (**Appendix 2**), details the actions to address the issues/ shortcomings recorded in the Play Assessment to secure sufficient opportunities for play.

3.7 Playing helps children to develop their inner resources and build resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their home and other parts of their lives. Through school holiday periods, Monmouthshire has established opportunities for supervised play, under the umbrella of Active Play and Stay & Play. Children's services through their holiday clubs support families with children with disabilities to access suitable play provision.

3.7.1 The School Holiday Enrichment Programme, 'Food & Fun' is delivered in the school summer holidays. A school-based scheme providing healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity, and enrichment sessions to learners in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. (**Appendix 3**).

3.8 Monmouthshire neighbourhood services manage and regularly maintain more than 100 fixed play areas and open spaces across the county. Most fixed play areas are developed and installed by officers within the team.

3.8.1 Fixed play areas are categorised by 'Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's) and Local Equipped Areas for Play' (LEAP's). Monmouthshire has a mix of play areas and ownership included Monmouthshire; Town and Community Councils and Housing Associations.

3.9 The 2019 independent play value assessment of Monmouthshire's fixed play areas was a comprehensive evaluation aimed at understanding and improving the quality of play opportunities across the county. **Appendix 3a**, outlines the specific assessment criteria and provides insight into the methodology and principles used.

There is a commitment to review this assessment more frequently and as a minimum when making improvements to these facilities the play value is reassessed.

3.9.1 When the opportunity arises to upgrade or replace play areas, two of the important considerations at the forefront of our thinking are accessibility and sustainability.

3.9.2 As part of the Welsh Government Final Budget 2025-26, there was an agreement to focus on a series of shared priorities. This included £5m of capital funding to local authorities to improve the quality of play spaces, refurbish playgrounds and support the creation of accessible play spaces and opportunities for children. Monmouthshire has been awarded **£128,619.28** of this fund.

### 3.10 People's Scrutiny Committee.

In June, the People's Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from officers representing the Monmouthshire Play Strategy Group, outlining the "Monmouthshire Play Opportunities for All" report and the associated Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital Funding proposal.

3.10.1 The committee highlighted the critical role of effective communication, particularly with town and community councils, local members, and residents. Refer to points 7.6 to 7.9.1 in the report.

3.10.2 The committee stressed the need to consult residents on the proposed investment and to ensure that the outcomes reflect their priorities and preferences. Refer to points 3.6.3 and 7.8 to 7.9.1. in the report. Notwithstanding the criteria of the funding, in point 7.8.

3.10.3 The committee inquired about the possibility of holding a few outreach sessions each year in rural communities, particularly in areas where investment has been made in play parks. Refer to point 7.4.2 of the report, highlighting the collaborative approach and furthermore an opportunity for officers within the Play Strategy Group to explore this further.

3.10.4 Clarification regarding the reporting within the Play Sufficiency Assessment, along with any other matters raised during the meeting, has been provided separately by the designated officers.

3.10.5 Following reflections from the meeting, officers have incorporated into the Play Sufficiency Action Plan a commitment to engage with town and



community councils, map play parks in each area, and initiate discussions on future priorities and potential investment.

3.10.6 The Cabinet will review the committee's feedback and make a final decision on the approval of the report and associated investment.

#### **4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:**

- 4.1 Approval of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan provides direction and vision in delivery. It allows access to All Wales Play Opportunities Grant and associated funding and will build on collaboration, joint outcomes and future workstreams identified under the Annual Play Action Plan.
- 4.2 The Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding programme has seen an objective and evidence-based assessment result in a prioritised number of projects and deliverables proposed achieved within the financial year 2025-2026.

#### **5. EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

- 5.1 The assessment criteria for the PSA measures are set out in Statutory Guidance/ the PSA Toolkit prepared by Play Wales on behalf of Welsh Government and the requirement to undertake an annual review of achievement against the action plan.
- 5.2 The annual update on Actions for PSA action plans is completed by the Play Development lead and submitted to Welsh Government on the 1st of June each year of the PSA Cycles. These annual reports are reviewed and approved at the Play Strategy group meetings.
- 5.3 The sport, community and play outcomes within the delivery plans are identified as measures within the Corporate and Community Plan within Fair Place; Connected Place; and Learning Place and are reported quarterly.
- 5.4 The Award of funding is subject to successful delivery of the agreed outcomes in the application and delivered by March 2026.

#### **6. REASONS:**

- 6.1 "Wales: A Play Friendly Country" is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

- 6.2 The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every three years and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis.
- 6.2.1 Each local authority is responsible for managing the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Play Action Plan. This includes engagement with a range of partners, data collection and analysis to help inform the assessment. Partnership working, collaboration and participation are core elements of conducting the Play Sufficiency Assessment against the criteria outlined within the Statutory Guidance.
- 6.3 The Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding provides us with the opportunity to build on our cross-departmental collaboration, whilst making improvements to our identified play areas and project. Providing children with better opportunities to play within their local communities.
- 6.4 The PSA outcomes and deliverables contributes to the objectives set out within the Corporate and Community Plan.

## **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 7.1 The Play development lead has established effective cross department working. A key element of success has been embedding play within the sport, play and community team and wider customer, culture and wellbeing directorate.
- 7.2 The Play development lead has recently been trained to deliver the L2APP, a playwork qualification for those who work in provisions that support children and children's play.
- 7.3 The children's disabilities team has made a commitment to deliver additional needs training annually to all school holiday site assistants and staff across, customer, culture and wellbeing, where staff are delivering provision to children and young people.
- 7.4 Funding streams and opportunities.
- 7.4.1 The Play Strategy group collaboratively seeks funding opportunities to ensure there are sustainable opportunities for play in Monmouthshire and to support the delivery of the play action plan.
- 7.4.2 Annual funding and support has included revenue contribution and grants from our stakeholders including;
- a. Town and Community Council contributions,
  - b. WLGA - Play Works Holiday Project and Food & Fun Holiday enrichment programme.

- c. Children and Communities Grant (CCG) 2024/25. Inclusive grant. Used to support Action for Children to deliver Playscheme sessions to children who are referred by the Children's Disabilities team.
- d. **Appendix 4** highlights the activities programme for the summer of 2024.

7.5 There have been several successful projects delivered and funded through S106 contributions or commitments; Lottery Bids; third sector grants and cross-departmental funding and outcomes. Several play areas have been upgraded in the period 2019 to 2024.

Location	Site	Comment
Abergavenny	Bailey Park	S106 funding
Caldicot	KGV Playing Field	Town Council funding
Chepstow	Castle Dell	Chepstow Town Council National Lottery Community Fund Transforming Towns Grant Programme
Monmouth	Chippenham	S106 funding Monmouth Town Council and Wye Valley AONB
Usk	Maryport Street	National Lottery Community Fund
Magor with Undy	Sycamore Terrace	Town Council funding

7.6 Welsh Government has stated that local authorities should consider the outcomes of their Play Sufficiency Assessment when allocating the money to projects:

- **Matter B** – *Providing for Diverse Needs, which* directs local authorities and partners to aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together.
- **Matter C** – *Space available for children to play, which* directs local authorities to undertake access audits at all designated play spaces and implement proposals to improve access and safety, and assess its play value; and,
- **Matter H** - *Community engagement and participation* which directs local authorities to consult widely with children, their families, and other stakeholders on their views on play provision. This includes engaging with relevant groups to enhance play opportunities for children in their area.

7.7 To identify where the Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding for 2025/26 should be allocated, the Play Strategy Group invited officers from the group to be part of a 'task and finish group'.

7.7.1 The task and finish group membership were officers from departments who contribute towards play/playgrounds. Officers have whole authority knowledge of need and contributors to the recent Play Sufficiency Assessment. In addition, support was given to, finance and monitoring to ensure the funding criteria was met.

7.7.2 Data and insight included;

- Grant criteria,
- Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan,
- Play Value Assessments for Play Parks,
- Future opportunities for funding or known improvements, S106, RLDP, partner funding,
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019,
- List of all play parks within Monmouthshire.

7.8 Based on the criteria of funding which stated that;

- All projects need to be **completed** by March 2026. Funding cannot be allocated to projects that won't be ready to use by March 2026.
- The grant must be used to support actions of the 2025 PSA.
- WG would like the money to be used, as far as reasonably practicable, to encompass a wide range of users including a range of ages. In relation to this it is concluded that this grant would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play). The funding would then cover a wider range of ages and needs whereas LAPS focus more on lower age groups, mainly the pre-school under-5s.
- WG would like to see funding being utilised to support cross policy objectives e.g. active travel, community.
- Supporting areas of deprivation is desirable but can be used in lower deprived areas if there is rationale to do so.
- Current Play value should be considered when making decisions with a view to improving play value. A score between 0-29 is considered LOW play value.

7.8.1 The group reviewed all data and information of parks and concluded that in line with the criteria stated above the funding should be allocated to the following projects, **Appendix 5**.

7.8.1.1 Improvements to Burntbarn Road, NEAP (also known locally as Western Avenue) and Bulwark Park, NEAP (also known locally as Piggy Hill).

7.8.1.2 Improvements to the skatepark (separate funding).

7.8.1.3 Improvements to the routes, where match funding could be achieved.

7.9 Consultation on the proposed plans to improve the identified play parks would be achieved through Let's Talk Monmouthshire and local drop-in sessions. These can be administered throughout the school summer holidays 2025 with analysis to be completed by end of September 2025.

7.9.1 This engagement will include children and young people who attend summer holiday provisions across play, youth and leisure centres in the identified area for the funding allocation.

## **8.WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING & CORPORATE PARENTING)**

8.1 The statutory matters mean that the PSA includes an assessment of the extent that play opportunities are inclusive and recognises the positive impact that securing sufficient and accessible play opportunities can have on children, families and communities. **Appendix 6.**

## **9. CONSULTEES:**

People Scrutiny Committee.  
Strategic Leadership Team.  
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing DMT.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

[Wales: A play Friendly Country](#)

[Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit](#)

[Creating accessible play spaces – a toolkit - Play Wales](#)

**Appendix 1 – Monmouthshire Play Sufficiency Assessment Form 2025-2028.**

**Appendix 2 - Monmouthshire Play Sufficiency Action Plan 2025-2026.**

**Appendix 3 - Food and Fun Programme 2024 impact infographic.**

**Appendix 3a – Play Value Assessment Template 2019.**

**Appendix 4 - Summer Holiday infographic.**

**Appendix 5 - Funding Panel Assessment document.**

## **Appendix 6 - Integrated Impact Assessment.**

### **11. AUTHORS:**

Nicholas John, Head of Leisure and Wellbeing.

Rebecca Hall, Play Development Lead.

### **12. CONTACT DETAILS:**

Tel: 07768 055408

Email: [nicholasjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:nicholasjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 07800 914204

Email: [rebeccahall@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:rebeccahall@monmouthshire.gov.uk)



## **Play Sufficiency Assessment Form**

**Local Authority: Monmouthshire County Council**

**Responsible Officer: Rebecca Hall**

**Job title: Play Development Lead**

**Date of completion: June 2025**

## **An Executive Summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) 2025: The state of play in Monmouthshire Local Authority.**

### **1. Local Authority Summary Statement**

The Council recognises the importance of play in children's lives, for both its recreational value and for the important part that it plays in children's physical and emotional health and well-being and in their personal development.

Accessible play opportunities contribute to children's lives and to the well-being of their families and communities, thereby contributing to the well-being objective to provide children and young people with the best possible start in life. Play is an important aspect of achieving the vision of the Council's Corporate Plan.

- A Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- A Safe place to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure
- A Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued.
- A Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

These strands of our corporate plan mirror the objectives of Welsh Play Policy where children should have time, space and permission to play as part of their community.

Our goal as an authority is to ensure that there is sufficient access and opportunity for children and young people to participate in play. The

### **2. Methodology**

The Play Development Lead held initial meetings with the play strategy group to discuss and plan how the PSA was to be completed. Members of the Play Strategy group include representatives from the following departments

- Active Travel
- Community infrastructure
- Community Focused schools
- Community and Wellbeing team



- Early years and Childcare
- Flying Start
- Sport and Community
- Play Development.
- Leisure Services
- Children's Disabilities team

Using part of the Play Wales Tool kit we identified stakeholders both externally and internally that should be contacted and should report into the PSA. Each of these stakeholders were asked to complete a document to report on what work they have completed since the last PSA that pertains to children's right to access time space and permission to play. Play development lead met with cluster heads to discuss the play duties and how schools play a part in that. Schools were asked to complete documentation on how they include play into their school day and how they make space available. All of these were in relation to themes of the PSA.

Using the playing out survey we went to all schools using playmakers teams to consult with children and ask them to complete the questionnaire. We held two focused groups at the Bronze young ambassador's day using some of the questions from the playing out survey to facilitate open dialogue on how children viewed their opportunity to access play and if play needs where met. Focus groups were facilitated using the same methods at 5 schools. This provided a wider range of ages and abilities. We added some questions to the playing out survey to gather information on children's views on play in their schools.

All leisure centres and libraries advertised using QR codes links to parent questionnaires and children's questionnaires within their centres. These were also shared on social media. These services have been fully updated on the progress not just of the completion of the current PSA but developments for play throughout the authority as forward facing to the public.

To ensure we reached children with additional needs/disabilities we used Action for children to consult with children in their sessions. We also reached out to our schools with specialist units to complete with their children.

The council works with local town councils who support with some funding of activities within their locality. We meet regularly with these councils to provide updates on provisions within their areas and they share with us their own consultation with constituents. This was also considered when preparing for the PSA.

All departments whose work pertains to themes of the PSA completed update documents to include how their work has met the criteria, what work has been completed, any challenges and future projects and any data. These were sent to the Play

Development Lead who inputted them into the 2025 PSA. These were then approved and edited where necessary by those relevant departments. These departments were also responsible for providing actions to inform the action plan.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Responsible department</i>
<b>Population</b> [Matters A, B, E].	<i>MonLife Play</i> <i>Data team</i> <i>Children with Disabilities team</i> <i>Early Years and Childcare</i> <i>Communities and Wellbeing team</i> <i>Youth Service</i> <i>Sport Development team</i> <i>Children's Services</i>
<b>Places where children play</b> [Matters C, F and I]	<i>MonLife Play</i> <i>Heritage and Attractions</i> <i>Leisure services</i> <i>Town and Community Councils</i> <i>Community infrastructure</i> <i>Active Travel</i> <i>Traffic and road safety</i> <i>Education</i> <i>Communities focused schools</i>
<b>Supervised provision</b> [Matters D and G]	<i>MonLife Play</i> <i>Monlife Sport and community</i> <i>Youth service</i> <i>Children with Disabilities team</i> <i>Town and Community Councils</i> <i>Action for Children</i> <i>Family information Service</i> <i>Early years and Childcare</i> <i>Flying start</i> <i>Heritage and Museums</i> <i>Workforce</i>

<b>Policy, engagement, advocacy and information</b> [Matters F, G, H, I]	<i>MonLife Play</i> <i>Education</i> <i>Communities and Wellbeing team</i> <i>Community focused schools</i> <i>Active Travel</i> <i>Traffic and road safety</i> <i>Countryside's</i> <i>Leisure services</i> <i>Marketing team</i> <i>Family information services</i> <i>Workforce Development</i>
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### 3. How engagement with children and families has informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment [max 2,000 words]

Using the playing out survey we went to all primary schools as part of the PlayMakers Award program. Using playmakers teams to consult with children and ask them to complete the questionnaire. We added some questions to the playing out survey to gather information on children's views on play in their schools. The PlayMaker Award is an introduction to leadership skills. It gives children knowledge of how to organise small games and activities that can be used in school, in community groups, and with family and friends. The PlayMaker Award helps learners develop leadership skills such as organisation, communication and teamwork. While completing the playmaker sessions in schools staff worked with year 5 and 6 children to complete the questionnaire alongside the set activities. They then attended lunch and breaktimes to access the rest of the children in the school to get a wider range of ages.

We held two focused groups at the Bronze Young Ambassador's Day. These days have 2-3 children from each primary school, and they participate in a variety of workshops such as learning on sport delivery, play delivery, wellbeing, disability awareness. These workshops are intended to develop children and young people's leadership skills.

A play theme is included at every event. In 2023 the play workshop involved talking to the children about the importance of play. The UNCRC and what play means to them. They were provided with the opportunity to discuss how they felt schools allowed them to meet their play needs at breaktimes. They produced feedback on how they can advocate for improvements to their break time

sessions. The information gathered here informed play sufficiency assessment and work began to develop play further in schools starting with two pilot schools in 2023/2024.

This year's play theme for the ambassador's event used some of the questions from the playing out survey to facilitate open dialogue on how children viewed their opportunity to access play in their area as well as schools and if play needs where met. Children openly discussed what they liked to play and how and if they can access this.

To reach further children Focus groups were facilitated using the same methods as above at 4 schools. The schools chosen covered rurality, high percentage of free school meals and schools located in busy urbanised areas. This provided a wider range of ages and abilities.

These discussions have been used to feed into the PSA and to evaluate actions that can be put into the 2025 PSA action plan.

To gauge parents and carers thoughts on play for their children we used Play Wales parent survey. This was promoted via social media and our website. We also used QR codes at all four leisure centres, libraries and the councils stay and play sessions. Teams who had close contact with families were also asked to share the questionnaire with parents. This included the communities and wellbeing team, and Flying Start. During the school holidays inclusive stay and play sessions staff members encouraged parents to complete questionnaires and had open conversations regarding their thoughts on children's play.

These responses have been considered within the assessment however questions regarding spaces locally for children to play did not marry with the same questions asked to children. Parents stated that there was not enough places and opportunities for children to play the things they like however this was not the case when children were asked in their consultations. It was also interesting to note that a higher percentage of children stated they were able to play out in their neighbourhood and a low percentage of parents stated they allow their children to play out. From this piece of work, it is felt that improvements parents would prefer is more access to free supervised provision and this is what is being considered in the action plan.

A common theme noted in both children and parents' consultations is that one of the barriers to playing out is road safety and the speed of cars. This is already noted in works completed by active travel and has been used to assess the sufficiency of access within the PSA.

To ensure we reached children with additional needs/disabilities we used Action for children to consult with children in their sessions. We also reached out to our schools with specialist units to complete with their children. The same survey that was used

for all children was used in this instance. We had a very small response using these methods. Given the short amount of time these children have in these settings and the ability to engage in changing tasks led to this not being an accessible approach. More parents responded providing their thoughts on play for their children with additional needs. Two points were highlighted, a need for more specialist provision and for more inclusive play equipment in parks. This has an impact on a lot of the matters of the PSA. All new developments have included more inclusive equipment in parks and these views from parents highlight that this needs to continue to be assessed and acted upon as necessary. Feedback on specialist provision is included in matters pertaining to supervised provision and providing for diverse needs.

It should also be noted that external providers Action for Children and Parents Carers network complete their own consultations with families of children with additional needs on what the needs are for their children. These consultations are regularly shared with the play team, and this informs sufficiency assessment and actions as well as the consultations we completed ourselves.

Consultations with young people ages 11+ was completed using the Make your Mark survey. As part of Monmouthshire's Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28, under the objective of "A Fair Place to Live," the annual Make Your Mark survey is a key instrument for measuring progress against the aim, "Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures." Make Your Mark is a cornerstone of engagement initiatives for young people in Monmouthshire, orchestrated by Monmouthshire Youth Service. This consultation aimed to identify critical issues for local young people aged 11-18. Youth Service will focus on addressing the most pressing of these issues, selected from a list of 10 key topics. This has been fed into the PSA.

School Sports surveys are completed every 3 years. These surveys seek to gather the views on children and young people's access to sport, physical activity and space to apply these. Using this data the sports team has completed capital grants to improve astroturf and MUGAs. Decisions on where these have been developed has been based on the views of the children from the sports survey. Comparing this data to the consultations completed with children as part of the current PSA MUGAS and sports areas are a destination that a lot of children want access to therefore this sports survey also informs the PSA.

The Active Travel team conduct an annual hand 's up survey. This survey gathers information on how children get to school whether that be walking, cycling or non-active travel. The data from this survey identifies areas where active travel routes are to be developed. This data allows us to assess the sufficiency of access for travel for children and young people.

#### **4. Maximising resources**

The Council has not previously had a dedicated play budget, however as a result of the 2022/23 budget round a new Play Development Lead post was funded to contribute to the strategic direction and delivery of play right across Monmouthshire.

This post, based in MonLife's Community and Sport and Team coordinates the statutory play duties, manages delivery of the Playworks Holiday Project fund to support actions of the PSA, chairs the Play Strategy Group and liaises with stakeholders and Council departments whose work can impact play.

Over the last three years the Council has directed play funding to work on the priorities identified in the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment and subsequent Action Plans. Across service budgets there are revenue resources used by the Council to support children's access to play opportunities. As well as its coordination role MonLife services provide supervised play opportunities, promote recreational and sport involvement, secure improvements to fixed and green space play provision and provide playful spaces within attractions and heritage sites.

Play forms an important part of the Council's early years and pre-school provision and it is also an important element of the foundation phase once children enter the formal education structure. Children's Services use their budget to support families with children with disabilities to access suitable play provision. Neighbourhood Services manage green spaces and 109 fixed play areas across the county.

Progress on supervised provision includes targeted family engagement for families with children with additional needs as well as cross partnership working with wider stakeholders of children with additional needs to ensure a wide-reaching program. A consistent approach to open access holiday provision throughout all holidays has been developed utilising Playworks Holiday Project funding and Town and Community Council Funding. These programmes run alongside an expanded Food and Fun offer which now includes elements of play in its planning.

The Council and its partners will continue to prioritise available play budgets to concentrate on priorities identified as a result of ongoing consultation and demand from local communities.

The Welsh Government programmes and funding provided through AWPOG, Holiday Playworks, have been used locally to extend provision beyond the school summer holiday period, to work in partnership with more agencies, to increase provision for disabled and more vulnerable children and, in respect of capital funding, to improve and increase play value in a number of the Council's fixed play sites. Grant via the WLGA supports the Food and Fun scheme and the continuing contributions from Town and Community Councils support open access play provision.

## 5. Monitoring

The Play development lead is responsible for leading on the strategic direction of play within the local authority. This is supported by the Sport and Community lead. All strategic direction filters in the Councils Corporate and community plan which includes yearly development plans and KPI's. This is monitored by the development and performance manager with quarterly updates and monitoring.

The Action Plan is managed by the play development lead who monitors progress regularly and provides updates to Welsh Government on an annual basis. There is a play strategy group (PSG) which consists of representatives from the following departments

- Active Travel
- Community infrastructure
- Countryside
- Community Focused schools
- Community and Wellbeing team
- Early years and Childcare
- Flying Start
- Sport and Community
- Play Development.
- Leisure Services
- Children's Disabilities team

The group has been reestablished since the implementation of the Play Development lead with quarterly meetings. The purpose of these quarterly meetings is to discuss work being completed by members and how this relates to Play. The PSA action plan is reviewed at these meetings with progress updates and actions identified. The Play strategy group were instrumental in the development of the full 2025 PSA. The team established timelines, identified stakeholders, reviewed own work in line with the PSA and supported in the marketing of the consultation work needing to be completed. The Play development lead chairs these

meetings providing an agenda and completing minutes and actions post meetings. These meetings are also used to plan play events such as National Play Day which provides opportunities for cross department support to keep costs to a minimum.

The Play Strategy Group provides sufficient benefits for Play. It ensures that Play is a focus on all agendas and that officers understand the importance of play being a whole authority approach. Monmouthshire is recognised for its successful cross department networking and resources sharing and the Play Strategy Group is a large part of this success. There are difficulties in maintaining attendance at these meetings due to the high levels of workloads across all departments. It is also recognised that there are some gaps in representation. This is continually monitored, and all members of the group are proactive in identifying where there is a need for representation from other departments.

## **6. Conclusion**

There has been a great deal of development across the local authority since the 2022 PSA. Cross department working has strengthened and key messages around play have been adopted by all departments whose work directly affects children access to time, space and permission to play. The appointment of the Play Development Lead in 2022 has ensured that there is a consistent focus on play both in terms of providing opportunities for quality play sessions but also in terms of play being a standing agenda on a range of policies and work plans across the authority.

Play being repositioned into the sport and community team has proven to be a sector leading success. With sports development working alongside play development this has ensured that play is included in sport objectives as far as possible, and this has been recognised by other authorities as a positive. All sport development officers are now Level 2 Playwork trained and advocating for play in all their work. Training has also been provided to heritage and museum staff which has contributed to the development of playful spaces at all our heritage sites include castles and a 300-year-old courthouse. Again, this is unique as most of these places are not usually seen to be child friendly. We encourage children visiting to play.



There are close links with play and active travel with active travel officers ensuring they are considering how their work can encourage play for children. The Williamsfield park Monmouth project providing a play park within an active travel route has been a big success and seen an increase in families walking to and from school. It is a good demonstration of how cross department working can provide positive results and meet many agendas as well as providing the most out of funding. This was identified by Welsh Government as a good example of best practice and as such was chosen as the venue for the launch of the 5 million Capital funding for Local Authorities to develop their parks and open spaces. It has been identified that this funding will be used to complete a similar project in Chepstow

There is a consistent program of activities for play co-ordinated by the Play Development Lead. These consist of open access play, stay and play, inclusive stay and play, playschemes for children with disabilities and Food and Fun. This has progressed since the last PSA with focus on developing a quality and consistent program for children and families. To achieve this, we utilise the Playworks Holiday Program grant funding and town council contributions. We are able to access funding for Food and Fun and some families first CCG funding to support children with disabilities. Without these streams we would not be able to hold such a consistent program. It is recognised though that these streams are fully utilised and without additional funding we could not expand on this further.

The direction of travel for play within Monmouthshire has been positive and it continues to grow and reach more stakeholders and departments. Our biggest action is to continue the trajectory of cross partnership working and to ensure that the strategic direction is consistently monitored and evaluated. There will be a big focus on workforce development in the 2025 PSA cycle with a target to train 40% of leisure assistants. This will not only support open access play but also The Monmouthshire Games Programme. This is a structured sport programme which falls within the exceptions order. With the exceptions order being reviewed and a drive to maintain and improve quality, training staff in Playwork will support these objectives. We will continue to develop our CPD with focus on additional needs training for all play staff. With regard to open spaces and active travel we have proposed actions to improve the play value in our parks and to continue to link active travel and play within walking routes. We also intend to continue to work with schools to develop the use of school grounds for play and to provide support in offering a playful experience during break and lunch times.

## 7. Theme analysis

### Population:

Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area

<b>Matter B: The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area</b> <b>Matter E: Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge</b>	
<b>What children have told us:</b> <p>Primary age children were consulted for the PSA with an age range of 5-11. Although all children responded it was apparent that children from age 8+ were more vocal in stating their play needs as well as having more opportunity to be able to play in their neighbourhood. We received a very limited response from children with additional needs compared to those in mainstream. Of the responses we did have half of the children did not play outside of their house or bedroom while the others could but with strict supervision. Reasons given for this is that the children's needs meant they needed a securer environment with appropriate adults.</p> <p>Of the 332 children who responded to the consultation 65% elected to answer the question on ethnicity. 13.8% identified as either Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese or Mixed. There were no comments made that children from different cultures or backgrounds did not feel they didn't have their play needs met or understood as a result of their background, however it is not fair to deduce that this was the case as they were not asked this question directly and may not have felt able to comment on this.</p>	
<b>Strengths</b> <p>The council provides opportunities for children's voices to be heard. They are consulted on their play needs both in schools and outside.</p> <p>There are play provisions available for children to access which are free. There is also low-cost sport specific activities that children can access.</p>	
<b>Weaknesses</b> <p>There needs to be further work done on ensuring that younger children can voice their play needs in the same way that older children can. A different process for consulting with children with disabilities and children from different cultures is desirable.</p>	
<b>Opportunities</b> <p>Play Sufficiency Lead has good links with schools and organisations supporting children with additional needs to draw upon their expertise in identifying more robust consultation methods to meet all needs.</p>	
<b>Threats</b> <p>There is limited funding and threats of budget cuts to some departments. Although we do well cross department working this could be a risk down the line</p>	
<b>Places where children play:</b> <b>Matter C: The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space</b> <b>Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play</b> <b>Matter I: The extent to which education and local development planning policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children</b>	
<b>What children have told us:</b> <p>Using the playing out survey 40% of children stated that there were most of their favourite places to play in their area. 48% said there were some of their favourite places and only 12% said there were hardly any. Children were asked where their favourite places were to play. A high percentage of children said it was theirs or a friend's garden, a local grassy area or sports pitch or local parks and school playgrounds. Although not excessively low less children said that community</p>	

centres/leisure centres, skate parks or spaces with sand and water came out lower than those stated above. It could be noted that most of these spaces are more adult led and controlled.

Children were asked what adults could do to help them play out more often and the highest suggestions were to find safe ways to crossroads to get about, ask dog owners to pick up dog mess and the help parents understand that it's okay to play out.

Regarding enhancing play opportunities in schools only 5% of children reported that they could play hardly anything they like with an almost even split between being able to play *lots* and *some* of the things they like. In consultation with children the majority said they would like to see more equipment; particularly open-ended items and it came up repeatedly that football was either an issue in as much it stops others from accessing space or that schools are limiting football to avoid negative behaviours.

### **Strengths**

All schools understand the importance of freely chosen play to children's wellbeing and development. Schools have good links to the sport and play team and most are keen to engage with these teams to further enhance children's opportunities for freely chosen play.

Some schools have found ways to balance the concerns noted with footballs, so all children feel their play needs are being met.

The Active Travel team input to all planning applications focused on creating safe, non-vehicle access to any proposed site. At this point play enhancements are also considered for the local community through the allocations of section 106 funding.

Regular monitoring of active travel schemes takes place to look at usage and impact for walking, wheeling and cycling on creating/improving traffic calming and segregated infrastructure. Regarding motorized vehicles, our road safety team also carry out regular speed monitoring work to check compliance.

### **Weaknesses**

Capacity within the Play team makes supporting every school in the authority to develop their breaktimes to be more playful difficult.

There is limited funding available for schools to purchase additional equipment to support play at breaktimes.

There is no play priority signs within the community to allow children to feel they have permissions to play. Capacity to build on this from the previous PSA has not allowed work to be completed on this.

### **Opportunities**

As funding becomes available priority will be given to develop the play team to allow for more capacity. Close partnership working with sports development and community and wellbeing teams offers a solution to support this and there is a willingness to further strengthen this as this team is moving into MonLife. This closer alignment provides opportunities for development.

MonLife Play team have developed strong links with town and community councils. These councils are positive towards providing opportunities for children's play and working with these can allow for more priority focus on play within in the community being more visible.

### **Threats**

Cuts to public spending and council funds will adversely affect further development. There are plans to further develop our parks and open spaces to increase play value and although these have been reviewed and designed and fit into a workplan there is always a risk with building that problems can arise. We will need to treat this as and when it could arise.

<b>Supervised provision:</b> <b>Matter D: Supervised play provision</b> <b>Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development</b>	
<b>What children have told us:</b> <p>The council operates a range of inclusive play provisions which offer rich play environments for the children following the Playwork Principles. These included supervised provision for 1 hour and 55 min which includes the option to use the leisure centre pool to play freely and a packed lunch. Since the last PSA the amount of provision that is available has increased and has become a regular timetabled feature in all holidays providing consistency to residents. There is evidenced feedback from children &amp; families with high satisfaction ratings. We continue to monitor, expand and adapt where needed. Children's voices in these provisions determine how we develop the quality of these provisions. The average uptake percentage across all provisions is 67%. This meets the national average.</p>	
<b>Strengths</b> <p>The appointment of a Play lead since the last PSA has allowed for even more contact with other partners providing Playwork. Work has been completed to provide knowledge of Playwork to partners in a variety of departments whose work has a direct effect on children's play. Sport Development team collaborate alongside the play team promoting Playwork. Ensuring it is incorporated into the outcomes delivered for Sport Wales and Monmouthshire County Council. PDL is a qualified trainer and assessor with high level qualifications in play so is able to deliver training to staff and stakeholders which reduces the cost of training and provides a bigger reach of people.</p>	
<b>Weaknesses</b> <p>Capacity may affect the amount that can be achieved. There is only a Play development lead within the team and sports development officers that can be used to support play tasks, but this is a big remit.</p>	
<b>Opportunities</b> <p>The delivery of play training to more on the ground staff can support the capacity in the longer term.</p>	
<b>Threats</b> <p>Staff retention. A lot of staff who work in holiday provision where our programmes predominantly sit are usually just temporary as they progress to further careers. This could have an effect for consistency across the programmes.</p>	
<b>Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information:</b> <b>Matter F: Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events</b> <b>Matter G: Training opportunities for the play workforce</b> <b>Matter H: The level of community engagement and participation</b> <b>Matter I: The extent to which other policies of a local authority take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children</b>	
<b>What children have told us:</b>	

<p>MonLife Play team has been working with MonLife Marketing team to develop a more robust area of the MonLife website. This includes information on what is available for play provision and spaces for play within Monmouthshire. The area also contains information on the importance of play, linking to a variety of information portals that can provide families with advice and guidance on play. It also contains all reporting and updated and historical PSA documents. Social media teams for MonLife also promote available provisions and as part of their “soft content” engagement, promote play importance, rights and guidance. From consultation with parents for the 2025 PSA it was identified that 52% of parents use MonLife/MCC social media and website to access information on opportunities and guidance on play.</p>	
<b>Strengths</b>	
<p>There are good cross department partnerships across the authority which enables play to be a fixture in all agendas. MonLife marketing team work closely with the play team to ensure that play opportunities and play importance is promoted across all platforms. There are good links with schools for the promotion and development of play as well as a means of communication to parents.</p>	
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
<p>Priorities of other policies can run the risk of taking precedence over play.</p>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	
<p>The Councils senior leadership team priorities play within its decision making and strategic direction which can ensure focus across departments.</p>	
<b>Threats</b>	
<p>Changes to staff and departments could set us back in our progress.</p>	

## Play Sufficiency Assessment Form

As well as establishing a baseline of provision, the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) will enable the following:

- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation
- Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency
- Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working
- The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding
- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals
- The identification of good practice examples
- Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities
- The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan, which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment

This template is a technical tool to support a corporate appraisal of the matters that need to be considered as set out in the [Statutory Guidance](#). It is set out in themes which allow the local authority to assess the matters set out in The Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 and [Statutory Guidance](#):

- Matter A: Population
- Matter B: Providing for diverse needs
- Matter C: Space available for children to play
  - Open spaces
  - Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces
  - Playing fields
- Matter D: Supervised provision
  - Playwork provision
  - Structured recreational activities
- Matter E: Charges for play provision
- Matter F: Access
  - to space/provision
  - to information; publicity; events
- Matter G: Securing and developing the playwork and the play workforce

- Matter H: Community engagement and participation
- Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

A guide to completing the template is included in the PSA Toolkit. The template informs a *State of Play* report to the Welsh Government, which will include:

- The local authority's statement: Aims, vision for play in the area
- The methodology for undertaking the PSA
- How resources are maximised for play sufficiency
- How the PSA is monitored
- How the views of children have shaped the PSA
- An analysis of each theme, which identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

The *State of Play* reports can include examples of actions taken locally to support children's play that the local authority wishes to highlight. A report card template, inspired by play sufficiency research, is included in the Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit.

### Criteria

This section contains the “matters that need to be taken into account” as set out within the [Statutory Guidance](#).

**The criteria column:** sets out the data that needs to be available and the extent to which local authorities meet the stated criteria.

### The RAG status columns (Previous PSA RAG status and Current PSA RAG status)

Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status is a tool to communicate status quickly and effectively.

Criteria fully met.	Green - Fully met
Criteria partially met.	Amber -Partially met
Criteria not met.	Red - Not met

**The evidence to support strengths column:** To be used to provide the reason for the chosen criteria status and how the evidence is held.

**The shortfall column:** To be used to explain the areas in which the local authority does not fully meet the criteria.

**What would address the shortfalls?** Use this column to highlight potential solutions and/or facilitators.

**Additional comments:** Use this section to add in anything of relevance that is not covered elsewhere.

### Theme: Population

This theme relates to:

**Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area**

**Matter B: The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area**

**Matter E: Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge**

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should provide an overview of population and demographic data of children aged 0-17 used locally to plan for providing opportunities to play.

#### Criteria to consider:

- The play needs of children of all ages are understood and provided for
- The play needs of children living in areas of deprivation and low income families are understood and provided for
- The play needs of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for
- The play needs of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for
- The play needs of ethnic minority children are understood and provided for
- The play needs of Gypsy Traveller children are understood and provided for
- The play needs and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for
- The play needs and support needs of children with Additional Learning Needs are understood and provided for
- The play needs of girls are understood and provided for



- The play needs of children in emergency or temporary accommodation are understood and provided for
- The play needs of LGBTQ+ children are understood and provided for
- The play needs of asylum seekers and refugees are understood and provided for
- The play needs of care experienced children are understood and provided for
- The play needs of disabled children and children with additional learning needs are understood and provided for
- The play needs of young carers are understood and provided for
- Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion
- There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for children with Additional Learning Needs
- There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for disabled children and those with additional support needs
- Premises and spaces used for play provision are provided at no cost or low cost to providers
- The local authority provides grants or subsidies for providers offering opportunities to play
- Subsidised transport for children travelling to provision, which offers opportunities to play, is provided for

**Complete the table for 'population' using the 'criteria to consider' list and ensuring that the following points are covered:**

- Provide an overview of population and demographic data used locally to plan for providing opportunities to play
- What has changed in terms of population and demographic trends since the last Play Sufficiency Assessment?
- How has/will the local authority use its population data to plan for sufficient opportunities to play locally?
- How has data been used (or how will the data be used) to address the barriers that children with diverse needs/protected characteristics face in accessing opportunities for playing?
- How is the local authority ensuring that children have access to no or low-cost provision?
- Has the local authority worked with other local authorities on regional projects?
- Have there been challenges? If so, how can these be overcome?
- Have there been successes? If so, please expand
- Actions considered for Play Action Plan

- Actions agreed for Play Action Plan
- Rationale for action prioritisation

**To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?**

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	The play needs of children of all ages are understood and provided for			The appointment of Play Development Lead has allowed for more focus to be given to consulting with children. Work has been completed using Play Wales Play sufficiency tool kit for children's consultations. These have been completed in playmaker sessions in schools, young ambassador's workshops and used as guide questions for conversations in focus groups. 332 completed the questionnaire across the authority proving a wide range of ages views. Children are consulted regularly at the regular open access play	It was recognised in reviewing of consultation that more children in the foundation phase needed to be reached. Responses were very heavy for older children and so we need to consider this in future consultations.	Look at a different way to consult with younger children.

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				<p>sessions; family stay and play programs and Food and Fun. Evaluations and fun ratings are completed at each session with options for children to provide what they need in future sessions. Flying start services use regular sessions with families and children to understand the needs of all children under age 5. Children and young people services meet regularly as part of the CCG funding and support team. Outcomes are shared with partners and support where needed from cross services is implemented regularly. All these services ensure there is a good understanding of</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				the play needs of children across the authority.		
	The play needs of children living in areas of deprivation and low income families are understood and provided for			The local authority holds information on children living in areas of deprivation at ward and LSOA level and in the Census 2021 population and household estimates for Wales. We have updated PLASC data (updated March 2025) which shows us where the levels of eFSM are as well as those with additional needs. This information is used with eligibility for Food and Fun provision.	It is understood that there are families who may not be living in areas of deprivation who may still be facing work poverty which can affect the wellbeing of children and young people. All our open access play and stay and play sessions are open to anybody with no stigma around a need to identify those most in need. Due to the nature of funding the food and fun program which supports up to 480 children during the school holidays means that only schools with 16% or higher can access. We work with schools to identify those that are in need and would benefit from the scheme	

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					outside of this eligibility, but we do understand that we may not meet all children who are on a low income based on this percentage eligibility.	
	The play needs of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for			Most supervised play provision takes place in the county's four main settlements and Magor and Undy which has recently been given town status. In most rural communities, children have access to fixed play areas and the majority of these are managed by the county council although some are the responsibility of town and community councils. Pilots of outreach play sessions within these rural areas have taken	It is understood that there are pockets of children in rural areas whose needs are not fully met in comparison to other children, however regular consultations have highlighted that there are appropriate areas for children to access play within their areas.	

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				place over the past three years, but these have not been well attended. The LA has also attempted to use transport to bring children from rural areas to supervised play provisions in the main towns. Again, this was not well attended. We have consulted with children in the rural areas and the consensus found that they felt their play needs were being met within their local area. This was due to access to open spaces, woodland areas and farms which have quality play appeal. most who want to access supervised play provision can travel.		
	The play needs of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for			The commitment to providing opportunities to use the Welsh language in the	We have rated this as amber. This is due to there being no exclusively Welsh language	

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				community is a vital part of the council's 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy which aims to contribute towards the Welsh Govt vision of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050. There are two Welsh schools within the LA and both have after school club in the medium of Welsh. Although there are no fully Welsh speaking holiday provisions provided by the LA play services 50 % of the workforce are either fluent in Welsh or identify as Welsh learners. All provisions are promoted bilingually and for children who want to communicate in Welsh at all our provisions there is a Welsh speaking staff member	holiday provision, however this has been attempted in the past but not been well attended. We actively ensure that all our play provisions are bilingual with a good number of Welsh speaking staff.	



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				available.		
	The play needs of ethnic minority children are understood and provided for			The LA seeks to ensure there is updated data of children from all ethnic minorities. We also have teams who support refugees.	There are no	
	The play needs of Gypsy Traveller children are understood and provided for			Extensive work has been completed by the council to assess and evaluate the needs and locations of Gypsy Travellers. This has included The Gypsy and Traveller Advocacy Group, Travelling Ahead, who have worked with Council Officers over many months, running two training sessions for Elected Members to raise awareness of Gypsy and Traveller's needs. As of January 2025, there are 4 children attending schools in Gilwern	Consultation did not take place in the travelling community although it was completed in the schools that they attend. As a whole the council has good ongoing working connections with the community but an action from this PSA is to join those officers in this capacity with the play team to further assess any needs that the play team could support with	

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				and Usk.		
	The play needs and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for			<p>There is 1:2:1 support for disabled children to attend After School Clubs and Holiday Clubs. This is managed by the Early years and childcare team to support with paid childcare.</p> <p>The council commissions Action for Children to operate out of school's clubs and holiday provision across each holiday for children with disabilities (CWD) Since 2022 MonLife Play team, Children's disabilities team and action for children have worked together to establish a wider offer for all children. This includes holiday provision operating from the same premises to allow</p>	<p>Appropriately trained and qualified staff to support disabled children is difficult to find and retain. There is limited funding to support the need for the extra staff that is needed to support all the children's needs</p>	<p>It is important that this is consistently monitored, and we always look for improvements. Seeking additional funding when and if it becomes available,</p>

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				families to access provision for the children they have who need additional support as well as children they have that can access the more mainstream provision. This has allowed consistency for families. It also offers opportunity for integration between the two provisions to allow those with additional needs to access play provisions with the support of their 1:1. Work has also been completed to provide water play for those with disabilities across all leisure centers throughout the holidays. Since the last PSA there has been an increase in the number of opportunities is available for (CWD)		

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				The council also works closely with the QB Project to provide additional family sessions for children with more complex needs. When improvements have been made to the Council 's fixed play areas, the proportion of accessible items of equipment has increased both in overall terms and on a number of the individual sites that have been upgraded.		
	The play needs of girls are understood and provided for	N/A		Within our sports development team an area of work focuses on Women and Girls- "Provide wellbeing opportunities for women and girls to engage in a physically active	There is no direct consultation with girls on their play needs although they are consulted within whole play consultations	

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				lifestyle.” Within this remit girls are consulted with regularly with actions such as the development of specific classes to meet their needs. Although this is sport and physical activity focused the lead for this is playwork trained and able to sign post if there are play needs identified		
	The play needs of children in emergency or temporary accommodation are understood and provided for	N/A		There are links between the play team and the social services team. Funded places for our TMG program have been regularly provided to the social services team to issue to those in need.	Although links exist no work has been done to directly assess the play needs of those in emergency or temporary accommodation.	The lead for social work will be asked to become a member of the play sufficiency group to allow for awareness across the teams to become a focus
	The play needs of LGBTQ+ children are understood and provided for			The Youth Service (MYS) staff are trained in aspects of LGBTQ+ and they ensure that young		

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				<p>people from this community have access to provision and support where required. There is an LGBT+ Group operating in four locations in each of the four main town centres, these operate as a mixed approach between support and social action. Following previous very successful events in 2018 and 2019 the groups are planning a further Youth Pride event and there are plans for another, larger event to promote equality and inclusivity in summer 2023, which will be organised as a coalition between MYS and young people from the LGBT+</p>		

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				community.		
	The play needs of asylum seekers and refugees are understood and provided for	N/A		<p>Beginning March 2022, the council provided a play development worker on site at the hotel with the young people initially and then through the holiday periods once the young people were enrolled into school.</p> <p>Subsidised leisure centre access and playschemes were provided as well as a few local football clubs who invited the young people to play.</p> <p>Youth service provision was offered 5 evenings a week from Innovation House.</p> <p>Schools have supported greatly with transition for children and young people with refugee</p>	There is no specific funding to have a specific pro-active program in place incase of the event of mass refugees but the council access those that do become available as the need arises	The Communities and wellbeing team continue to be the point of contact to support those in need of support and will liaise with the Play Development need if it is identified that support is needed

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				status. These children continue to be signposted to the Food and Fun program		
	The play needs of care experienced children are understood and provided for	N/A		There are links between the play team and the social services team. Funded places for our TMG program have been regularly provided to the social services team to issue to those in need.	Although links exist no work has been done to directly assess the play needs of those in care.	The lead for social work will be asked to become a member of the play sufficiency group to allow for awareness across the teams to become a focus
	The play needs of young carers are understood and provided for			Monmouthshire has a Carers Strategy and there is a young carers provision operating in the county delivered by Crossroads Care Southeast Wales. There is also regular contact between the Young Carers Group and the Youth Service		



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	Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion			Play projects run by the Council have access to resources that support inclusion. Inclusion packs Including sensory equipment is available as part of a kit library that can be shared with voluntary organisations and projects supporting inclusivity. Monmouth leisure center has had a refurbishment to its soft play center to include more inclusive and sensory equipment. Over the past three years there has been an increase in the number of resources purchased to support inclusivity. MonLife Play service has provided wall mounted equipment, soft furnishings and inclusive sensory	We have rated this amber even though there is a good range of resources and developments since the last PSA. However, we are continuing to develop this and work with sport development team to enhance their kit library to include play equipment including inclusive resources.	We are including into our action plan that we will further develop our kit library and have robust procedures in place to ensure inventory and replenishments.

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				activities to Monmouth, Caldicot and Chepstow leisure center to be fixed within their cafes/public sitting areas for children to participate in play while waiting and or using cafe areas with parents.		
	There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for children with Additional Learning Needs			The Council's policy and practice is to support inclusive provision wherever possible. In response to requests from families with diverse needs an action from the previous PSA 2022 was to introduce-disabled only sessions. The Children With Disabilities Team have been commissioning these and through CCG funding MonLife Play team are contributing to there being an increase to the		

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				<p>number of sessions available.</p> <p>Action for Children (AFC) are commissioned to run these sessions with an aim of these sessions to build confidence and resilience so that these children can transition into mainstream provision.</p> <p>There has been exceptional growth in this over the past three years. These sessions now operate alongside MonLife play provisions where it makes it possible for partnership working to integrate children into the mainstream provision and to support in enhancing the disabilities provision.</p>		

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	Premises and spaces used for play provision are provided at no cost or low cost to providers			The council does not provide indoor premises free of charge but it does provide outdoor space free of charge for play provision.		This would not be able to be changed as the need for a hire charge supports keeping the buildings operating. There is no additional funding to provide free facilities but costs to play providers are kept low and can be covered using the Playworks Holiday Project funding.
	The local authority provides grants or subsidies for providers offering opportunities to play			Monmouthshire Early Years provides an out of school childcare grant for additional support at holiday clubs and after school clubs in the county. There is a limited budget available for this and it is only available to children		

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				with additional needs. Also, the grant funds a 1:1 worker but does not subsidise the place for the child. Food and Fun in the summer holidays provides grant funding for opportunities to play. The funding is for an education program, but planning ensures it includes opportunities for freely chosen play. However, this is also a targeted provision and only children attending eligible schools or identified as in need through schools and social services can attend		
	Subsidised transport for children travelling to provision, which offers opportunities to play, is provided for			This is currently not provided; however, this is something that has been provided for in the last PSA and uptake for the		We will continue to monitor the need for this provision and act accordingly were reasonably practical.

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				service was not high enough to justify sustainability.		

\*(Type in green, amber or red)

#### Population: Additional comments

A variety of data assessment tools are used to support in the planning of play assessments and provisions. These include the 2021 census and Data Cymru Dashboard, this allows us to view each ward in Monmouthshire by a number of themes such as people, transport, housing, and skills & employment. The Council has created a Wellbeing assessment, The assessment has been produced following a range of engagement and draws on a wide range of data, reports, and academic studies to develop an evidence base to help us understand well-being in our county. Updated PLASC data shows us the levels of eligible free school meals in schools to allow us knowledge of low income and areas of deprivation.

Monmouthshire is geographically large compared to many local authority areas in Wales. It is semi-rural in nature and is often perceived as leafy and affluent. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 95,164. There is a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.

As a predominantly rural county, with 53% of the total population living in wards defined as being in urban areas the rurality of our county needs to be considered when planning for play. Historically we have funded transport to allow those in rural areas to be transported into the main towns to access supervised play provision; however, the uptake of this was limited and could not be sustained. We provided outreach stay and play sessions in these rural areas but again this was not well attended. During consultation periods for the current Play Sufficiency focus groups were held with children within rural schools. It was voiced by the children that due to the environment of their locality it allows for quality play and meets their needs. Approximately 70% of children in rural schools stated they play and hang out with their friends most days. The percentage of children across Monmouthshire as whole that said they play and hang out most days was 42%. Trellech primary school, a rural school has opened the school grounds for play after school once a week for children to stay behind with those collecting to continue playing.

This has been positively received, and it is highlighted in the action plan that MonLife Play will continue to work with and encourage further schools in rural areas to offer this as an option for families.

Given Monmouthshire's location in the South-East corner of Wales, as well as its shared border with England, there is a general perception that Welsh language use is low. However, the 2011 Census showed that Monmouthshire was one of only two local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language speakers over the previous decade, from 9.7% to 9.9%. A likely factor in this rise is the growth of the two Welsh-medium primary schools, based at either end of the county: Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni in Abergavenny, and Ysgol Y Ffin in Caldicot. This is recognised and the authority continues to develop its Welsh Language offer. At recent recruitment for summer holiday play assistant, it was stated as desirable for candidates to be Welsh speaking. Of the 208 applicants who applied 50% stated they were either fluent in Welsh or were Welsh learners. This will allow for all holiday provisions to have a high level of Welsh speaking staff and allows us to confidently say that we provide bilingual provision throughout the authority.

As a local authority we pride ourselves on our cross departmental collaboration. MonLife Play team, Children's Disabilities team and schools with SEN units work closely to ensure children can access appropriate provisions. The sport and community team provides services for the re-engage team where they work with children and education services to provide provision and support to children who struggle to access school. It is felt that this collaboration allows for good knowledge and opportunity to continually assess the play needs and act accordingly. During the consultation process for the PSA Action for Children, the Children's disabilities teams and SEN schools all worked to consult with their children using the consultation surveys. Although there were responses from these children, they were very limited, and it can't be said that we reached an appropriate amount of these children to say we heard their voice. It is felt that we need to develop a different approach to consultation in the future to ensure consistency with this demographic. This will be an action from the PSA.

Since the last PSA the councils play provisions has developed in quantity and consistency. Using a mixture of funding pots to ensure there is a mix of supervised provision, family provision and inclusive provision. This continues to grow and is an action of this PSA to continue to grow this program. All of these are free at the point of access.

## Theme: Places where children play

This theme relates to:

**Matter C: The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space**

**Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play**

**Matter I: The extent to which education and local development planning policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children**

Criteria to consider:

- An up-to-date record of all designated play space, as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#), is kept
- Designated play areas and playgrounds are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use
- Public spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use, as set out in the [Statutory Guidance](#)
- An Open Space Assessment (OSA) that maps areas that are used, or might be used for playing as listed in the [Statutory Guidance](#), has been undertaken
- Open Space Standards in accordance with the advice and requirements of [Planning Policy Wales](#), have been developed
- Green spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play
- Neighbourhood spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase play
- Access audits are undertaken at all designated play spaces and proposals are implemented to improve access and safety
- A new fixed play provision standard has been developed and agreed
- Brownfield sites owned by the local authority are assessed for the potential for the site to be reclaimed to provide for children's play
- The Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020 that require playgrounds in Wales to be smoke-free, are adhered to
- 'No ball games', or similar signs have been removed, to encourage more children playing in the community
- Play Priority Signs or similar, have been erected to encourage more children playing in the community
- A recognition of the importance of playing fields to children's play is included when any disposal decisions are made
- Children and their families are included in any consultations regarding decisions to dispose of playing fields
- Access audits for all settings, as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#), are undertaken



- Guidance around creating *accessible* play space is referred to when refurbishing or developing new playgrounds
- Partners collaborate to identify a mechanism for assessing the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures on the opportunity for children to play outside in their communities
- There is a plan to reduce the negative effect of busy roads and junctions through the introduction of speed reduction measures and provision of safe crossing points/routes for pedestrians and cyclists
- There is a plan(s) to improve walking and cycle access to parks, outdoor play facilities and local leisure centres from residential areas. To be included on the Active Travel Network Maps
- Road safety grants and/or other funding is used to provide pedestrian safety training and cycling training for children
- There is an accessible and well-promoted way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes
- [Active Travel Act guidance](#) is used when considering new developments and changes to the highway network/urban realm to ensure that safe and convenient routes for walking, wheeling and cycling are incorporated from the start
- Child pedestrian road accident casualty data is used to inform the location and design of interventions which help children get around independently in their communities
- Active Travel Fund, Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety grants and/or other funding is used to support access to opportunities to play
- The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children. An example of this is school street schemes which are funded through the [Safe Routes in Communities Grant](#). They create opportunities for play at the start and end of the school day
- Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day
- Schools provide play opportunities during out of teaching hours
- Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times
- Guidance to ensure schools understand and ensure that regular outdoor play is not curtailed, is provided
- The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the [Community Focused Schools](#) initiative
- The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the [Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme](#)
- The Health and Safety policies explicitly recognise the value of children being able to experience risk and challenge
- The Health and Safety policies and procedures incorporate a benefit-risk approach to health and safety assessments as recommended by ISO, the International Organization for Standardization
- The local authority offers the provision of insurance through the local authority scheme, to all third sector play providers and community councils

Complete the table for 'places where children play' using the 'criteria to consider' list and ensuring the following points are covered:

- What children have told us about the places where they play
- Please highlight successes of collaboration across policy areas to improve access to opportunities for playing
- Have there been challenges?
- How can these be overcome?
- Actions considered for Play Action Plan
- Actions agreed for Play Action Plan
- Rationale for action prioritisation

To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	An up-to-date record of all designated play space, as described in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a> , is kept			The council keeps an up to date record of all designated play spaces in its ownership and is aware of those that are not in its ownership. We also maintain a number of sites not in council ownership.	Some sites used as designated play spaces are in the ownership of other parties.	
	Designated play areas and playgrounds are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use			A further Audit was completed in June 2024. 6 of the 11 play areas assessed were	It has been identified that there are a lot of parks with a low play value. Although	We will be reassessing parks this financial year

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				also assessed in 2019 and improvements since the last audit have shown an increase in the value of all 6 of these place spaces. When The competition of the Castle Dell works in Caldicot are completed, we will have a destination play area with a play value ranked as "good" in each of the five main towns	work has been completed to enhance 6 parks to have a destination park in all 6 main towns there are still a lot of parks that fall short particularly in areas of deprivation. We have identified Chepstow is a high priority for investment. Castle Dell has been completed but this is in the main town, and this is too far from the Bulwark side of town which is in higher deprivation. There is a need to develop Bulwark park but also Piggies hill including the skatepark. This has been identified by children and young people. It is also noted that since the decommissioning of school transport	for play value. It is noted that some will increase from work that has been completed since the last assessment. We will be using capital funding to develop Chepstow play areas this financial year

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					this area has become an access for children walking to school. Investment here would greater benefit communities as a whole	
	Public spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use, as set out in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a>			Audits have been carried out at most but not all sites. A lot of work on the play requirements for the new Local Development Plan, with specific proposals for the 18 sites are currently contained in the consultation document.		
	An Open Space Assessment (OSA) that maps areas that are used, or might be used for playing as listed in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a> , has been undertaken			As part of the preparation of the replacement local development plan (RLDP) for Monmouthshire, an updated OSA has been prepared, which identifies standards of public		

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				open space and recreation, including fixed play, designated play space and casual play space.		
	Open Space Standards in accordance with the advice and requirements of <a href="#">Planning Policy Wales</a> , have been developed			The Monmouthshire Greenspace Study from 2010 has been updated as part of the preparations for the Monmouthshire RLDP		
	Green spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play			Access audits have taken place at most sites and the audits are reviewed when an changes or improvements are made on an ongoing basis	There are a number of open spaces that are in the ownership or control of some of the town and community councils in Monmouthshire and they are responsible for their own access audits.	
	Neighbourhood spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase play			The Local Authority has adopted the Fields in Trust Six Acre Standard in relation to parks and open spaces but has developed		There is a move away from providing LAPs (local areas for play), as they offer very limited play value.

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				its own categorisation for fixed play provision.		Instead, we are seeking to provide, both on existing sites and in new developments, a number of new LEAPs (local equipped areas for play) which offer better standards of play value – and, in some locations, NEAPs (neighbourhood equipped play areas).
	Access audits are undertaken at all designated play spaces and proposals are implemented to improve access and safety			Since the original independent play value assessment of all local authority play areas in 2019 a number of sites have been substantially improved, and we re-assess those sites to measure the improvements in play value.		These audits are helpful in identifying areas where action may be necessary in the future, as and when funding permits.

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	A new fixed play provision standard has been developed and agreed			<p>We have adopted the Fields in Trust Six Acre Standard in relation to play provision and use this as guidance. However, we now concentrate on installing LEAPs (Local Equipped Area for Play) and NEAPS (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) rather than LAPs (Local Areas for Play) due to the fact that traditional LAPs offer limited play value.</p> <p>Also, in the main urban centres (the six Town Council areas), we try to ensure that at least one of the NEAPs is regarded as a destination play area (i.e. a play area that is likely to attract families and children from a</p>		

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				wider geographical area).		
	Brownfield sites owned by the local authority are assessed for the potential for the site to be reclaimed to provide for children's play				We do not assess brownfield sites for their play potential, however the number of such sites in council ownership is limited.	
	The Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020 that require playgrounds in Wales to be smoke-free, are adhered to			Smoke free signage, in the designated format, has been installed on all fixed play sites in council ownership. Guidance has also been given to those Town & Community Councils that manage their own playgrounds.		
	'No ball games', or similar signs have been removed, to encourage more children playing in the community			The council has removed the majority of "no ball games" signs but a small number	A small number of such signs exist but these are mainly on sites	



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				still exist in some areas, usually in areas with a high concentration of social housing	not in council ownership	
	Play Priority Signs or similar, have been erected to encourage more children playing in the community				No play priority or similar signs have been erected	
	A recognition of the importance of playing fields to children's play is included when any disposal decisions are made			The council recognises the importance of children's play where disposal decisions are made – this is also picked up in Future Generations Evaluations and Equality Impact Assessments		
	Children and their families are included in any consultations regarding decisions to dispose of playing fields			There have been very few cases of the council disposing of playing fields. When this took place in Caldicot		

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				and Govilon, the views of families were sought as part of the consultation process. The council would continue to include this in their consultation process if this became the case in the future.		
	Access audits for all settings, as described in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a> , are undertaken			Active Travel mapping looks at access to a range of destinations which will include access to play spaces. This work is uploaded to councils GIS system and data map Wales to look at improving access to AT standards.	Audits do not extend to all sites that are in the ownership of, or managed by other bodies such as Town & Community Councils	
	Guidance around creating <i>accessible</i> play space is referred to when refurbishing or developing new playgrounds			The council does take into account guidance on accessibility when refurbishing		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				or developing new playgrounds and increases the amount of accessible equipment when existing playgrounds are upgraded		
	Partners collaborate to identify a mechanism for assessing the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures on the opportunity for children to play outside in their communities			Regular monitoring of active travel schemes takes place to look at usage and impact for walking, wheeling and cycling on creating/improving traffic calming and segregated infrastructure. Regarding motorised vehicles, our road safety team also carry out regular speed monitoring work to check compliance.		Continue to monitor active travel, travel to school and modal share data, through Drakewell in-house data dashboard, PHW Travel to School survey and other specific user group qualitative and quantitative data gathering, as a tool to assess the effectiveness of Active Travel and road safety interventions.

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	There is a plan to reduce the negative effect of busy roads and junctions through the introduction of speed reduction measures and provision of safe crossing points/routes for pedestrians and cyclists			Through core AT funds, the team run a series of large strategic schemes and smaller quick win interventions to support a cohesive network to facilitate walking and wheeling. Alongside the infrastructure improvements, AT funding supports behavior change and promotional activities to raise the visibility of active travel and convert short car trips into active travel journeys, to reduce car use and increase driver awareness.		
	There is a plan(s) to improve walking and cycle access to parks, outdoor play facilities and local leisure centres from residential areas. To be included on the Active Travel Network Maps			Monmouthshire County Council's Active Travel Strategy focuses on journeys of three miles or less. This means making active travel the first natural choice		

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				for local journeys by improving walking and cycling infrastructure to connect people to key destinations within communities.		
	Road safety grants and/or other funding is used to provide pedestrian safety training and cycling training for children			Road Safety Grants are used to deliver Cycle Training via an external company who follow the National Standards scheme. Welsh Government Funding has been received to deliver Level 1 and Level 2 funding to 4 schools in Monmouthshire in 25/26, with Level 1 (on yard) training, being offered to every other primary school, delivered by the RSO. A		

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				<p>six week child pedestrian training programme is offered to all schools in the county to enhance the knowledge and understanding of children in years 1 and 2 around being safe at the roadside and how to cross safely. Active travel workshops are offered to the foundation phase within schools in Monmouthshire. These include "scoot2school" that teaches children how to share footways, whilst underpinning key road safety messages. "Cool kids</p>		

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				wear lids” teaches children the importance of wearing a helmet when using bikes, scooters and skateboards, etc. School transition training is offered to year 6 pupils and is an interactive workshop, highlighting the key road safety issues to this age group, as well as discussions around active travel and their new comprehensive school.		
	There is an accessible and well-promoted way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes			MCC have previously delivered playing out pilot and have an agreed process		

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				with the road safety management team how to implement within the community. Wider promotion of this through the community network team and play service can be focused on linked to increased marketing of play provision.		
	<a href="#">Active Travel Act guidance</a> is used when considering new developments and changes to the highway network/urban realm to ensure that safe and convenient routes for walking, wheeling and cycling are incorporated from the start			AT refer to the Manual for Streets, ATAG and Planning Policy Wales when commenting on planning applications to push for high quality accessible routes and facilities in communities. All projects are designed in accordance with the AT (Wales) Act 2013 and to national AT design guidance standards. In		



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				financial year 23/24 MCC was allocated the highest funding in Wales based on the work being developed (7.49 million).		
	Child pedestrian road accident casualty data is used to inform the location and design of interventions which help children get around independently in their communities			AT network maps have been informed on a data led approach and consultation. Any projects which progress through AT are done in line with the WeITAG process to ensure community input and options appraisal at each stage. Our Road safety team monitor the accident and casualty data.		
	Active Travel Fund, Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety grants and/or other funding is used to support access to opportunities to play			The AT team input to all planning applications focused on creating safe, non-vehicle access to any proposed site. At this point play		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				enhancements are also considered for the local community through the allocations of section 106 funding.		
	The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children. An example of this is school street schemes which are funded through the <a href="#">Safe Routes in Communities Grant</a> . They create opportunities for play at the start and end of the school day			The adopted LDP contains a policy requiring the provision of open space and play provision in accordance with the Council's adopted standards. The adopted Green Infrastructure (GI) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) recognises the need to increase both formal and informal play opportunities as a distinct benefit and a key design consideration. A more coordinated approach in responding to pre-application enquiries and to	Funding to repair weather damage and wear and tear to play spaces and equipment has been identified across some schools	Further collaboration with the LA play team to support schools in further developing play times

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				submitted planning applications has been implemented. This encapsulates comments relating to green infrastructure, ecology & biodiversity, play & recreation, trees, landscape & street services		
	Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day			All schools within the authority have developed their outdoor space to encourage play. All schools have a mixture of areas including yards and field areas. All schools were asked to provide details of opportunities to report with the PSA. Over 50 % of schools responded and it was evident that all schools have climbing equipment, game markings, trails,		

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				quiet and sensory areas, wooden equipment and tires with children having access to play equipment. All schools are involved in the playmaker and young ambassador program. Children part of these programs play an important role in advocating for quality play opportunities at break and lunch time. Children have attended workshops on how to deliver play activities to others and most schools reported that these children are implementing this within thier schools. Trellech primary school took part in a pilot project to train LSA's in playwork. As a result of this they		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				have further developed break times to include a play pod where children can access loose parts. It has been reported that this has improved behavior at breaktimes, and children are engaging more. There are plans in place to offer this support to further schools.		
	Schools provide play opportunities during out of teaching hours			All schools hold a plethora of extracurricular activities that children can choose to participate in. Alls schools offer the EG breakfast clubs where they also offer opportunities to play and provide play equipment. 12 schools provide the school grounds for out of school childcare where		

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				provision is run using the playwork principles. In 23/24 2 schools were supported to provide the school grounds for stay and play afterschool with support from Play Wales.		
	Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times			Most schools provide school grounds to accommodate supervised play and childcare provisions. 2 schools allow the grounds to be used for family stay and play sessions at the end of the school day. Outside of these, schools close the school grounds, so they are not accessible to children outside of school. It is reported that the reasons for this is security and risk to	The security and risk to property damage prevents schools from opening the grounds for freely accessible use	Play development lead will continue to work with schools to develop the use of school grounds for play utilising the stay and play offer piloted and supported by Play Wales, Community focused schools and the Play Development team.

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				damage of property		
	Guidance to ensure schools understand and ensure that regular outdoor play is not curtailed, is provided					
	The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the <a href="#">Community Focused Schools</a> initiative					
	The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the <a href="#">Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme</a>					
	The Health and Safety policies explicitly recognise the value of children being able to experience risk and challenge			This is not recognised in the main health and safety policy but is covered in the Trips and Visits policy under "hazardous pursuits" and "adventurous activities".		
	The Health and Safety policies and procedures incorporate a benefit-risk approach to health and safety assessments as recommended by ISO,			The council works & operates in line with the All Wales Guidance for Educational		

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	the International Organization for Standardization			Visits - a safety guide for learning outside the classroom, which embraces the HSE principles of sensible risk Management. MonLife's open access play services follow policies in line with CIW and therefor includes RBA		
	The local authority offers the provision of insurance through the local authority scheme, to all third sector play providers and community councils			The council does not offer the provision of insurance through its own scheme and can see difficulties in doing so, particularly the transfer of legal liabilities.		

\*(Type in green, amber or red)

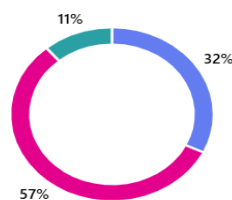
Places where children play: Additional comments



Consultation has taken place across the local authority to gauge how children feel about their access and spaces to play. Across an online questionnaire, attendance at all schools during playmaker sessions, young ambassador's events and focus groups in schools we were able to gain 332 responses from children aged 5-11. When asked about their favourite things to play and if they can play these things in their neighbourhood 40% said they could do most of their favourite things, 48% said they could do some of their favourite things while only 12% said they could do none of their favourite things. When children were asked, what grown-ups can do to help them play out more there were two suggestions that came out the most- Find safer ways to cross the roads to go out/get around" and "help my parents understand that it's okay to play and hang out" Children were asked about their neighbourhood:

In your neighbourhood, which of these is true?

● There are lots of my favourite places to play or hang out	107
● There are some of my favourite places to play or hang out	188
● There are hardly any of my favourite places to play or hang out	37



Children were consulted on the quality of their play opportunities at lunch and breaktimes in school. 49% of the children asked said they could play most of the things they like in school break times with only 5% stating they couldn't play any of the things they like. All schools within the authority have developed their outdoor space to encourage play with all schools having access to large fields and play yards. 50% of schools responded to provide detail for the PSA and it was evident that most of the schools have opportunity for climbing, physical play, natural play, quiet areas and a variety of equipment for children to access. Schools are very understanding of the importance of freely chosen play and provide for this as much as possible. In consultation with children the majority said they would like to see more equipment; particularly open-ended items and it came up repeatedly that football was either an issue in as much it stops others from accessing space or that schools are limiting football to avoid negative behaviours. Some schools have found ways to balance this need, so all children feel their play needs are being met.

All schools provide opportunities for extracurricular activities in a range of interests with 12 schools providing their premises for after school childcare operating with the ethos of the Playwork Principles. 2 schools have implemented stay and play after school allowing use of the school grounds for play after school hours.

Audits for play value and potential to increase play use have been completed across all parks in the council's ownership. 6 out of 11 parks have been reassessed in 2024 and all have increased in value to be rated as good. These have been improved because of information gained through previous assessments. Castle Park playground in Caldicot is near completion and once this is complete there will be a destination play area with a play value ranked as "good" in each of the five main towns.

## Theme: Supervised provision

This theme relates to:

**Matter D: Supervised play provision**

**Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development**

### Criteria to consider:

- An up-to-date record of all supervised playwork provision, as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#), is kept
- Playwork provision offered by the local authority provides a rich play environment, as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#)
- The local authority ensures that partners offering playwork provision are supported to offer rich play environments, as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#)
- Staffed playwork provision that the local authority provides meets the regulatory requirements and the Welsh Government's [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\) for regulated childcare](#) for children up to the age of 12 years
- Staffed playwork provision that the local authority funds meets the regulatory requirements and [NMS](#)
- Staffed playwork provision that the local authority's partners provide meets the regulatory requirements and [NMS](#)
- Staffed playwork provision that is not registered under the Child Minding and Day Care Regulations is supported to ensure staff suitability and quality of opportunities for children to play
- Staffed playwork provision across the local authority works to a recognised quality assurance programme
- Settings assessed as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) have been assessed in respect of the quality of play opportunities they provide and offer
- Local authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing access to play and recreational activities.
- The sports agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children
- The cultural and arts agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children.
- The playwork workforce in regulated provision is supported to achieve the qualification level required by the Welsh Government's [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\) for regulated childcare](#) for children up to the age of 12 years
- The playwork workforce in unregistered provision has access to training and qualifications in playwork
- The Local authority has a staff development budget ring fenced for play, including playwork

- There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area
- Playwork is included within local Workforce Development strategies
- Family support initiatives provide up to date information and support for parents to enable them to support their children to play
- The local implementation of the Families First programme recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of opportunities to play
- Early years and Flying Start plans and services recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich opportunities to play for younger children

**Complete the table for 'supervised provision' using the 'criteria to consider' list and ensuring the following points are covered:**

- What is the organisational structure of play policy and play sufficiency in the local authority? Who manages the play policy area of work? Who is responsible for workforce development?

**To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?**

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
D1	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all supervised playwork provision as described in the Statutory Guidance			Up to date records of supervised play settings are kept by the Family Information Service which provides the initial access portal to this information for families and their children. This database holds	This area has improved since play has been repositioned into its own team. As a result, there is more focus on ensuring this information is up to date. It is difficult to be	

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LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				information on open access play and childcare that provide sessions using the Playwork ethos. MonLife co-ordinates and manages council open access play across the authority. This is held centrally within MonLife and shared with the family information service, schools and other stakeholders before each holiday. A working group on provisions for children with diverse needs consisting of stakeholder groups and MonLife Play Development lead meet regularly and share information on what provision is available and this is shared and held by each stakeholder.	100% accurate all the time due to any ongoing changes but links are stronger to monitor this	
D2	The Local Authority offers playwork provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance			The council operates a range of inclusive play provisions which offer rich play environments for	Although this has greatly improved since the repositioning of play in the LA	

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				the children following the Playwork Principles. Since the last PSA the amount of provision that is available has increased and has become a regular timetabled feature in all holidays providing consistency to residents. There is evidenced feedback from children & families with high satisfaction ratings. We continue to monitor, expand and adapt where needed. Children's voices in these provisions determine how we develop the quality of these provisions.	there is an ongoing need to monitor and increase provision where need is identified. The increase to provision would need a larger workforce which at present is still being developed. It is also funding dependant.	
D3	The Local Authority ensures that partners offering playwork provision are supported to offer rich play environments as described in the Statutory Guidance			The appointment of a Play lead since the last PSA has allowed for even more contact with other partners providing Playwork. Work has been completed to provide knowledge of playwork to partners in a variety of departments		

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				whose work has a direct effect on children's play. Sport Development team collaborate alongside the play team promoting playwork. Ensuring it is incorporated into the outcomes delivered for Sport Wales and Monmouthshire County Council. This has been recognised as sector leading by Welsh Government and other partners.		
	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority provides meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards			The open access schemes that we operate are not required to be registered with the CIW but they do meet the regulatory requirements and the national minimum standards. The Play Development lead is highly experienced in CIW processes and regulations and ensures that policies, safeguarding and		

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				registration procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the national minimum standards.		
	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority's partners provide meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards			The council works with Action for Children, with the Quest Busters programme and with other partners to deliver playwork provision that meets the regulatory requirements and the national minimum standards		
	Staffed playwork provision across the Local Authority works to a recognised quality assurance program			The Play Development lead has been developing the provisions provided by the local authority since taken up the role in 2023. They have been working to develop the consistency of the provisions by developing a regular workforce at each provision where focused		



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				training is provided. Using observations and feedback from children they have purchased resources and changed planning processes to improve quality. In 2024 a Play Quality Audit - (First Claims) was used as a baseline assessment to all provisions and this also informed improvements including the implementation of use of the swimming pools for play across 3 of the sites. This audit will be completed again in 2025 by the site leads who will take ownership of the development plan with support from the Play Development lead		
	The Local Authority prioritises quality issues when engaging with/ commissioning the private sector to deliver recreational activities for children.			The council works with third sector partners to deliver activities for children and in those cases		

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				<p>where it does quality issues are Prioritised. The council commissions Action for Children (AFC) to provide holiday play provision for children identified through the disabilities team as having additional needs. In these cases, the environment that AFC can provide is better suited to the children's needs. The relationship between the operational team of AFC has developed exponentially over the past 2 years. Both councils led provisions and AFC provisions now operate alongside each other at most venues to allow for consistency for the whole family who may have a need for both provisions. We also work together on planning where the</p>		

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				council can support in enhancements and where accessible integrate the children with support from ACF staff into council led provisions. This has enhanced the quality for both provisions.		
	Local authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities			<p>Monmouthshire provide and collaborate with partners to provide free, enriching activities for children and young people. The following programmes are delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parkruns</li> <li>• Free Swimming Initiative (targeted and open splash)</li> <li>• Positive Futures</li> <li>• Active Play</li> <li>• Stay and Play</li> <li>• Food and Fun</li> <li>• Playmaker award</li> <li>• Ambassador programme</li> </ul>		

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidised memberships</li> </ul> <p>Through these programmes they are providing free opportunities to participate in sport, play, arts and crafts activities. These contribute to children and young people building their confidence, skills, friendships and connection with the community.</p> <p>LA's play duties sit within the sport and community team and as such there is sector leading collaboration to ensure that play features heavily within sports agendas.</p>		
	The sports agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children			Monmouthshire is committed to creating a wealth of sporting opportunities for children and young people. The programmes are underpinned by frameworks		

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				<p>provided by Education, Government, National Governing Bodies and Sport Wales.</p> <p>These opportunities are delivered through the following pillars of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundations</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Workforce</li> <li>• EDI</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul> <p>Through these pillars of work, opportunities are delivered through key programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals</li> <li>• Sport specific sessions</li> <li>• Leadership activities</li> <li>• Targeted education provision</li> <li>• Diversionary activities</li> <li>• Adaptive sessions</li> <li>• Community sports provisions</li> </ul>		

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteering</li> </ul> <p>The above information is governed and monitored by Sport Wales to ensure that Monmouthshire is delivering the priorities set out for physical activity. Data, insight and learning is captured through attendances, case studies and feedback. The work delivered in Monmouthshire has been acknowledged as good practice by Sport Wales and other National Governing Bodies.</p>		
	The cultural and arts agenda, is contributing to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children			A playful places audit has been undertaken at the council's museums and heritage & cultural attractions to explore the physical infrastructure of the sites as well as the human and		

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				<p>cultural conditions that support the development of play and playful opportunities for children and families.</p> <p>The staff at these sites have also received training around the nature and value of play and developing and supporting playful approaches and working with heritage sites and collections. The attractions learning manager works closely with the Play Development Lead to continuously enhance the playful spaces and provide activities during the school holidays</p>		
	The Local Authority Youth			Monmouthshire Youth		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	Service provides for children's opportunities for leisure and association			Service (MYS) provide opportunities on a regular basis for young people aged 11 years+ to engage in leisure and recreational activities in youth drop-in centers, more traditional youth club settings, village halls and outreach sessions. The service regularly provides trips for YP which are well attended. Residentials and camping trips took place in summer 2024. MYS also provides services to young offenders, support with anti-social behavior intervention and co-ordinates the shift project which supports YP with emerging mental health and wellbeing and emotional issues. In		



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				summer 2023 MSY made 2598 contacts, and this increased to 3123 contacts in summer 24. MYS completed a Make your Mark survey with young people in 2024 This consultation aimed to identify critical issues for local young people aged 11-18. Youth Service will focus on addressing the most pressing of these issues, selected from a list of 10 key topics.		
	The playwork workforce in regulated provision is supported to achieve the qualification level required by the Welsh Government's <a href="#">National Minimum Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare</a> for children up to the age of 12 years			The council keeps up to date information regarding the Early Years and After School play workforce and this is updated as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The Council works closely with Clybiau Plant Cymru to be able to provide Level 2 and 3 playwork qualifications and transitions to		

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				playwork as and when this is needed.		
	The playwork workforce in unregistered provision has access to training and qualifications in playwork			As of 2022 there was a more defined play management structure within the authority with a level 5 Playwork qualified Play Development Lead who oversees all aspects of play sufficiency and supervised play. Play sits within the Sport and Community team who have all now become qualified to level 2 in Playwork. All staff that work within the open access and stay and play provisions have received an introduction to playwork training and have the opportunity for CPD in Play provided by the play development lead. All departments within MonLife that support with play have opportunity to access		

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				training and qualifications in play via the Play development lead		
	The Local authority has a staff development budget ring fenced for play, including playwork			There is no ring fences budget for play within the local authority, however the Play Development lead (PDL) now manages the Playworks Holiday Program funding. As per the criteria the PDL ensures that a portion of that budget is used to provide training for staff to further develop Playwork Knowledge. There is also scope within this budget to fund qualifications if needed but for the past two years and for the next two years there is funded places available for Playwork qualifications through Clybiau plant Cymru		
	There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development			The council promotes CPD to	The provision, whilst valuable	

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	(CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area			play workers, also providing underpinning knowledge courses – for example, food hygiene, Safeguarding health & safety and Manual handling. Childcare providers who offer registered provision providing Playwork have access to CPD Via the Early years and Childcare team including all mandatory training. The Play Development Lead has a suite of Play training that they can deliver to those who need it and continues to source CPD from external providers when these are available and financially viable.	and constantly evolving, does not cover all play workers in the area and it cannot be classed as comprehensive.	
	Playwork is included within local Workforce Development strategies				The workforce development strategy for the LA does not include Playwork,	There have been initial meetings with the LA training, learning and

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					however, there has been further development since the repositioned work on increasing the amount of playwork training available has increased.	development team to implement play on thingi- the LA's learning system. This will allow play to be an option for all employees but a mandatory training badge for all those employed to work with children in a recreational capacity.
I12	Family support initiatives provide up to date information and support for parents to enable them to support their children to play			There is a plethora of family support initiatives throughout the authority. Flying Start provide a variety of opportunities for family support and promotes the importance of play within these programs. MonLife Play team provides Stay and Play sessions for families and inclusive stay and		

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				<p>play for those families with children who have additional needs. The importance of play is promoted heavily at these sessions.</p> <p>The play section on MonLife's website has a dedicated section for parents where links can be accessed to up-to-date information on how to support children's play as well as signposting to Playful childhoods website.</p>		
	The local implementation of the Families First programme recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of opportunities to play			<p>There are a range of programs that are funded through the Families First program within the LA. The Families First Program in Monmouthshire is small compared to other areas. The projects that are funded through Families First are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Acorn Centre</li> <li>• Watch Wait and</li> </ul>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				<p>Wonder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Years Disability</li> <li>• Inclusive Play</li> <li>• Young Carers</li> <li>• Building Strong Families</li> <li>• Face to Face Creative Therapies</li> </ul> <p>Play threads throughout most of the program with some providing direct opportunities for children to play. Where appropriate these programs promote the benefits of play to their families. The FF program sits under the CCG umbrella. Regular meetings of all recipients of funding from CCG occur. The Play Development Lead sits on this group and provides advocacy for play here.</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	Early years and Flying Start plans and services recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich opportunities to play for younger children			<p>The council's Early Years Policy deals mainly with early education and promotes the importance of play as an important educational tool. The fundamental principle of the Foundation Phase Framework is that learning should be active/play based and should take place both indoors and outdoors.</p> <p>The council's service specification agreement with approved early education providers states that all children must have access to a stimulating, safe &amp; secure outdoor learning environment</p>		



LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				during every session.		

\*(Type in green, amber or red)

#### Supervised provision: Additional comments

The council operates a range of inclusive play provisions which offer rich play environments for the children following the Playwork Principles. These included supervised provision for 1 hour and 55 min which includes the option to use the leisure centre pool to play freely and a packed lunch. Since the last PSA the amount of provision that is available has increased and has become a regular timetabled feature in all holidays providing consistency to residents. There is evidenced feedback from children & families with high satisfaction ratings. We continue to monitor, expand and adapt where needed. Children's voices in these provisions determine how we develop the quality of these provisions. The average uptake percentage across all provisions is 67%. This meets the national average.

The appointment of a Play lead since the last PSA has allowed for even more contact with other partners providing Playwork. Work has been completed to provide knowledge of Playwork to partners in a variety of departments whose work has a direct effect on children's play. Sport Development team collaborate alongside the play team promoting Playwork. Ensuring it is incorporated into the outcomes delivered for Sport Wales and Monmouthshire County Council. This has been recognised as sector leading by Welsh Government and other partners.

The open access schemes that we operate are not required to be registered with the CIW but they do meet the regulatory requirements and the national minimum standards. The Play Development lead is highly experienced in CIW processes and regulations and ensures that policies, safeguarding and registration procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the national minimum standards.

The Play Development lead has been developing the provisions provided by the local authority since taking up the role in 2023. They have been working to develop the consistency of the provisions by developing a regular workforce at each provision where focused training is provided. Using observations and feedback from children they have purchased resources and changed planning processes to improve quality. In 2024 a Play Quality Audit - (First Claims) was used as a baseline assessment to all. This audit will be completed again in 2025 by the site leads who will take ownership of the development plan with support from the Play Development lead.

Continued professional development has increased with the implementation of the Play Development Lead. There is a suite of training now available that can be delivered by the play development lead (PDL). The PDL has recently become qualified to be able to deliver the L2 APP. Agored Cymru Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice – this course provides a broad introduction to Playwork. It is the entry requirement for the P3 route and has to be completed successfully before progressing to the other qualifications in the series. As a standalone qualification, it is also suitable for those working in holiday playschemes. It includes information about the importance of play, inclusion, Playwork theory and creating spaces for playing. An action of the 2025 PSA is to provide this training to 50% of leisure center staff to support them in ensuring the Leisure Centers can be developed into a playful space. This will also support The Monmouthshire Games program. With consideration to the review of the exceptions order this will prepare the TMG program for the possibility that there could be a need to register with CIW as part of an appropriate standard.

There have been initial meetings with the LA training, learning and development team to implement play on Thingi- the LA's learning system. This will allow play to be an option for all employees but a mandatory training badge for all those employed to work with children in a recreational capacity. This will be an action of the PSA.

The Play Development Lead is responsible for the completion of the PSA. Their role sits within the Sports Development team. This is unique across Wales and has been recognised as sector leading. All sports development officers are trained in Playwork and use this knowledge as part of their work in developing the sports agenda across the authority. Play now plays an integral part of the leadership program, young ambassadors and playmakers program. With the implementation of Sport Wales Foundation Framework, play sits appropriately into this. Our sports Development team continuously endorses play in the implementation of the Foundation Framework.

## Theme: Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information

This theme relates to:

**Matter F: Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events**

**Matter G: Training opportunities for the play workforce**

**Matter H: The level of community engagement and participation**

**Matter I: The extent to which other policies of a local authority take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children**

### Criteria to consider:

- There is a clearly identified section on the local authority website, which gives information about opportunities to play as described in the [Statutory Guidance](#) (play areas, playwork provision, clubs and their accessibility)
- Information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required
- Events which encourage opportunities to play and events for children and families are publicised and supported
- Information which contributes to positive community attitudes to play is publicised
- Information and support for parents to help them encourage their children to play is publicised
- The local authority engages with the media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area
- A comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce, as defined in the [Statutory Guidance](#), has been undertaken
- There is a variety of learning and development opportunities offered to staff so that they can consider their role in supporting play
- There is a comprehensive range of continued professional development opportunities for a range of professionals who work with children
- Play sufficiency and other training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play
- Initiatives to engage relevant groups in enhancing play opportunities for children in its area, are promoted

### Community engagement is promoted in:

- Making space available and suitable for play

- Organising play events
- Positive attitudes towards children and play
- Training on the importance of play
- There is a named person on the Local Public Service Board who champions children's play
- The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are incorporated within, the Well-being Plan
- The local Public Health Team supports play and play sufficiency
- There is a named person on the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) who champions children's play
- The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are incorporated within the work of, the RPB
- Plans to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities.

**Complete the table for Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information using the 'criteria to consider' list and ensuring the following points are covered:**

- What are the successes across policy areas and advocacy for play?
- Have there been challenges?
- How can these be overcome?
- Actions considered for Play Action Plan
- Actions agreed for Play Action Plan
- Rationale for action prioritisation

**To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?**

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	There is a clearly identified section on the local authority website, which gives information about opportunities to play			Work with marketing partners in 2023 was		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	as described in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a> (play areas, playwork provision, clubs and their accessibility)			undertaken to develop the play portion of MonLife website. This has now been live for 12 months. The website has clear tabs to provide clear information. These include "what's on"- this takes residents to all activities available for children and young people with focus on the open access provisions and stay and play. A section on places to play which holds information on outdoor parks and spaces within the authority. A section on play information which links to playful parenting websites and other play related information		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				website. The final tab has all our play reports and completed PSA		
	Information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required			Information is updated on the Play unit of MCC website. It is also shared before each holiday on social media platforms with contact information to include the central play email address where all queries are addressed by the sport and play team. Information is also shared with the council's family information service who share it on their information site and signpost to the play team as needed.		
	Events which encourage opportunities to play and events for children and families are publicised and supported			Events are publicised and supported by the FIS, they advertise specific events on the FIS website and through social		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				media throughout the year. All public events planned via MonLife Play and partners are advertised via MonLife social media and website.		
	Information which contributes to positive community attitudes to play is publicised			There is a dedicated page on the play section of MonLife that provides links to the importance of play for children and communities. Local communities are collaborated with on activities to promote positive community attitudes to play and these links promote this within their own mediums.		
	Information and support for parents to help them encourage their children to play is publicised			There is a dedicated page on the play section of MonLife that provides links to the importance of play for children with ideas on how to support their		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				children with play. National and international days of play are promoted on all social media with ideas of how to access play opportunities.		
	The local authority engages with the media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area			The council has an effective engagement with the media, and we promote positive portrayals as and when there is an opportunity to do so.		
	A comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce, as defined in the <a href="#">Statutory Guidance</a> , has been undertaken			Work has been completed since the implementation of the Play Development lead to assess the current workforce and its training to date. A training program has been developed to provide staff working in open access play to undertake and introduction to	The casual nature of those employed to work the school holidays provisions makes it difficult for them to attend full play qualification training. The development of the play workforce is ongoing, and this has developed to a good standard since the last PSA, but we continue to look at avenues to	Continuing collaboration with partners to access appropriate training routes that can accommodate our workforce. Continuing to provide CPD and update training on the importance of play to ensure all staff maintain



LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				playwork. All Play and sports development officers have level 2 playwork with pathways to level 3. Links between Clybiau Plant Cymru, Play Wales and the early years and childcare team to access qualifications when needed.	further develop this area,	their knowledge and skills as far as reasonably practical.
	There is a variety of learning and development opportunities offered to staff so that they can consider their role in supporting play					
	There is a comprehensive range of continued professional development opportunities for a range of professionals who work with children			The council promotes CPD to All professionals working with children. CDP we provide doesn't just involve introduction to playwork and opportunities to access qualifications but also underpinning knowledge		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				<p>courses for example, food hygiene, safeguarding, autism awareness, first aid and health and safety. The council has recently introduced a central learning management system which includes all induction and mandatory training as well as CPD. There are plans to include play-related training to this system in the future.</p> <p>The Early Years and Childcare development team provide CPD and update training to all childcare providers who offer out of school childcare and holiday care.</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	Play sufficiency and other training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play			Since the implementation of the Play Development lead (PDL) the Play Strategy Group has been reinstated with a robust structure. This group meet quarterly to discuss the development of play across the authority and what the various departments are planning and how these impacts play and play sufficiency. The group consists of many decision makers and those who can influence policy. The PDL meets regularly with town councilors who support with funding to provide play opportunities. These meetings are an opportunity to further promote	It is felt that the council completes a lot of work to ensure that all professionals are providers with awareness and play is very much seen as an important priority across the council. The messages and work need to be a regular discussion with all professionals continuously.  Specific training sessions would be difficult to implement across all professionals but there are resources to deliver this if there is capacity. It is felt that a continuing focus on including play on all agendas and regular meetings to continue to have play as a focus is	

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				the importance of play. Work pertaining to play is a regular agenda item with the Department Managers Team meetings and this is fed further up the council to The CEO and senior team. Training has been available to schools on play sufficiency and how schools can provide a more playful experience during break and lunchtimes.	sufficient	
	Initiatives to engage relevant groups in enhancing play opportunities for children in its area, are promoted			Feedback is routinely obtained from parents and children at every supervised play session run by the council and those commissioned through external agencies such as Action for Children and some of the activity providers we use to		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				<p>deliver active play and recreation sessions. When improvements are planned to fixed play sites we engage with local children and families about the revised layout. equipment schedule and border treatments. We also consult on the items of accessible equipment to be included in the revised provision. The council also engages regularly with a number of Friend Groups across the county, set up to promote improvements to green open spaces and outdoor fixed play</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				sites		
	<p><b>Community engagement is promoted in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making space available and suitable for play</li> <li>• Organising play events</li> <li>• Positive attitudes towards children and play</li> <li>• Training on the importance of play</li> <li>• There is a named person on the Local Public Service Board who champions children's play</li> <li>• The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are incorporated within, the Well-being Plan</li> <li>• The local Public Health Team supports play and play sufficiency</li> <li>• There is a named person on the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) who champions children's play</li> <li>• The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are</li> </ul>			<p>There is a strong emphasis via the planning process on making space available and suitable for play and for the provision of play and recreational opportunities for children and young people. Cross department working is a high priority within this council, and this works especially well with the promotion of play. Leisure centers, Youth centers, outdoor parks and natural areas, heritage and attractions are all focused on providing space for children to play. There is a strong membership in the play strategy group who meet regularly</p>	<p>Due to workloads attendance at all meetings for LPSB and RSB can sometimes be sparse. This is something that needs to be addressed with support for the Play Strategy Group.</p>	<p>Including other boards as a standing agenda item on the Play strategy group meeting to join up on feedback and to see where gaps might be.</p>

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
	<p>incorporated within the work of, the RPB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities.</li> </ul>			<p>to assess how these spaces can continue to be developed and utilised for play. The Play Development lead works alongside Leisure center managers to provide open access play within their buildings as well as outdoor education centers. Museums and castles are arranged to be playful spaces for freely chosen play and play events. The play strategy group works together to plan National Play Day events annually drawing on shared resources. There has been an increase on available play training since the 2022 PSA and this will continue to be</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
				rolled out to a variety of departments and stakeholders. Members of the play strategy group sit on the local public services boards and regional service boards to represent play.		

\*(Type in green, amber or red)

**Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information: Additional comments**

Monlife Play team has been working with MonLife Marketing team to develop a more robust area of the MonLife website. This includes information on what is available for play provision and spaces for play within Monmouthshire. The area also contains information on the importance of play, linking to a variety of information portals that can provide families with advice and guidance on play. It also contains all reporting and updated and historical PSA documents. Social media teams for MonLife also promote available provisions and as part of their “soft content” engagement, promote play importance, rights and guidance. From consultation with parents for the 2025 PSA it was identified that 52% of parents use MonLife/MCC social media and website to access information on opportunities and guidance on play. It is an action of the 2025 PSA to continue to promote play through our social media and online platforms. Cross partnership working continues to ensure that the councils Family Information Service is utilised to promote opportunities for play within the local authority.



2024 National Play day was celebrated by offering a full day of play opportunities within the Caldicot area. All opportunities were free at the point of access and the importance of play was promoted throughout the day. The event saw a variety of activity including fire building, climbing wall, sumo wrestling, den building, messy play and sport. Departments across the local authority provided activities at no cost including, youth service, heritage and attractions, leisure services, Monmouthshire housing association and communities and wellbeing. The event was promoted as being accessible for the whole local authority. There were approximately 400 people who attended the event. It has been approved that this will happen again in 2025 with the option to hold two events one in the North and one in the South. As well as the event, play was regularly promoted on social media using posts to provide ideas on low-cost play.

The communities and Wellbeing team are being relocated into MonLife as of March 2025. This team links to the communities of Monmouthshire supporting with a variety of services. These include, community focused schools, tackling poverty and promotion of community support. Historically this team has produced a way of delivering street play which supported the closure of roads within housing estates to allow children to play in the street. With changes to management and structure, work on this has been halted, however, the structure is still robust to continue this, The PDL already has strong links with this team and the repositioning will allow for this to develop further.

Community focus school lead has worked with the PDL and Play Wales to support two schools to open their grounds for the use of play after school. This has proved successful with strong case studies. An action of the PSA is to further develop this work with more schools with particular focus on schools in rural areas.

Museums and Heritage completed a play audit in 2022 and produced an action plan to create all museums and castles to be playful spaces. The heritage education manager continues to assess and promote these spaces for children to play. As part of the Cultural Strategy Plan which is currently being developed an action highlighted in this is "Support and develop partnership

working with heritage, libraries and museums to develop and promote playful spaces through a young ambassador's programme". This will be included in the 2025 PSA action plan.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## **Play Sufficiency Action Plan**

**Name of local authority: Monmouthshire**

**Name of responsible officer: Rebecca Hall**

**Job title: Play Development Lead**

**Completion date: June 2025**

## Play Sufficiency (2025) Play Action Plan

Actions to be taken to address the issues / shortcomings recorded in the Play Sufficiency Assessment to secure sufficient opportunities to play.

Proposed actions for the period of (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026)

Theme / Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Milestones	Resources needed	Funding source	Lead Person
<p><b>Population</b> [Matters A, B, E].</p> <p>The play needs of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for</p>	<p>Continue to ensure there are sufficient Welsh speaking staff at all play provisions to allow Welsh speaking children to communicate through the medium of Welsh. Ensure that all resources are bilingual. Monitor the implementation of incidental Welsh as far as reasonably practical.</p>	<p>Keep an up-to-date record of Welsh speaking staff</p> <p>Continue to assess and monitor the need for exclusive Welsh speaking provision with consideration to sustainability.</p> <p>This will be a priority agenda item of the Play sufficiency group</p>	<p>As part of annual quality audits. These take place in February and October holiday periods and are actioned accordingly.</p> <p>Consultations will take place annually at the beginning of each financial year and again at the end of the financial year. PDL will assess this termly</p>	<p>MCC translation services</p> <p>Play Development Lead (PDL) time.</p> <p>Sport development time</p> <p>Disabilities team time.</p>	<p>PHP funding</p> <p>Food and Fun</p> <p>WGLA</p> <p>Core funding</p> <p>CCG funding</p>	<p>Becky Hall PDL 2025</p> <p>Children's disabilities team-</p>
<p>The play needs and support needs of disabled children are</p>	<p>We will continue to work with stakeholders who</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a</p>				

<p>understood and provided for</p> <p>Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion</p>	<p>support children with disabilities and additional needs. A more practical approach will be sort and implemented to ensure that the needs of disabled of children can be consulted in a more meaningful way. MonLife Play team will work closely with commissioning services to achieve this.</p> <p>The Disabilities team will provide additional needs training annually to all play staff Further develop our kit library to include a range of play resources and have robust procedures in place to ensure inventory and replenishments.</p>	<p>completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p> <p>Training booked into our summer training program each year</p>	<p>Training review and evaluations end of each summer period</p>		<p>Sport Wales Core funding (EDI)</p>	<p>Spots Development Officer 2025</p>
<p><b>Places where children play</b> [Matters C, F and I]</p>						

<p>Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times</p> <p>Designated play areas and playgrounds are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use</p>	<p>Play development lead will continue to work with schools to develop the use of school grounds for play utilising the stay and play offer piloted and supported by Play Wales, Community focused schools and the Play Development team.</p> <p>A full re assessment will be completed on all parks to assess for new scores and to re score those that have had improvement. Piggies Hill and Western Hill have been identified as priority for improvement this will include increasing the value of the skatepark in Piggies Hill to support older children's play. All parks identified as low play value</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p> <p>This will be completed by March 2026</p>		<p>PDL School support staff</p>	<p>Core funding for PDL time. Schools to identify possible funding streams.</p> <p>AWPOG funding S106 funding Town Council funding</p>	<p>PDL Community Focused Schools Lead</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Manager</p>
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	will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to appropriate funding					
<p><b>Supervised provision</b> [Matters D and G]</p> <p>There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area</p> <p>Playwork is included within local Workforce Development strategies</p>	<p>PDL will continue to provide CPD to all staff providing play provision. A target of 40% of leisure assistance (10% at each site) will be trained in L2APP to ensure knowledge of playwork and playful spaces at all LC's and to prepare for any changes that may come about as a result of the exception order review.</p> <p>Learning and development team to implement play on Thingi- the LA's</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p> <p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p>	<p>Annual assessment to monitor target</p> <p>Annual assessment against progress</p>	<p>PDL time.</p> <p>Play Wales course cost</p> <p>PDL time. Request for support from sports</p>	<p>PHP funding</p> <p>Core funding (for PDL time and Learning and development team)</p>	<p>PDL Leisure centre managers and Duty officers to arrange compliance</p> <p>PDL Sport and community manager</p>

<p>The Local Authority offers playwork provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance</p>	<p>learning system. This will allow play to be an option for all employees but a mandatory training badge for all those employed to work with children in a recreational capacity</p> <p>Continue to provide a quality consistent program of delivery and enhance where a need is identified.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Annual reporting and consultation with children, town councils and stakeholders.</p>	<p>development team. Thing system</p> <p>PDL Leisure manager Town councils Children and young people</p>	<p>Town and community council funding PHP Food and Fun (WGLA) Sport Wales</p>	<p>Learning and development team.</p> <p>PDL Sport and Community Manager Leisure services department manager Town and Community councils</p>
<p><b>Policy, engagement, advocacy and information</b> [Matters F, G, H, I]</p> <p>Play sufficiency and other training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on</p>	<p>The promotion of play sufficiency will continue to be a priority of the council and a standard agenda item on all sectors</p>	<p>Play Strategy Group (PSG) will continue to meet quarterly.</p>	<p>Minutes of PSG meeting will be drawn quarterly.</p>	<p>PDL Sport and community Manager. PSG DMT</p>	<p>Core funding PHP</p>	<p>PDL Leisure manager</p>



<p>children's opportunities to play</p> <p>Community engagement is promoted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Making space available and suitable for play</li> <li>-Organising play events</li> <li>-Positive attitudes towards children and play</li> <li>-Training on the importance of play</li> </ul>	<p>whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play. Play sufficiency group will continue to meet and priorities play on all agendas that connect to matters of the PSA.</p> <p>Membership of the group will be constantly reviewed and extended upon as priorities develop</p> <p>The Cultural Strategy Plan is currently being developed an action highlighted in this is "Support and develop partnership working with heritage, libraries and museums to develop and promote playful spaces through a young ambassador's programme". This will be developed</p>	<p>Heritage Education manager will monitor as part of their work plan. Regular meetings with heritage and play to ensure actions are met.</p>			<p>PHP</p>	<p>Heritage Education Manager PDL PSG</p>
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	over the course of this PSA Cycle and will include training support to museum staff. Playful spaces in museums will continue with cross partnership between the PDL and heritage manager to ensure consistency.					
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# Monmouthshire County Council



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## Food and Fun Programme 2024 – Impact Infographic



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sir fynwy

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# Headline Figures

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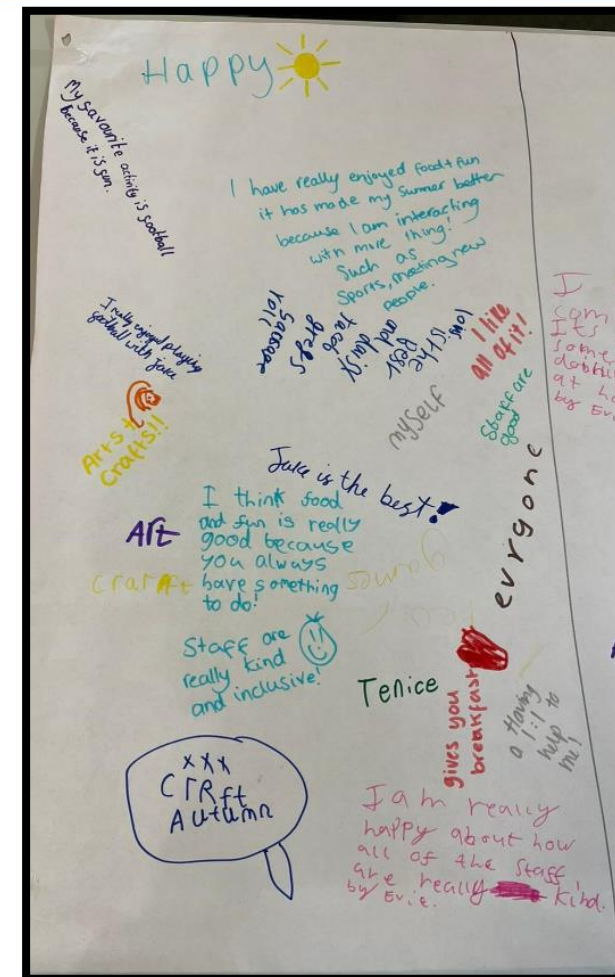
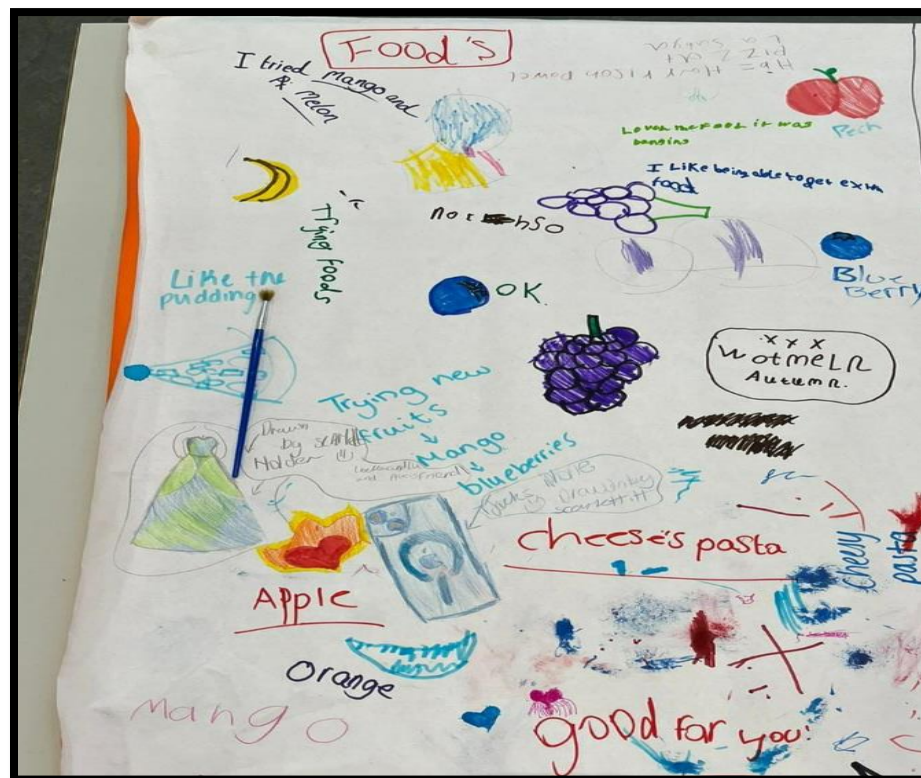
# The programme's impact on children

What have children most enjoyed?	How has it made them feel about being active and healthier?	What did children highlight are the wider benefits to them?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports and activities</li> <li>• The food</li> <li>• Arts and crafts</li> <li>• Making new friends</li> <li>• Taking part in tennis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I've enjoyed getting out of the house'.</li> <li>• Less screen time</li> <li>• 'I'm active here than I am at home'.</li> <li>• 'The school gives us more space to move'.</li> <li>• 'The food is really healthy'.</li> <li>• 'I love being outside'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence</li> <li>• Socialising with others</li> <li>• Being in the comprehensive school and increased familiarity.</li> <li>• Making new friends and seeing school friends through the summer.</li> <li>• Being able to express themselves</li> </ul>





# The programme's impact on children





# The programme's impact on parents

Opportunity for their children to make new friends.

Free healthy breakfast and lunch reduces cost of the summer holidays.

Being able to work, without the programme many would not be able to. It provides great balance for parents.

Children come home fed and exhausted.

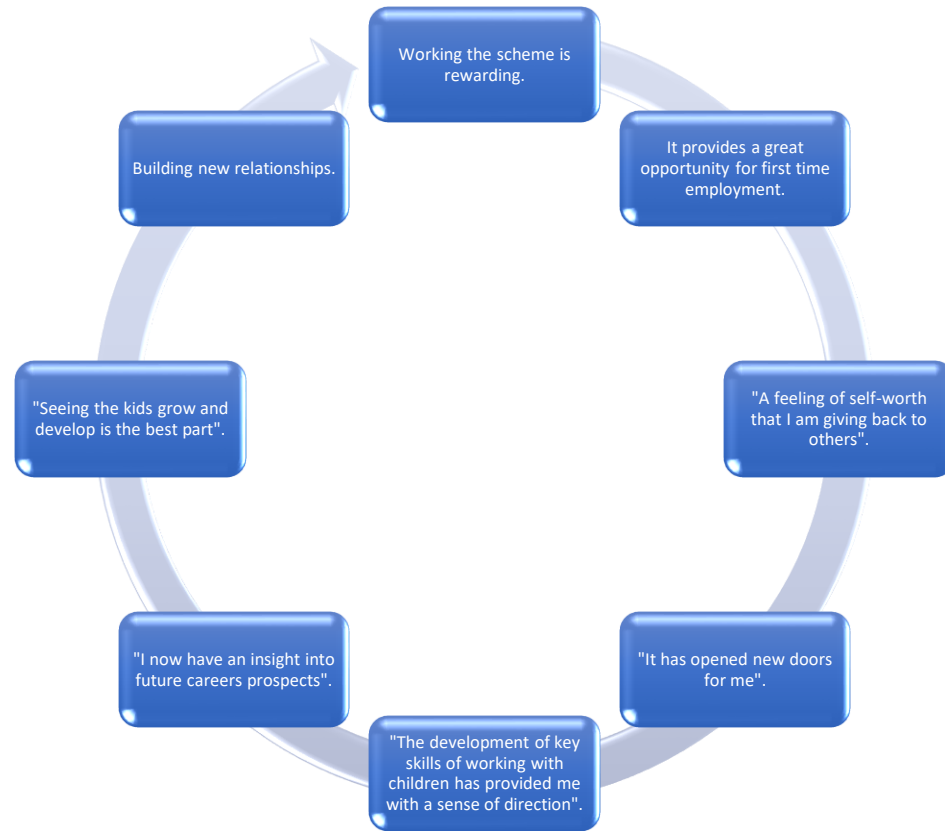
It is important for children to socialise with different age groups.

The scheme provides routine.

"It helps to keep them mentally stimulated so when they go back to school it isn't so much of a shock".



# The programme's impact on staff





Report By:	Site Name:	Date of site visit:
	Type: (Lap/Local/Destination) <small>Click here to enter text.</small>	
Contact and Visit by:	Site Address:	

Age Group: 0-6 Years	Score	Age Group: 7-12 Years	Score
<b>Traditional Play Values</b>		<b>Traditional Play Values</b>	
Swinging	0	Swinging	0
Sliding	0	Sliding	0
Rocking	0	Hanging	0
Climbing	0	Climbing	0
Balance	0	Balance	0
Rotating / Spinning	0	Rotating / Spinning	0
Inclusive / Less-abled	0	Inclusive / Less-abled	0
<b>Development Play Values</b>		<b>Development Play Values</b>	
Social Play	0	Social Play	0
Physical and Personal Development	0	Physical and Personal Development	0
Imagination	0	Imagination	0
Sensory	0	Sensory	0
Problem Solving / Educational	0	Problem Solving / Educational	0
Natural Play	0	Natural Play	0
<i>Additional (e.g. Bounce, Zip Wire)</i>	0	<i>Additional (e.g. Bounce, Zip Wire)</i>	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0/42</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0/42</b>
<b>SCORING RESULT: 0/84</b>			
Poor	Adequate	Good	

Other Considerations	General Comments and Observations
Seating Available	
Surfacing	
Access and Location	
Distance to Local/Destination playpark	

Individual Value Result	Score	Total Playground Result	Score
Non-Existent	0	Poor	0-28
Low	1	Adequate	29-55
Medium	2	Good	56-84
High	3		

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# SUMMER 2024



# MonLife



## Mission:

To promote healthier lives and inspirational experiences, and promote the vibrancy of Monmouthshire as a great place to be.



## Vision:

Enriching people's lives and creating vibrant places.



## Aims:

- Enrich people's lives through participation and activity
- Build strong communities in Monmouthshire
- Developing leadership skills for our future generations



## Values:

- Openness
- Fairness
- Kindness
- Flexibility
- Teamwork



# Summer Provisions

**The Monmouthshire Games (TMG)** – TMG is an all-day sports provision delivered across our four MonLife Leisure Centres. The programme aims to promote learning of new skills, develop confidence, meeting new people, and most importantly having fun through sport. Each day is action-packed, with a range of sporting activities for children and young people to enjoy.

**Food and Fun** – The Food and Fun scheme is a school-based education programme that provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions, Play and healthy meals. The program also enabled families to be provided with a Bag Bwyd which contained a wide selection of staple food items. Through working with partners in Education and Social Services, the team have delivered the programme across four Monmouthshire Primary School settings this summer for a total of five weeks, with the full impact demonstrated below.

**Active Play / Stay and Play** – Both our Active Play and Stay and Play sessions run throughout most school holiday periods. This summer they ran once a week from Chepstow and Abergavenny. These 2-hour sessions encompassed the Playwork principles as highlighted in 'Wales – A Play Friendly Country Policy'. The Playwork principles state that the play process for children should be freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed. The children were given the opportunity to choose from a variety of resources and activities that would support their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and creative development. The team have delivered sessions in Abergavenny, Chepstow, Magor and Undy, and Wyesham this summer.



# MonLife Active

## Summer Headlines 2024



### 703



children attended The  
Monmouthshire Games  
across our four leisure centres

### 3,170



total bookings for The  
Monmouthshire Games  
across our four leisure centres

### 418



attendances at 'Free Swim'  
sessions across our four  
leisure centres

### 1,547

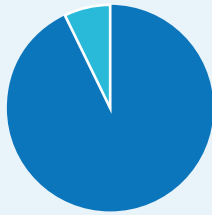


children attended Monmouth  
Play Centre throughout  
the Summer Holidays



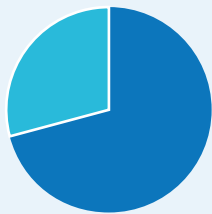
# The Monmouthshire Games

## Summer Headlines 2024



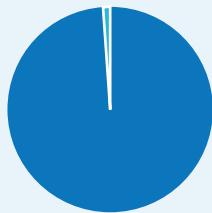
**86%**

of children said they had met a new friend



**77%**

of children tried a new sport that they hadn't before



**97%**

of children said they would come back again



**9.4**



average rating for how friendly staff were

**9.1**



average rating for how much fun the kids had

**8.4**



average rating for how likely they are to recommend us to family or friends

**(TAKEN FROM 343 CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED THE MONMOUTHSHIRE GAMES)**

# MonLife Connect

## Summer Headlines 2024



**774**

children were supported  
through MonLife Summer  
Play Provisions



**8,950**

meals provided across  
ALL our summer  
provisions



**617**

children supported  
through our food  
and fun provision



**4,445**

total attendances  
for our food and  
fun provision



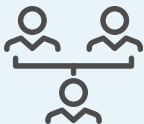
**41.8%**

of children eligible for  
free school meals took  
part in Food and Fun



**258**

children in receipt of  
free school meals  
attended Food and Fun



**7**

partners worked with  
us to help carry our  
Summer Provisions



**157**

Children were supported  
via our 'Active Play' and  
'Stay & Play' sessions



[www.monlife.co.uk/connect](http://www.monlife.co.uk/connect)



# MonLife Connect

## Summer Headlines 2024



**168**

number of inclusive attendances at our summer play provisions



**1,410**

total hours of play provided throughout the summer via our play provisions



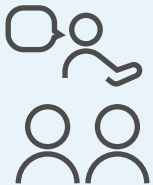
**400**

people attended our National Play Day event at Caldicot



**508**

individuals engaged with across our youth centres, trips and outreach work



**3,123**

contacts were made with young people via our youth centres this summer



**90**

youth centre sessions took place throughout the summer holidays



# MonLife Heritage

## Summer Headlines 2023



**396**

children attended craft sessions arranged by MonLife Heritage Museums



**98%**

of feedback from MonLife Heritage Museum craft sessions were positive



**960**

people attended Outdoor Theatre Events at Abergavenny Castle

“

“Everything you've done has been really good this summer holidays”

- **Parent of Child attending craft sessions**

”

“

“Been an amazing way to spend quality time with my grandson”

- **Grandparent of Child attending craft sessions**

”



## Funding Panel Assessment.

### Grant criteria information

The below must be considered when assessing the use of the AWPOG grant.

- All projects need to be **completed** by March 2026. Funding cannot be allocated to projects that won't be ready to use by March 2026
- The grant must be used to support actions of the 2025 PSA
- WG would like the money to be used, as far as reasonably practicable, to encompass a wide range of users including a range of ages. In relation to this it is concluded that this grant would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play). The funding would then cover a wider range of ages and needs whereas LAPS focus more on lower age groups, mainly the pre-school under-5s.
- WG would like to see funding being utilised to support cross policy objectives e.g. active travel, community.
- Supporting areas of deprivation is desirable but can be used in lower deprived areas if there is rational to do so
- Current Play value should be considered when making decisions with a view to improving play value. A score between 0-29 is considered LOW play value.

### Assessment

SITE	CATEGORY	DEPRIVATION	PV SCORE 2019	PSA detail	COMMENT	Funding Panel Review	To be funded
<b>Abergavenny</b>							
Underhill	Neighbourhood	Cantref 2 (1)	9	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate</b> funding"</i>	Investment likely from new RLDP site at Penlanlas, although that could be a few years away – but at least it does have the prospect of future funding that could be significant.	History of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This isn't a reason not to invest but there is a prospect of future S106 funding and there is another Neighbourhood play area on the same estate at Rother Avenue. The Underhill site is more of a playing field with a zip wire, a basketball court and a limited number of other pieces of play equipment. The site is currently on the edge of the estate but if developed in the future as proposed it will have a much better level of overlooking, creating an extra level of safety for users. This is definitely one for future investment, preferably through S106 funding contributions.  The level of work needed for this will not be possible to complete by the end of March 20262.	x
St Faith's Close	Local	Castle&Llanfoist(19)	13	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate</b> funding"</i>	LAP.	It was discussed and concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play). The funding would then cover a wider range of ages and needs whereas LAPS focus more on lower age groups, mainly the pre-school under-5s.	x
Belgrave Road	Neighbourhood	Cantref 1 (49)	21	As part of the PSA 2025 action plan this is one of the parks that is to be reassessed for its play value as it has already had investment.	Recent investment, further minor investment due in 2025 from Ross Road S106.	High affluent area. Has had significant investment recently. Fence required to complete site. When reassessed it will score a much higher play value.	x
Bailey Park	Neighbourhood	Priory 2 (18)	61	With a high play value this is not included in the 2025 PSA action plan	2 <sup>nd</sup> best PV score in MCC, more small-scale investment due in 2025 from volunteers.	High play value score, recent improved access work completed. Volunteers have raised funding for new play panels that will further increase play value score.	x
St Helen's Close	Local	Grofield (10)	25	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA	LAP.	Serves a large area and is well-used, but all tarmac surfacing. Not in one of the highest areas of deprivation.	x

				2025 as “All parks identified as; low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”			
Rother Avenue	Neighbourhood	Grofield (10)	24	As part of the PSA 2025 action plan this is one of the parks that is to be reassessed for its play value as it has already had investment.	Significant investment due in 2025 from Ross Road S106.	Located in central position on the Underhill Estate – when improvements carried out will raise play value score to “adequate” status.	x
Glan Gavenny	Local	Croesonen (4)	13	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”	LAP.	It was discussed and concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play). The funding would then cover a wider range of ages and needs whereas LAPS focus more on lower age groups, mainly the pre-school under-5s.	x
<b>Caldicot</b>							
Longfellow Road	Neighbourhood	West End (5)	22	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”	Ongoing discussions locally, to assess the site.	Relocation, replacement or significant upgrading would be a longer-term aim and is not practical with timelines for this year’s AWPOG grant	x
<b>Chepstow</b>							
Garvey Close	Local	Thornwell 1 (3)	10	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”	LAP.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play).	x
Summerhouse Lane	Local	Thornwell 1 (3)	10	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on	LAP.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play).	x

				access to <b>appropriate funding</b>			
Pheonix Drive	Local	Thornwell 1 (3)	10	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	LAP.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play).	x
Burnt Barn Road (also known as Western Avenue)	Neighbourhood	Thornwell 2 (17)	25	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	Play area located in high-use area, next to rugby pitches and close to Thornwell Primary School.	Equipment is in poor condition. Improvements have been requested by local residents and local members. No prospect of future S106 funding, if AWPOG capital is allocated there is sufficient space within the existing site boundary to accommodate the improvements. Work can be completed by 31 March 2026.	Y
Larkfield Close	Neighbourhood	Thornwell 2 (17)	13	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	Ongoing discussions locally, to assess the site.	Not accessible for disabilities, not overlooked and too far removed from anywhere that children would play/access. Nowhere to relocate sensibly. Even if there was a way to improve on this it could not be achieved by March 2026. This park is located in the same ward as Western avenues and therefore residents can access that park.	x
Bulwark Park (also Known as Piggy's Hill)	Neighbourhood	St Christophers (23)	19	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	High level of use, located on through route and close to St Mary's Primary School – very well used by children and families at drop off/pick up times throughout the school year.	Site is located approx.100yds from Chepstow skatepark, which is also in need of some investment to provide a better skating surface on the apron surrounding the main skatepark bowl. Some funding exists and there is potential to match fund, using part of the AWPOG money – which would ensure that the AWPOG money would benefit a wide range of children and young people. Work can be completed by 31 March 2026.	Y
Hardwick Avenue (also known as Garden City)	Neighbourhood	St Christophers (23)	21	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	Links to NEAP.	Can link to Bulwark Park. Does need some investment (circa £50K) but not as urgent as other areas. The site is well used, has an active Friends Group and is located next to a community garden and well used junior football pitch.	x
Clydach							



Recreation Ground	Neighbourhood	Llanelly Hill 2 (12)	16	As part of the PSA 2025 action plan this is one of the parks that is to be reassessed for its play value as it has already had investment.	Recent investment from S106 funding from Ty Mawr and Cae Meldon sites.	Site needs to be re-assessed in terms of play value.	x
<b>Llanelly Hill</b>							
Playing Field	Neighbourhood	Llanelly Hill 2 (12)	15	As part of the PSA 2025 action plan this is one of the parks that is to be reassessed for its play value as it has already had investment.	Recent £22K S106 investment in improvements from Ty Mawr/Cae Meldon.	Site needs to be re-assessed in terms of play value.	x
Penllwyn Open Space	Local	Llanelly Hill 2 (12)	11	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	LAPS.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play)	x
<b>Monmouth</b>							
Carbonne Close	Neighbourhood	Overmonnow 2 (2)	28	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	Moderate investment needed to increase play value to "adequate".	Further discussion with housing association to increase play value and any investment.	x
Goldwire Lane	Local	Overmonnow 2 (2)	24	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; <i>"All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b>"</i>	Recent investment – site need to be reassessed in terms of play value	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play).	x
King's Fee Estate	Local	Overmonnow 2 (2)	30	With an adequate play value this is not included in the 2025 PSA action plan As part of the PSA 2025 action plan this is one of the parks that is to be reassessed for its play value as it has already had investment.	Playpark replaced via Active Travel funding. as part of Williamsfield Lane footpath upgrade.	Significant recent investment – site needs to be re-assessed in terms of play value.	x

Magor with Undy							
Manor Chase	Local	The Elms (52)	13	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”	LAPS.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play)	x
Rockfield View	Local	The Elms (52)	7	As low play value this aligns with the action of the PSA 2025 as; “All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based on access to <b>appropriate funding</b> ”	Confirmed S106 funding to upgrade in 2025 and/or 2026.	Concluded that this fund would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play).	x
Usk							
Usk Playpark	Neighbourhood	Usk 1 (41)	69	With a high play value this is not included in the 2025 PSA action plan	Best ranked play value site in Monmouthshire.	Already significant investment. High play value and low level of deprivation.	x

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# Integrated Impact Assessment document

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

<b>Name of the Officer</b> completing the evaluation  Nick John Rebecca Hall  <b>Phone no:</b> 077680 55408 <b>E-mail:</b> nicholasjohn@monmouthshire.gov.uk	<b>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</b>  <b>Monmouthshire Play Opportunities for All and Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital Funding</b>
<b>Name of Service area</b>  <b>Culture, Customer and Wellbeing</b>	<b>Date</b>  10/4/2025

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

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	The PSA seeks to assess the sufficiency of access to play for all children 0-18 and to identify any actions that will improve opportunities	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
Disability	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs including disability	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
Gender reassignment	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>Race</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>Sex</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Matter B of the PSA related to proving for diverse needs which includes all diversity and protected characteristics.	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.

## 2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice.

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

	<b>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.</b>	<b>Describe any negative impact your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.</b>	<b>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
<b>Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice.</b>	The purpose of the PSA is that all children irrelevant of social-	For Food and Fun which is featured within the PSA there is	The eligibility criteria is set out by WGLA who funds the program.

	economic status has a right to play and it everyone's responsibility to ensure this right is met	an eligibility criterion. This criterion meets those children who are in receipt of eFSM however is they are not, or parents haven't applied, and they don't go to an eligible school they are not entitled to a place on the scheme; this may cause some disparity.	This is not something we can affect but we do work with schools and upon their recommendation we are able to offer priority spaces to those in need.
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### 3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal.	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts.
<b>Policy Making</b> effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favorably	As part of matter B- diverse needs the provision of Welsh language needs to be considered. It has been identified that all provisions for children and young people are bilingual. As part of workforce development, it has been noted that the level of Welsh speaking staff sits at around 50%	It has been identified that there is no provision that is delivered solely through the medium of Welsh, however it is noted that those children who attend Welsh speaking schools do access our bilingual sessions which contain Welsh speaking staff	Continue to monitor the need for sole Welsh Medium provision and implement if funding allows. This is identified on the PSA Action plan.
<b>Operational</b> Recruitment & Training of workforce	It is noted in the PSA that the food and fun and holiday provisions create a pathway for employment for the young people who come through the leadership program. There is a comprehensive suite of training that can be delivered by the play development lead. This has been completed to a percentage of	Without further input into the workforce for play it will be difficult to expand further.	We provide regular training and monitoring to leisure centre staff who regularly work the play sessions.


	staff within holiday provisions. Play development lead has recently qualified to deliver Level 2 playwork, a recognised qualification for those working in holiday provisions.		
<b>Service delivery</b>  Use of Welsh language in service delivery  Promoting use of the language	Please see above.	Please see above.	Please see above.  All our advertising and registration materials are bilingual.

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

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<b>A prosperous Wales</b> Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generate wealth, provides jobs	The PSA has established that there is coordination's between teams across the council to support the actions needed. Workforce development is a matter of the PSA and an action is to continue to develop the workforce for play	Careful use of funding to ensure quality provisions throughout the local authority.
<b>A resilient Wales</b> Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	No impact was identified at this stage.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>A healthier Wales</b> People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood	The PSA assesses children's time, space and permission to play. Play provides children with opportunities to participate in physical activity enhancing their physical wellbeing. There is strong evidence that play has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing and that play	The PSA action plan highlights the need to further develop provisions in Abergavenny and Monmouth

	deprivation can be negative to childrens future mental health.	
<b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b> Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Play as part of the community is a big part of the PSA. It is noted that there are opportunities across the authority for communities to support play.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
<b>A globally responsible Wales</b> Taking account of the impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	The positive impact of the Food & Fun scheme is captured by children and parents and informs future programmes and the PSA action plan.	Share the impact of the programme more widely.
<b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b> Culture, heritage and the Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	The PSA is derived with consideration of the UNCRC. Article 31 says that children have a right to play, rest and recreation. The focus of the PSA is to ensure that this right is assessed for and met as far as reasonably practical.	Continue to monitor is the need for a full welsh medium Active Play is needed within the Welsh Schools. At present all our provisions are bilingual and are attended by Welsh speaking children with Welsh speaking staff.
<b>A more equal Wales</b> People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Matter B of the PSA is concentrated on Diverse needs. This includes disabilities, Welsh speaking, those from Gypsy communities, LGBTQ+. All criterions within this matter has been assessed for its sufficiency	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.

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

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not, explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term needs with long term and planning for the future.</p> <p>Long Term</p>	Actions within the PSA relating to Workforce development highlights the Play teams plan to develop a trained workforce for play to continue to be in a position to support free play provisions.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.



Collaboration

Working together with other partners to deliver objectives.

Play strategy group consists of a variety of stakeholders within the local authority. This group meets regularly to plan for and assess ongoing projects that may affect children's access to play

- Active Travel
- Community infrastructure
- Community Focused schools
- Community and Wellbeing team
- Early years and Childcare
- Flying Start
- Sport and Community
- Play Development.
- Leisure Services
- Children's Disabilities team
- Youth service

The outcomes of the PSA and action plan is reported quarterly through departmental delivery plans and forms part of the actions of the Corporate and Community plan.





Involvement

Involving those with an interest and seeking their views

As part of the PSA completion consultation took place with children from age 5-17. Parents were also consulted with both providing feedback on what they feel the authority could provide. We also consulted with schools and other stakeholders whose work related to or could affect children's time, space and permission to play

No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.

 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>The PSA by its very nature can prevent problems occurring as it is not just a one off assessment of the situation but reviewed regularly.</p>	<p>No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>Play is an important factor in supporting the wellbeing of children and communities.</p>	<p>No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.</p>

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

	Describe any positive impact your proposal has.	Describe any negative impact your proposal has.	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	The PSA ensures that stakeholders provide a variety of play opportunities that enhance children's wellbeing. All activities/opportunities are governed by MCC's safeguarding policies and procedures	There is nothing as part of the PSA that could negatively impact safeguarding.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.
Corporate Parenting	Criteria within the PSA relate directly to looked after children and children within the care system. By assessing these areas, we are	The PSA is fully inclusive and equitable.	No mitigation actions were identified at this stage.

	ensuring that the best possible outcomes for children are being implemented.		
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**7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?**

[Wales a play friendly country](#)  
[Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit](#)

Lates census and data about Monmouthshire  
 Consultations with Children, parents and stakeholders

*Equalities dashboard link.* [Equality data dashboard for EQIA's 2020.xlsx](#)

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

The PSA is a statutory duty that puts onus on Local Authorities to assess the sufficiency of play in the authority. This has been completed and will be submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of June 2025. The positive of this completion is that it allows all stakeholders to assess their part in children being able to access space and opportunities to play. Play that is inclusive and meets children's needs and preferences. Play supports children's physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

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

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?

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



Version No.	Decision making stage.  Budget mandate; DMT; SLT; Scrutiny; Cabinet; Council, etc	Date considered.	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration.
1.	<b>Peoples Scrutiny</b>	<b>17 June</b>	

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**SUBJECT: FINANCIAL UPDATE REPORT**  
**MEETING: CABINET**  
**DATE: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025**  
**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with information on the Authority's final financial results for the 2024/25 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.
- 1.2 To update Cabinet on the early indicative progress against the 2025/26 revenue budget.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Cabinet *recognises*:

- 2.1 A **gross revenue budget surplus at outturn of £1,239,000** prior to transfers to reserves, representing a 0.6% variance against the budget.
- 2.2 After accounting for approved transfers to/from earmarked reserves of £742,000, the final net surplus stands at £497,000, which will be added to the Council Fund.
- 2.3 The surplus reflects a significant improvement of £2.83 million compared to the previous financial update. This positive variance is largely due to an unbudgeted grant of £1.19 million from the Welsh Government in March 2025, alongside favourable service budget positions resulting from effective budget recovery actions.
- 2.4 The Council's continued financial discipline, combined with late grant funding has enabled the replenishment of reserves in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 2.5 Despite the positive outturn, significant cost pressures remain in **Social Care, Additional Learning Needs, Waste, Passenger Transport, and Homelessness/Housing**, with a combined overspend reported for the year of **£4.6 million**. While some of these were addressed in the 2025/26 budget, these areas continue to pose financial risks.
- 2.6 An increase in school reserve deficits of **£3.19 million** during the year, resulting in a cumulative year-end deficit of **£4.09 million**. Fifteen schools were in a deficit balance at year-end. Several schools continue to face structural budget challenges, which are being addressed through recovery plans.
- 2.7 Total capital expenditure for the year was **£48.81 million**, with a gross underspend of **£2.73 million**, primarily due to underspends in Infrastructure and Property Maintenance and the receipt of additional unbudgeted grants that have offset core budgets.
- 2.8 Capital slippage requests total **£25.03 million**, which includes **£1.3 million** that can be allocated out of the underspend achieved and will be re-purposed to create a **capital contingency budget** for 2025/26 to mitigate scheme risks or address emerging capital priorities.
- 2.9 There are early indications of cost pressures against the 2025/26 revenue budget, exceeding the **£850,000 contingency** held. Prompt mitigation by services will be required to ensure a balanced outturn position is achieved.
- 2.10 That Cabinet **approves**:
- The strategy to **replenish reserves** as outlined in Section 7, including the allocation of the **£497,000 year-end surplus** to the Council Fund.
  - The use of **£3.68 million in capital receipts** to fund eligible revenue expenditure under the Welsh Government’s “flexible use of capital receipts” direction (**Appendix 3**).
  - The **capital slippage requests** of **£25.03 million** (Appendix 1 - Section 4), acknowledging the factors that delayed project delivery.
  - The **capital budget revisions** detailed in Appendix 5, reflecting finalised grant funding awards for the year.

## KEY ISSUES

### 3 Revenue outturn position

- 3.1 The 2024/25 financial year has seen the continuation of financial headwinds which are impacting upon the Council's service operating environment:
- The wider socio-economic landscape and cost of living challenges continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and impact upon income generating services. This particularly impacts the service areas of Children's Social care, Adult social care, Homelessness, and Children's additional learning needs.
  - Wider public sector challenges continue to impact upon Council services, notably within Health where efforts to improve patient pathways impact upon the level and complexity of demand for Social care;
  - Whilst headline inflation has fallen, some discrete areas of Council services continue to experience cost pressures on supplies and services, alongside supply chain issues.
  - In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained high, with revised forecasts suggesting that they will remain higher for longer than anticipated at the time of setting the budget;
  - The Council continues to deal with a shortage of staff resources in some areas.
- 3.2 The first two financial updates received by Cabinet in October and December indicated significant pressure on the Councils budget of between £3m and £4m. Cabinet subsequently endorsed mitigating action to develop a structured approach to tackling the forecast deficit through a range of budget recovery measures.
- 3.3 These included a targeted vacancy freeze, maximising the use of grants and income to support core expenditure, bearing down on all non-essential spend, and identifying eligible capital related costs that could be met from capital funding.
- 3.4 In February 2025 Cabinet received the third financial update for the year outlining a reduced forecast deficit of £1.593 million. This was reflective of favourable movements within the majority of service budget areas, where successful budget recovery action and additional grant income had been notified.
- 3.5 At outturn, the Council has successfully mitigated the overall cost pressures through these ongoing targeted actions, and through additional unbudgeted grants and contributions. This has culminated in a gross expenditure budget surplus of £1.239 million prior to transfers to reserves, representing a 0.6% variance against the approved budget.

- 3.6 The final budget outturn position is a significant improvement of £2.83 million since the previous forecast at financial update 3 where a budget deficit of £1,593,000 was anticipated.
- 3.7 The majority of directorates have experienced improvements in positions which is due to five main factors:
- Additional grant funding being secured, or services maximising core revenue costs being met from both revenue and capital grant funding;
  - Staff vacancies continuing to be held as part of budget recovery action;
  - Increased external income from rents, fees and memberships;
  - Identifying additional costs eligible to be met from capitalisation direction to maximise its use;
  - Net borrowing costs remained lower than expected as cash balances remained higher for longer than expected, and longer term loans were secured at competitive rates.
- 3.8 Whilst the final revenue outturn shows a marked improvement, it is important to recognise that over £3 million of this is due to one-off unbudgeted grant funding received from the Welsh Government during the year. This funding has temporarily alleviated service pressures, many of which persist and will continue to pose challenges during 2025/26.
- 3.9 The below summary outlines the service variances both positive and negative that make up the final outturn position:

**Table 1: 2024/25 Revenue budget outturn**

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	3,345	4.9%	<b>Children's services</b> £2,392k - increasing complexity of needs, placement shortages, recruitment challenges	<b>Support services</b> £120k - Staff vacancies and grant
			<b>Adults services</b> £1,358k - increasing complexity of cases, rising cost of care, increasing residential placements, savings not fully realised	<b>Public protection</b> £284k - Staff vacancies

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
Children, Learning, Skills & Economy	(26)	0.0%	Central budgets £138k – Various over spends relating to school related costs that are required to be funded centrally	Economy, Employment & Skills £164k – Grant income and supplies and services reduction
Infrastructure & Place	503	1.9%	Passenger transport £555k - Demand, contract hand backs	Enterprise management £339k (Senior officer savings, increased grant)
			Waste £399k - Recyclate contract volatility, reduced income	Decarbonisation £240k – Staff vacancies, renewable energy savings
			Housing/Homelessness £342k - maintenance increase for leased accommodation, shortfall in savings from Severn View	Highway external works £136k - increased income
			Building Control £76k - fee income reduction, change in regulatory requirements	Highways Design & Road Safety £120k – staff vacancies
			Solar farm £69k - Weather & grid outage	Highways Development & flooding £126k – additional fee income
			Corporate Mileage savings £100k – Shortfall in saving target	Schools catering £156k (Grant and staff vacancies)
			Planning & Development Control £80k – reduced applications impacting income	
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	(677)	-8.3%	Attractions £62k – reduced visitor numbers	
			Museums £44k – delayed staff savings	Leisure, Youth & Outdoor £437k – increased memberships and grant income
				Countryside and Culture £92k – additional grant income
				Communications £97k – strategic allocation of costs into available grant streams
				Markets £154k – increased income and reduced overheads
People, Performance and Partnerships	(80)	-2.3%		Policy/Partnerships £74k - staff savings, ability to passport expenditure to capitalisation directive

Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
Law & Governance	18	0.7%	Committee & Elections £15k – Vat adjustment resulting from changes in how election grant costs are recovered.	
Resources	(132)	-1.5%	Newport leisure park £126k - Surplus generated of £220k fell short of the £346k target due to changes in tenancy agreements and periods of rental concessions.	Revenues, Systems & Exchequer £107k – staff vacancies and grant income
			Castlegate £415k - Increased site maintenance and service charges for vacant units, £367,000 doubtful debt provisions.	Finance/Audit £207k - staff vacancies
			County Farms & Industrial units £138k – reduced income, one-off water rate charges, void costs	Building cleaning & Public conveniences £114k – increased income, rate reductions and staff vacancies
				Landlord services £208k - staff vacancies
Corporate costs	(3,491)	-11.7%	Pension strain costs £209k – enhancements to pension contributions where employees have accessed pension benefits earlier than normal pension age.	Business rate refunds £61k - following appeal
				Insurance £298k – Estimates of the costs for unsettled insurance claims lower than anticipated.
				Un-hypothecated grant income £3,354k – Welsh Government grants received towards the end of the year to support local government cost pressures.
Capital financing & Reserves	258	-6.1%	Earmarked reserves £895k – Year-end decisions to make contributions to/from earmarked reserves that were not budgeted	Lower net borrowing costs £641k - reflective of higher than anticipated cash balances, forward starting loans, and significant capital slippage.



Directorate	Over / (Under) Spend (£,000s)	% Variance to budget	Over spend	Under spend
<b>Council tax</b>	<b>(215)</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>Council tax</b> £337k – Increasing discounts and exemptions which have a negative impact on the overall amount collected.	<b>Council tax reduction scheme</b> £552k - cases have tracked slightly lower than budgeted for the year
<b>Year-end surplus</b>	<b>(497)</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>		

- 3.10 **Budgeted service savings:** Service savings of £10.94 million were required as part of the original revenue budget for 2024/25. 81.6% of these have been met during the year which continues a longer-term trend of under delivery of targets. The ongoing financial impact of the shortfall in delivery will need to be considered as part of the budget forecasting for 2025/26.

Table 2: Service savings delivered

Directorate	Total Saving / Budget recovery	Achieved	Variance to Budget	% met
	£000	£000	£000	
Social Care & Health	(4,972)	(3,650)	1,322	73.4%
Children, Learning, Skills and Economy	(3,172)	(3,103)	69	97.8%
Infrastructure & Place	(927)	(470)	457	50.7%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	(1,079)	(961)	118	89.1%
People, Performance and Partnerships	(86)	(86)	0	100.0%
Law & Governance	(33)	(33)	0	100.0%
Resources	(595)	(548)	47	92.1%
Corporate Costs & Levies	(77)	(77)	0	100.0%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(10,940)</b>	<b>(8,928)</b>	<b>2,013</b>	<b>81.6%</b>

- 3.11 Further details of the performance against budget savings can be found at **Appendix 2**.

3.12 Eligible revenue costs of £3.68 million have been met from capital receipts reserve funding through capitalisation direction. These costs are principally in the areas of service change and reform, digital approach to service delivery, and collaboration with other public sector bodies. A summary of these costs is shown at **Appendix 3**.

3.13 The 2025/26 budget includes the further use of capitalisation direction of £3.7 million, with the current medium term financial plan modelling a tapering down of this support which is budgeted to end in 2029/30.

### 3.14 Robustness of budget forecasting during the year:

Table 3: Budget forecasting at formal reporting periods

2024/25 Budget forecast in £000's	Total Deficit / (Surplus)	Social care & Health	Children, Learning, Skills & Economy	Infrastructure & Place	Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	Resources	People, Performance and Partnerships	Law & Governance	Other
Update 1	124	2,494	468	963	(46)	18	68	51	(627)
Update 2	4,353	3,897	673	708	(122)	(145)	94	48	(799)
Update 3	1,593	4,211	272	671	(336)	(430)	(6)	2	(2,789)
Update 4	(497)	3,345	(26)	340	(677)	31	(80)	18	(3,448)

3.15 Whilst there has been significant variation in the overall forecast budget position during the year, this has largely resulted from the movement in Corporate areas where un-hypothecated grants have been allocated. Service area positions have predominantly improved during the year, reflective of budget recovery action instigated during the year.

3.16 It has however been another difficult year to obtain any budget forecasting certainty:

- Late notification of unbudgeted grant and contributions continues;
- £10.9m of budget savings were required to be delivered;
- Services were asked to engage in additional budget recovery action part way through the year;
- Demand for high-cost services remains volatile

## 4 School Balances

- 4.1 Schools continue to face significant budget pressures, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased the overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards have also impacted upon budgets.
- 4.2 The 2024/25 financial year has culminated in a £3,187,000 draw on school's balances, resulting in the cumulative deficit balance increasing to £4,092,000 and with fifteen of thirty-five schools now holding deficit balances.
- 4.3 The ongoing budget challenges at Chepstow Comprehensive, King Henry VIII School, and the Pupil Referral Service remain a significant concern. The Local Authority continues to work closely with representatives from these schools to implement agreed budget recovery plans. It is acknowledged that, due to the scale of the challenges, the recovery process will take longer than initially anticipated.
- 4.4 The Authority continues to work closely with all schools of concern to aid in the return to more sustainable budget plans over the medium term without impacting on educational standards. This will continue to be informed by the ongoing review of school's budgets as part of the periodic update of the medium-term financial plan.

**Table 4: Movement in Schools balances**

<b>School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2024</b>	<b>Draw upon Reserves</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Comprehensives	976	391	1,366
Middle	329	1,057	1,386
Primaries	(1,142)	836	(306)
Pupil referral service	742	903	1,645
<b>Total</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>3,187</b>	<b>4,092</b>

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

## 5 Reserves

### 5.1 Key considerations

5.2 The level of the Council Fund reserve stood at £10.4m at the start of 2024/25, excluding delegated school balances. This represented 5% cover as a proportion of the Council's 2024/25 net revenue budget and was in line with the recommendations of the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.3 The final revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 did not include any use of the Council Fund reserve to balance the budget which was in line with the budget planning framework agreed by Cabinet. The budget did include £1.122 million of planned use of earmarked reserves in support of one-off revenue expenditure.

5.4 In determining the allocation of the outturn position, priority was given to strengthening the Council's financial sustainability. The focus has been on mitigating potential financial risks and enhancing the medium-term financial outlook. Accordingly, the following transfers to earmarked reserves are proposed. These will provide greater resilience against future uncertainties and support strategic investment in key service priorities over the medium term.

### 5.5 Proposed reserves rationalisation and replenishment:

	<b>Gross revenue budget surplus</b>		<b>£-1,238,590</b>	
Contribution from	Priority investment reserve	<b>£-26,512</b>		Releasing unused reserve
Contribution from	Capital support reserve	<b>£-375,340</b>		Reducing reserve from £625k to £250k. Borrowing is the favoured funding stream for longer term capital investments
Contribution to	Programme of change reserve	£350,000		Targeted up-front investment to deliver on programme of change within services
Contribution to	ICT Reserve	£663,608		To provide additional cover for future data & digital priorities
Contribution to	Pay inflation reserve	£129,868		Support pay award pressures in 2025/26
	<b>Movement in earmarked reserves</b>		<b>£741,624</b>	

	<b>Net revenue budget surplus</b>		<b>£-496,966</b>	
Contribution to	Council fund		£496,966	To maintain 5% cover of 2025/26 revenue budget
	<b>Final budget position</b>		£0	

5.6 Based upon the above reserve movements and when taking into account the most up to date financial modelling, the forward projection of reserve balances is shown below:

**Table 6: Reserves projection based on 2024/25 outturn and the latest financial modelling**

<b>31st March</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2029</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Council Fund (Excluding schools)	10,388	10,885	10,885	10,885	10,885	10,885
Strategic earmarked reserves	6,254	5,687	5,049	4,858	4,667	4,476
<b>Sub-Total Non-specific reserves</b>	<b>18,666</b>	<b>18,597</b>	<b>17,960</b>	<b>17,770</b>	<b>17,580</b>	<b>17,390</b>
Partnership earmarked reserves	2,248	1,912	1,762	1,637	1,687	1,737
Service specific earmarked reserves	856	1,031	2,699	2,727	2,755	2,783
Council tax premium reserve	0	809	1,172	1,559	1,971	2,409
<b>Sub-Total specific reserves</b>	<b>3,104</b>	<b>3,752</b>	<b>5,633</b>	<b>5,923</b>	<b>6,413</b>	<b>6,929</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,770</b>	<b>22,349</b>	<b>23,593</b>	<b>23,693</b>	<b>23,993</b>	<b>24,319</b>

## **6 Capital budget**

6.1 Capital expenditure totalled £48.81 million for the year, with a gross under spend of £2.73 million reported.

6.2 This was primarily due to the programmes of work within Infrastructure and Property maintenance not being fully spent, alongside the receipt of additional grant which has allowed core budget to be released. Alongside this, the vehicle replacement programme did not require the full allocation of budget.

6.3 After allowing for capital financing adjustments, £1.3m of the gross under spend is available to be repurposed to create a capital contingency budget for 2025/26 to mitigate scheme risks or address emerging capital priorities.

6.4 **Capital slippage – Appendix 1** details capital schemes requiring slippage into next financial year.

6.5 Capital schemes by nature are usually multi-year, and some slippage is to be expected as expenditure profiles change based on flex in project circumstances. A total of 98 capital schemes require slippage into 2025/26 totalling £25.032 million representing 33% of the total budget for the year.

6.6 Over two-thirds of the slippage (£17.547 million) relates to eight larger schemes within the capital programme, as follows:

Scheme name	Slippage £000's	Comment
ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	4,368	Slippage required to align with revised scheme programme of works as agreed with the grant awarding body
Welsh Medium School and Nursery	2,696	Slippage required to align with revised scheme programme of works as agreed with the grant awarding body
Wye Bridge Monmouth	2,166	Initial phases of work were pushed back to allow wider programme of resurfacing works to be carried out within the area. These works faced delays due to external issues with third parties, which has meant that a revised schedule of works is required for Wye Bridge. Whilst some initial design and feasibility works will be carried out within 2025/26, it is recommended that this budget is slipped forward to 2026/27 to align with the revised schedule.
Capital Capital Region City Deal	1,948	Re-profiling of contributions as required by the programme of works delivered by the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,867	Multi-year scheme which relies on suitable properties being identified to match demand requirements
Asset Investment Fund	1,781	Remaining budgeted designated to cover any ongoing capital expenditure required on investment properties. This allocation ensures that sufficient funds are available to address maintenance, improvements, and other capital-related expenses, thereby safeguarding the value and functionality of our investment assets.
Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	1,421	Acquisition strategy in development to formalise arrangements in respect of buying properties to address homeless issue & support the implementation of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2025/26

Capital contingency fund	1,300	£1.3m of released budgets will be carried forward to 2025/26 as a contingency budget to mitigate capital budget risks developing in year. This can either be on schemes already in progress and facing additional cost pressures, or to meet new risks that were not foreseen at budget setting stage.
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- 6.7 The internal and external operating environment continued to affect the capital programme during 2024/25. Challenges such as limited internal capacity, constraints in accessing external professional support, and isolated supply chain disruptions have hindered project delivery. Over time, these issues may lead to financial consequences, particularly due to inflationary pressures and the implications for capital financing strategies.
- 6.8 **Capital receipts** – The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. The full balance of capital receipts is committed to future capital investment meaning there is little scope to support additional capital investment. This also means that the level of capitalisation direction support is profiled to taper down to zero over the medium term.

Table 5: Capital receipts balances

Capital receipt balances	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	9,984	6,082	4,033	1,877	422
Capital receipts used for financing	(418)	(557)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,682)	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	0
Capital receipts Received	198	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	0	2,278	603	303	0
<b>Forecast Balance as at 31st March</b>	<b>6,082</b>	<b>4,033</b>	<b>1,877</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>372</b>

## 7 2025/26 revenue budget – early update

### 7.1 Budget Context

- 7.2 The Council faced a complex and challenging financial environment in preparing its 2025/26 budget, with volatility in the demand for services, continuing economic uncertainty, and operational challenges.
- 7.3 The budget process began with a significant funding gap of £11.4 million, driven by £15.5 million in cost pressures and only £4.1 million in projected income growth. This gap widened further as updated forecasts revealed £23.7 million in new cost pressures - equivalent to 11% of the Council's total budget. This marks the third consecutive year the Council has needed to manage pressures exceeding £20 million, a scale far beyond the £5 - 10 million challenges it has historically faced.
- 7.4 A major driver of these pressures is the rising demand for services, particularly in Children's and Adult Social Care, Homelessness, and Additional Learning Needs. These demands are being fuelled by ongoing socio-economic difficulties and changes in the health sector, where efforts to streamline NHS patient pathways are increasing the complexity and volume of social care needs. This shift places additional strain on Council services, which must adapt to meet these growing and evolving demands.
- 7.5 The broader economic environment is compounding these challenges. The cost of living crisis is increasing reliance on Council support services while simultaneously reducing income from fee-based services. Although headline inflation has eased, specific service areas continue to face high costs and supply chain disruptions. Higher interest rates are also adding to financial strain, and skills shortages in some key areas continue to impact the Council.
- 7.6 Despite these pressures, funding growth has been limited. The Welsh Government's initial settlement offered only a 2.6% increase - below the 4.5% Welsh average, though a later funding floor increased this to 3.8%, adding £1.54 million. To help close the gap, the Council proposed £6.2 million in service savings and efficiencies, alongside additional income measures. However, the scale and persistence of the financial challenges indicates that difficult decisions will continue to be required throughout 2025/26 to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable while continuing to support its communities.
- 7.7 **Early indications**
- 7.8 At this early stage in the financial year, services are reporting emerging cost pressures across several areas.
- 7.9 In Children's Additional Learning Needs, demand is currently tracking above the levels anticipated during budget setting. Within Children's Social Care, delays in the operational readiness of new facilities are contributing to financial strain. Adult Social Care is also experiencing ongoing pressures due to the full-year impact of additional placements that commenced late in the previous financial year and were not accounted for in the current budget.



- 7.10 The planned savings from corporate mileage reductions have been affected by procurement delays, which have postponed the rollout of the pool car initiative. Similarly, the temporary closure of Abergavenny Leisure Centre, as part of the King Henry VIII development, has led to a freeze in leisure memberships and swimming lessons, impacting income.
- 7.11 School transport is facing challenges in achieving savings due to changes in pupil numbers and safety concerns on certain routes, which have necessitated continued transport provision. In Homelessness services, anticipated savings from the transition to the Severn View site have been delayed, further contributing to the overall budgetary pressure.
- 7.12 These early indicators highlight the need for close monitoring and prompt mitigation to ensure financial stability throughout the year.
- 7.13 **Remaining budgetary risks for 2025/26**
- 7.14 Alongside the above early indications, there remain key specific budgetary risks that have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2025/26:
- **Pay award** – The 2025/26 budget assumes a 3.1% increase for NJC and Teachers' pay. Any final agreement exceeding this assumption will result in an additional ongoing financial pressure. As an indication, a variance in pay award of 0.5% represents around £500k in costs.
  - **National insurance** – The budget assumes that the increased national insurance costs for directly employed staff will be fully funded. However, there is still uncertainty regarding both the total amount of funding and how it will be allocated, as no official notification has been received. An additional risk is that the Council's key partners and suppliers may not be able to absorb their own rising national insurance costs, potentially passing on unavoidable additional expenses to the Council beyond what has been budgeted.
  - The **deliverability risk** of budget savings, especially where these involve the income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models or have implications for service design involving community or other partners. If the long-term average delivery rate of 85% is repeated, this would represent a further pressure of circa £1m.
  - The trend of **reducing debt recovery**, particularly within Council tax where there is a significant increase in the number of discounts and exemptions awarded which has a negative impact on overall income. There is also a slowing down in collection rates as households continue to struggle with the cost of living crisis.
  - **Schools reserves** – schools have budgeted for a further draw on reserves for 2025/26. If this materialises it will increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit being carried on the Council's balance sheet. This consequently impacts upon the Council's financial resilience and increases its risk exposure by reducing available balance sheet resources.

- 7.15 The delivery of a balanced budget position for 2025/26, alongside substantial budget recovery action within schools will be fundamental in maintaining financial stability. It is therefore essential that services maintain the same financial discipline that saw significant budget recovery in the latter stages of 2024/25.

## **8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

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

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

- 9.1 This report provides Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality of future generations' implications directly arising from this report.
- 9.2 Any such impacts will be fully considered subsequently when Council receives further budget proposals.

## **CONSULTEES:**

Senior Leadership Team  
Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee  
Cabinet members

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

**Appendix 1** – Revenue and capital outturn report including school budgets  
**Appendix 2** – Performance against budgeted savings  
**Appendix 3** – Capitalisation directive schedule  
**Appendix 4** – Movement in individual school balances

***Appendix 5*** – Capital budget revisions requiring Cabinet approval

**AUTHORS:**

Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance (Acting Section S151 officer)

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Tel:** (01633) 644114

**E-mail:** [jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

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## Appendix 1 – 2024/25 Budget outturn report

<a href="#">Section 1</a>	Revenue budget position at Outturn
<a href="#">Section 2</a>	Detailed service commentary on Outturn
<a href="#">Section 3</a>	School balances at Outturn
<a href="#">Section 4</a>	Capital budget position at Outturn

### Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2024/25 Revenue budget outturn summary statement

Service Area	Original Budget 2024/25	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Outturn	Actual (Under) / Over Spend @ Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Variance
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	68,410	(193)	68,217	71,562	3,345	4,211	(866)
Learning, Skills and Economy	65,152	(6)	65,146	65,120	(26)	272	(298)
Infrastructure & Place	26,188	(126)	26,062	26,402	340	671	(331)
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	8,304	(166)	8,138	7,461	(677)	(336)	(341)
People, Performance and Partnerships	3,288	140	3,427	3,347	(80)	(6)	(74)
Law & Governance	2,894	(70)	2,825	2,843	18	2	17
Resources	8,891	(148)	8,743	8,773	31	(430)	461
Corporate Costs & Levies	29,477	287	29,763	26,272	(3,491)	(1,607)	(1,883)
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>212,603</b>	<b>(282)</b>	<b>212,321</b>	<b>211,781</b>	<b>(540)</b>	<b>2,776</b>	<b>(3,315)</b>
Appropriations	7,301	590	7,891	8,148	258	(565)	823
<b>Expenditure to be Financed</b>	<b>219,904</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>220,211</b>	<b>219,929</b>	<b>(282)</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>(2,492)</b>
Financing	(219,904)	(307)	(220,211)	(220,426)	(215)	(617)	402

Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	(497)	(497)		1,593	(2,090)
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Table 2: 2024/25 Revenue budget outturn detailed statement

Service Area	Original Budget 2024/25	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Outturn	Actual (Under) / Over Spend @ Outturn		Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Variance
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's		'000's	'000's
Adult Services	42,816	(45)	42,771	44,129	1,358		2,040	(683)
Children Services	22,450	(133)	22,317	24,709	2,392		2,468	(76)
Public Protection	1,982	(32)	1,950	1,666	(284)		(279)	(5)
SCH Support	1,162	17	1,179	1,059	(120)		(18)	(102)
<b>Social Care, Health &amp; Safeguarding</b>	<b>68,410</b>	<b>(193)</b>	<b>68,217</b>	<b>71,562</b>	<b>3,345</b>		<b>4,211</b>	<b>(866)</b>
Economy, Employment & Skills	299	(4)	295	131	(164)		(159)	(5)
Emergency Planning	170	(1)	169	183	14		25	(11)
Individual Schools Budget	52,459	8	52,467	52,529	62		41	21
Resources	1,032	13	1,045	1,081	36		17	19
Standards	11,192	(21)	11,171	11,196	25		348	(323)
<b>Learning, Skills and Economy</b>	<b>65,152</b>	<b>(6)</b>	<b>65,146</b>	<b>65,120</b>	<b>(26)</b>		<b>272</b>	<b>(298)</b>
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	2,735	(116)	2,618	2,621	3		(104)	107
Facilities & Fleet Management	10,124	489	10,612	10,993	380		539	(159)
Neighbourhood Services	11,305	(102)	11,204	11,327	123		459	(336)
Placemaking, Highways & Flood	2,024	(396)	1,628	1,461	(166)		(223)	57
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Place</b>	<b>26,188</b>	<b>(126)</b>	<b>26,062</b>	<b>26,402</b>	<b>340</b>		<b>671</b>	<b>(331)</b>
Communications	434	(5)	429	332	(97)		(38)	(59)
Countryside & Culture	1,141	(6)	1,135	1,043	(92)		(65)	(27)
Finance & Business Development	4,336	29	4,365	4,314	(51)		44	(95)
Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure	2,393	(184)	2,209	1,772	(437)		(277)	(160)
<b>Customer, Culture and Wellbeing</b>	<b>8,304</b>	<b>(166)</b>	<b>8,138</b>	<b>7,461</b>	<b>(677)</b>		<b>(336)</b>	<b>(341)</b>

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,415	166	1,580	1,507	(74)	(28)	(46)
People	1,873	(26)	1,847	1,841	(6)	22	(28)
<b>People, Performance and Partnerships</b>	<b>3,288</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>3,427</b>	<b>3,347</b>	<b>(80)</b>	<b>(6)</b>	<b>(74)</b>
Democratic Services	1,847	(53)	1,795	1,814	19	(20)	39
Legal and Land Charges	1,047	(17)	1,030	1,030	(1)	21	(22)
<b>Law &amp; Governance</b>	<b>2,894</b>	<b>(70)</b>	<b>2,825</b>	<b>2,843</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	1,867	(218)	1,649	1,987	338	(39)	377
Corporate Health & Safety	92	63	155	151	(4)	(0)	(4)
Finance	3,936	4	3,940	3,626	(314)	(351)	37
Information Communication Technology	2,996	3	2,999	3,010	11	(40)	51
<b>Resources</b>	<b>8,891</b>	<b>(148)</b>	<b>8,743</b>	<b>8,773</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>(430)</b>	<b>461</b>
Precepts & Levies	26,532	0	26,532	26,528	(4)	3	(7)
Coroner's	278	0	278	290	12	0	12
Archives	213	0	213	219	6	6	(0)
Corporate Management	398	0	398	337	(61)	9	(70)
Non-Distributed Costs (NDC)	577	0	577	437	(140)	182	(322)
Strategic Initiatives	(350)	287	(64)	(3,068)	(3,004)	(1,766)	(1,238)
Insurance	1,828	0	1,828	1,530	(298)	(41)	(257)
<b>Corporate Costs &amp; Levies</b>	<b>29,477</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>29,763</b>	<b>26,272</b>	<b>(3,491)</b>	<b>(1,607)</b>	<b>(1,883)</b>
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>212,603</b>	<b>(282)</b>	<b>212,321</b>	<b>211,781</b>	<b>(540)</b>	<b>2,776</b>	<b>(3,315)</b>
Interest & Investment Income	(1,176)	0	(1,176)	(1,313)	(137)	34	(171)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	7,252	0	7,252	7,049	(203)	(339)	136
Charges Required under Regulation	6,230	0	6,230	6,779	549	168	381
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(7)	(7)	0	(7)
Attributable Costs - Fixed Asset Disposal	0	0	0	3	3	0	3

Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,883)	0	(3,883)	(4,725)	(842)		(464)	(378)
Capital Expenditure Financed from Revenue	0	68	68	68	(0)		0	(0)
Contributions to Reserves	833	533	1,366	2,509	1,143		217	927
Contributions from reserves	(1,955)	(11)	(1,966)	(2,214)	(248)		(181)	(67)
<b>Appropriations</b>	<b>7,301</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>7,891</b>	<b>8,148</b>	<b>258</b>		<b>(565)</b>	<b>823</b>
<b>Expenditure to be Financed</b>	<b>219,904</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>220,211</b>	<b>219,929</b>	<b>(282)</b>		<b>2,210</b>	<b>(2,492)</b>
General Government Grants	(91,149)	0	(91,149)	(91,149)	0		0	0
Non-Domestic Rates	(34,871)	0	(34,871)	(34,871)	0		0	0
Council tax	(102,294)	(307)	(102,601)	(102,265)	336		(92)	428
Council Tax Benefit Support	8,410	0	8,410	7,858	(552)		(525)	(27)
<b>Financing</b>	<b>(219,904)</b>	<b>(307)</b>	<b>(220,211)</b>	<b>(220,426)</b>	<b>(215)</b>		<b>(617)</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(497)</b>	<b>(497)</b>		<b>1,593</b>	<b>(2,090)</b>



## Section 2 - Directorate – Service Variance Comments

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>2,494</b>	<b>3,897</b>	<b>4,211</b>	<b>3,345</b>
<p>The directorate outturn position shows an improvement with a variance of £866K since update 3. This is comprised of last minute WG grant monies distributed via Health (£500K) including slippage arising from the Gwent Regional Integrated fund and the 'Further, Faster' grant provided to increase community capacity within adult care. There was a further saving against held vacancies in direct care (£200K) and revenue savings of £166K following a WG grant to support the first year's implementation of a new case management system for social care.</p> <p>Whilst it is pleasing to see an improved year end position, the directorate nevertheless showed a deficit of £3.345M, reflective of significant challenges within social care (Adult and Children's services).</p> <p><u>Adult Services</u></p> <p>Aligned with the aging demographic, the needs of adult residents within the county who require social care and support are becoming more complex. For example, the numbers of adults entering residential placements continues to trend upwards.</p> <p>The cost of care is increasing in line with changes in Real Living Wage and inflationary pressures. This year there was a £230K shortfall against the budgeted cost of in-year fee increases for provider services (including domiciliary care, residential care and support service contracts).</p> <p>The service continues to implement a strategic change programme including the development of a reablement pathway; new approaches to commissioning; enhanced advice and support at the 'front-door'; improvements to hospital discharge arrangements and ensuring consistency around eligibility and the application of a strengths-based approach within assessments, care planning and reviews. The programme is aimed at achieving increased sustainability in the face of on-going demand.</p> <p>The challenges within adult services with respect to meeting both existing and new demand undermined our ability to meet the entirety of our expected savings in respect of 'practice change' albeit the workforce mandate was achieved in full.</p> <p><u>Children's Services</u></p> <p>Regarding children's services, although the number of children who are looked after by the Local Authority has maintained a slight downturn over recent years, the children who enter the care system tend to have more complex needs. This, together with on-going shortages in placements, continues to drive up the cost of children's care. The £2.4M overspend within children's services relates predominantly to the cost of new children coming into care (including those on a temporary basis) or where new placements have had to be sought following placement breakdowns.</p>				

The service has a well progressed placement development strategy in place which is starting to support the ambition to achieve better outcomes for children using in-house placements representing better value for money. This is illustrated by the ability to generate savings of £1.2 M through effective care and progression planning for children (a deficit of just of £100K against the mandate).

The service remains committed to supporting children to remain living safely at home within their families and communities wherever possible. There is a suite of family support services in place to support this endeavour, although some of these services are currently dependant on WG grants creating some potential instability.

As in previous years, the directorate, benefited from a number of Welsh Government grants at approximately £3M including Workforce grant, Regional Integration Fund and the Radical/Eliminate grants, which were used to bolster core service provision. This represents an additional risk and potential pressure for the service in that there is little certainty over the extent to which these grant streams will be maintained in the medium term. The directorate has additionally benefited from some savings in public protection, largely as a result of savings against posts.

## ADULT SERVICES

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	1,534	2,505	2,040	1,358

Over the year the demand for adult services has remained high with referrals emanating from both the community and from hospitals. The needs and complexity of many residents are increasing requiring more intensive assessments and services.

The overspend for the Integrated Services has been due to the increased demand for care. For non- residential care provision, activity data shows an increase in the care provided towards the end of Qtr 2 and into Qtr 3 with a further increase in Qtr 4. At year end there 570 people supported and provided with 1,230 weekly care hours.

Another particular pressure is external care home placements. Care at home placements are not made without management oversight and where all other options for care provision have been explored. Nevertheless, care home placements have increased during the year by 10%, increasing from 310 at the start of the year to a close of 341. This includes both older adults, dementia care and younger people with complex learning disability or mental health support needs. This creates pressure within the budget, as the number of placements are hard to predict at budget setting (including existing and new placements).

A further pressure of £375K has arisen as contrary to previous indications, WG have confirmed that any potential increase to the non-residential weekly care charging cap will not go ahead. A small amount of grant totalling £70K has been awarded to offset this.

The service has put in additional controls around how new care services are provided, which is helping to ensure that care is provided with parity across the area and allocated according to the most pressing needs. As and when opportunities arise, care at home is being re-brokered to ensure that costs are minimised as far as possible without compromising people's care and support needs. The new commissioning arrangements for domiciliary care in the South will offer better opportunities to accurately forecast spend as hours are purchased in blocks and premium rates eliminated from the pricing structure.

The ongoing programme of reviewing existing care remains challenging because of the pressure of managing new referrals and assessments; however additional resource has now been turned to reviewing care arrangements using some external funding. As health are re-trenching around their own cost pressures, we have been unable to make progress in successfully pursuing Continuing Health Care costs; however individual cases remain under regular review.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £’000s	1,134	1,536	2,468	2,392

The first quarter of this year saw an increase in the population of Children Looked After (CLA) which rose from 199 at the start of the year to 208 at the end of July including an increase in the number of residential placements from 21 to 23. This created creating a pressure of £1M.

As at end of Update 2 the number of children looked after was 205 a reduction of 3. During this period 30 children became looked after and 24 children ceased to be looked after. The new entrants included a family of 5 siblings, a family of 3 siblings and 5 families of 2 siblings. The needs of the children and the lack of suitable alternative in house placement options resulted in 2 new entrant children being placed in residential care and 5 in For Profit Foster care. In addition, 8 children entered “Parent and Child” assessment placements which included a parent with 4 siblings and 3 individual children with their respective parents. Whilst such placements are time limited (approx. 12 weeks) they are high cost with each placement mandated by Family Court during proceedings. A further net pressure of £403K had arisen due to the needs of these children.

At the end of Update 3 although the numbers of children being looked after had remained stable, the degree of change and movement underneath the headline figure continued to have an impact. This included one high cost residential placement, a further 6 parent and child placements and extensions to 2 others. This created a further in-year pressure of £932K.

Some anticipated movements in placements were delayed in accordance with the needs of the children thereby reducing the amount of savings that could be achieved. In addition, this year has seen a higher than usual number of children's placements breaking down, such that there is then no option but to place in a higher-cost placement.

Lack of placements for children remain a significant challenge within the service with ongoing instability and uncertainty within external providers of both residential and IFA placements, resulting in increased costs for external placements, more competition for placements and less movement. The recruitment of in-house foster carers also remains a challenge. The service is continuing to develop its own provision including the opening of a step-down provision for young people aged 16+ expected which became operational in November 2024 and a children’s residential home expected to be operational in July 25.

The service continues to review all CLA children's placements with a focus on high-cost placements. The service is able to utilise the suite of grant funded family support services that are in place to manage risk in the community and directly address parenting issues to ensure that all opportunities for

children to remain in family care or return to family care are maximised. This is despite the acknowledged complexity of children's needs and presentations which means there is not always a direct route out of care or high-cost placements.

In this way, the Children Services projected saving target has been almost achieved. The final quarter of the year has seen on-going work to stabilise placements and the planned reductions in CLA brining numbers down to 190 children, 12 of whom were UASC via the National Transfer Scheme. There was an increase in the numbers of children completing legal proceedings not on an order to the Local Authority and residing with family members which created a financial cost saving which mitigated the crisis demand previously seen within the year.

Alongside the pressure arising from children's placements, there is a further pressure of approximately £200K within the Family Time team out of hours service. The establishment of the out of hours service in 2023 was in response to the significant costs of using private nursing agencies to manage risk in the community (keeping children at home or under supervision in a hospital whilst safeguarding investigations are ongoing). This is a cost avoidance (overspend management) strategy which has seen a reduction of up to 60% in the use of external agencies despite the service supporting 2 children to step down from residential care placements.

## PUBLIC PROTECTION

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(175)	(147)	(279)	(284)

The underspend is mainly as a result of staff vacancies, including the head of service role. 2 posts having external funding and income above budget.

## SCH SUPPORT

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	1	2	(18)	(120)

This budget area delivered an under spend at outturn due to a staff vacancy and end of year funding for work undertaken on the care management replacement system.

## LEARNING, SKILLS and ECONOMY DIRECTORATE

Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
468	523	296	(26)

## CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

The Directorate's outturn is an underspend of -£26,286.

This is due to several Welsh Government grants being received since update 3, as well as a number of ALN pupils leaving Independent Schools and the costs for ALN pupils receiving EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) Bespoke packages, not being as much as previously forecast

Further additional costs across the Directorate have been offset with holding vacancies and through income generation.

## Economy, Employment & Skills

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	0	(149)	(159)	(164)

An ability to passport core costs to grant funding, and a reduction in supplies and services.

## Emergency Planning

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	16	16	14	14

The overspend is due to employee related savings not being met.

## Individual Schools Budget

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(4)	0	41	62

The additional overspend since Update 3 is due to expenditure relating to the Mounton House site (£14k), along with several other unforeseen costs, such as Box-It Charges, a BT PSBA line upgrade for OLSM School etc

## Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	17	43	51	36

The reduction in the overspend since Update 3 is due to a further reduction in income against the Photovoltaic Grids, which has been offset by the Teacher Pension Costs not being as much as expected and receipt of grant funding.

## Standards

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	440	614	348	25

The large reduction in the overspend since Update 3 is due to a number of ALN pupils leaving Independent Schools, the costs for ALN pupils receiving EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) Bespoke packages, not being as much as previously forecast, and receipt of additional grant funding, which could be used to offset existing costs.

INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	963	955	671	340

### INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

The directorate reported an overspend of £340k, representing an improvement of £331k since Update 3. A detailed breakdown by service area is provided below. The financial performance for 2024/25 was primarily impacted by overspends in demand-led services—namely School & Passenger Transport, Homelessness, and Waste Services—as well as reduced income in areas affected by economic uncertainty, such as Planning & Building Control.

The directorate achieved £470k (50.7%) of its £927k savings target. The shortfall is largely attributable to two factors: the inability to realise the £400k savings anticipated from relocating tenants to Severn View, due to delays in the site becoming operational, and a shortfall in planning fee income.

### Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(107)	54	(104)	3

Enterprise & Community Animation has over spent by £3k, this is mainly due to: -

- **Enterprise Mgt** - £339k underspent – due to employee savings through the removal of vacant senior management posts as part of the in-year SLT restructure, a late year grant windfall relating to the project administration of the Marches forward programme, further staff savings within our Strategic Operations team by not backfilling a senior officer post during maternity leave and leaving a vacant IT officer post unfilled (£38k). In addition, a £62k saving was achieved on our City Deal contribution as this has been moved to capital in line with the authority's in-year budget recovery plan.
- **Housing** - £342k over spent, broken down into these main areas: -
  - **Homelessness** - £398k net overspend – there are a number of factors that have contributed to the overspend this year. As previously reported, the planned £400k saving from relocating tenants to Severn View could not be realised this year due to delays in planning permission and subsequent refurbishment of the site. Additional cost pressures have arisen from increased rental, repairs, maintenance, and ancillary expenses, linked to the expansion of our leasing portfolio as we transition away from B&B placements. These pressures

have been partially offset by a £163k reduction in the Housing Benefit Subsidy penalty, reflecting the financial benefits of reducing B&B use (currently 20 placements, down from 44 in May 2024). Further mitigation came from a £232k Welsh Government discretionary homelessness grant and £63k in staffing savings (due to vacancies and grant recharges). This is a £201k increase in overspend compared to Update 3. This rise is attributed to unforeseen maintenance costs, lower-than-expected Housing Benefit income, and year-end bad debt write-offs.

- **Assistive Technology (Formerly Careline)** – £56k under spent – mainly due to the receipt of grant funding which allowed us to offset staff costs, a positive increase in the client base and the reduction in equipment expenditure, as stock replenishment funded through grants in 2023/24 reduced the need for additional purchases during the current year.

## Facilities & Fleet Management

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	867	773	539	380

Facilities, Fleet & De-carbonisation has over spent by £380k, this is due to:-

- **Decarbonisation** - £111k net underspend – this can be attributed to the following factors:-
  - Corporate Mileage Saving - £100k over spent – no change from Update 3 – with the required changes to the corporate travel and disbursement policy not being implemented in 24-25 we weren't able to roll-out the Pool car scheme and other saving initiatives resulting in all the £100k budget saving not being achieved.
  - Corporate Energy Saving - £111k under spent – final consumption figures for the authority came in below budget generating an underspend on our utilities cost.
  - Solar Farm - £69k over spent – income improved in the latter half of the year but poor weather and grid outages earlier in the year impacted on the budget, the solar farm made a surplus of £304k in 24/25 but this is £69k less than the budgeted surplus of £373k.
  - De-Carbonisation Team - £212k under spent – because of staff savings due to 3 posts that have remained vacant all year (2 posts have since been filled with only 1 energy officer position left to appoint) and an increase in carbon reduction grant funding.
  - Sustainability - £28k under spent – due to energy savings generated from our renewable energy infrastructure that is installed throughout our buildings.
- **Passenger Transport** – £555k net over spend – this is due to increased service demand as pupil numbers have increased resulting in additional contract costs. Since update 3 there has also been further increases in external contract costs due to one operator handing all contracts back due to ill health which were retendered and resulted in an increase in prices. This has been offset in part by being able to move further staff costs to capital grants and by the receipt of administration funding for the regional Bus Network Grant in 24/25 plus a one-off windfall payment relating to a balance owing from 23/24. In addition, we have also benefitted from the receipt of income from the sale of 2 coaches during the year.



- **Fleet Maintenance** - £11k over spent – The budget has been impacted in-year by the rising cost of parts, supply chain delays, the growth in hire vehicles and increased borrowing spend as we transition our fleet to EV, but we were able to move qualifying ICT, EV and maintenance costs to capital (as per budget recovery plan) and this helped reduce the net overspend to £11k.

## Neighbourhood Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	263	237	459	123

Neighbourhood Services has over spent by £123k, due to:-

- **Streetlighting** – £21k under spent – due to a reduction in maintenance as we were able to passport qualifying costs to capital as part of in-year budget recovery.
- **Highways Operations** – On Budget.
- **Highways External** - £136k under spent – income received from external works has exceeded original budget. The partnership works we do for SWTRA (South Wales Trunk Road Agency) came in on budget as per the cost recovery arrangement.
- **Highways Design & Road Safety** - £120k under spent – mainly as a result of 4 staff vacancies, a decision was made part way through the year to not fill these posts to aid with in-year budget recovery. It is the intention that these posts will be filled in 25/26.
- **Waste & Grounds Maintenance** - £399k overspent – a £279k improvement from Update 3 – volatility in the market in 24/25 reduced the value of our re-cyclate and a delay in entering into a new recycling contract impacted savings further although this was resolved in February enabling some savings in the latter part of the year. Income was affected by the introduction of Workplace recycling regulations, the changes we have made to charging structures to accommodate this has resulted in a large reduction in trade waste collection income plus additional recycling collection costs. These coupled with the volatility of end market values has resulted in a pressure on the bottom line. In addition, the 24/25 budget was built on the premise that our poly-prop service would be fully operational from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, delays in vehicle delivery meant that the service did not start in full until November resulting in our early year disposal costs being higher than originally anticipated. The service was able to passport £213k of qualifying spend to the capital programme and this coupled with the new recycling contract agreement helped reduce the overspend to £420k and is the reason for the improvement since update 3. Grounds maintenance returned a £22k under spend for the year mainly driven by increased income.

## Placemaking, Highways & Flood

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(58)	(110)	(223)	(166)

Placemaking, Highways & Flooding has under spent by £166k, due to:-



- **Building Control** – £76k over spent – this is due to 2 main reasons 1) the uncertainty around the economy has resulted in a drop off in applications reducing rechargeable fee income 2) the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 has increased the amount of statutory non-chargeable works having to be undertaken adversely affecting staff and income budgets.
- **Planning & Development Control** - £80k over spent – no change from update 3 – over spend due to a reduction in planning fee income (inc Fast Track) compared to budget expectations mainly driven by the uncertainty around the economy impacting on application numbers.
- **Car Parks & Civil Parking Enforcement** - £16k over spent – a £75k adverse swing from Update 3 – parking & PCN income dropped off towards the end of the year and fell short of our Update 3 forecast by £56k, pay & display activity was showing an upward trend through to Christmas and we were anticipating that this would continue through to year end, unfortunately activity fell and is the main reason for the variance in outturn. In addition, there were late year costs relating to drainage surveys (£4k) and additional employee back pay as a member of staff had to leave due to long term sickness (£15k), both of which were not known in December.
- **Highways Development & flooding** - £126k under spent – a £43k adverse swing from Update 3 - mainly due to improved income because of additional Highways development fees and capital programme fees that have exceeded budget. These have been part offset by increased costs within flooding where late year spending mainly on Tintern flood watch and sandbagging have pushed the service into a £20k overspend and is the reason for the adverse swing at outturn.
- **Schools Catering** - £156k under spent – mainly due to in-year staff savings (£100k) resulting from delays in replacing staff who left during the year and a net increase in UFSM income (£56k) due to 24/25 grant income exceeding budget, the level of grant cannot be confirmed until end of year and is the reason for the increase in underspend at outturn.
- **Monmouthshire Regeneration Team** - £56k under spent – the regeneration projects team has underspent by £56k, this is due to the ability to claim staff time back through the regeneration grants that the team oversee. The level of recharge could not be finalised until year end and is the reason for the improvement in position at outturn.

Customer, Culture and Wellbeing Directorate	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(46)	(165)	(336)	(677)

At outturn the directorate has underspent by £677k, representing a significant improvement of £341k compared to financial update 3. During the financial year we have seen delays in the implementation of the area management restructure, alongside deferred staff savings within the museums service and reduced income at our attractions, all of these have been offset by increased revenues from our leisure services, markets and countryside departments leading to an overall positive outturn position for the directorate.

This improvement has mainly been due to increased one off grants. £90k (additional SPF funding), £25k ATF Communications and Engagement Funding, £30k capitalisation as per update 3 recovery plan. Along with improvement in leisure centre income of £196k. This improvement in income is attributable to our marketing campaigns and the diligent efforts of our sections to enhance customer experiences. Consequently, these efforts have resulted in the addition of new members and improved membership retention. Notably, a 35% increase in Monthly Direct Debit memberships post pandemic, increase in

membership retention averaging at 21 months retention period an improvement from 19 months in 24-25 and this year's January annual campaign has generated an annual income of £135,882.

This year, we have made significant strides in enhancing accessibility to our sites, ensuring they are welcoming and accessible to all. A key achievement has been the notable increase in our passport to leisure memberships, which has risen from 106 members to 223 members. We remain committed to engaging with our customers and will continue to foster growth in this area.

Additionally, we have observed positive trends in several key matrix, including an increase in the number of members successfully completing the exercise referral scheme, higher participation rates in national exercise referral sessions, a growing number of members utilising a My Wellness Account, increase in the number of green infrastructure projects delivered across the county and the number of active travel routes delivered/being developed, these improvements highlight the support our services provide in our communities health and well-being.

## Countryside & Culture

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(6)	(39)	(66)	(92)

### Countryside & Culture section

The section has underspent by £92k an improvement of £26k from update 3 this is due to additional grant income, thereby reducing our reliance on core funding.

## Communications

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(44)	(38)	(97)

### Central Communications

The section achieved a significant underspend of £97k. This financial efficiency has been realised through strategic allocation of staffing costs to individual grants within the community and partnership division, £50k of Active Travel funding to support promotional works and the secondment of one member of the team to WG, thereby reducing our reliance on core funding.

## Finance & Business Development

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	62	174	44	(51)

## Finance, Business and Development

The section has underspent by £51k, this is a substantial improvement on Month 3 update of £95k, this is due to additional capitalisation directive funding of £30k and improved income positions in both our markets and Bourgh Theatre.

**Attraction** sites have overspent by £62k due to lower than expected visitor numbers, which were affected by adverse weather during the summer. Efforts have been made to offset the reduction in income through one-off events and grant opportunities.

The **Borough Theatre** has overspent by £16k due to lower than anticipated income. This is an improvement on update 3 of £14k. The section is still recovering post-pandemic and from site closures, but we continue to see improvement month on month. Additionally, there has been a reduction of 50 seats, limiting opportunities for larger performances. However, there has been an improvement in the third quarter of 24-25, which is hoped to continue into the next financial year, reducing reliance on core funding.

**Learning** has overspent by £17k due to reduced income.

**Museums** have overspent by £44k due to delayed staff savings and higher than anticipated expenditure. The section will seek to use any available grant opportunities or reserve balance to mitigate this where possible.

**Community Hubs** have overspent by £62k, due to higher than anticipated staffing costs, one off photo copier replacements to allow for public printing to return and lower than anticipated income.

**Management** has overspent by £25k due to delayed implementation of the area management structure. This process is underway, and the changed structure is likely to be implemented in the final quarter of 24-25.

These overspends have been offset by underspends in other areas: **markets (£154k)**, **business support (£32k)**, **Community Education (£25k)** and the **contact centre (£54k)** due to increased income, reduced overheads, and staff vacancies.

## Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(102)	(257)	(276)	(437)

**Leisure, Youth and Outdoor Adventure** has underspend by £437k, an improvement from update 3 of £161k this is due to increase income at our four leisure facilities, we have seen continued growth in our monthly Direct Debit memberships, improved membership retention due to improving our

customers journey and investing in digital and site improvements. Along with additional grants which have been used where applicable to offset core staffing costs whilst still delivering the outcome of the grant.

Pre covid monthly memberships were £160k per month we are currently running at a month DD collection of £215k this is an improvement of £55k per month a 35% increase in membership post pandemic.

**The Outdoor Adventure Centre** has improved its residential income position on 23-24, moving from an overspend position in 23-24 to a slight underspend in 24-25 of £5k.

People, Performance and Partnerships Department	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / <b>(Surplus)</b> £'000s	68	94	<b>(6)</b>	<b>(80)</b>

#### CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

People, Performance & Partnership has under spent by £80k. The overall picture has masked financial pressures in some areas such as occupational health services and Welsh language translations. Overall, the budget has been balanced by leaving some posts vacant with the work being covered by other members of the team. This has led to increased pressure and is not sustainable longer term. Plans to partner with a neighbouring authority to reduce translation costs are being taken forward during 2025-26.

#### Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Experience

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / <b>(Surplus)</b> £'000s	0	19	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(74)</b>

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Relations has underspent by £74k, this is due to:-

- **Corporate** - £28k under spent – staff management costs have been partially covered by Ukraine grant funding as capacity is diverted to manage this project.
- **Customer Relations** - £24k over spent – due to the cost of undertaking independent complaint investigations exceeding our available budget.
- **Scrutiny** - £4k over spent – due to the inability to make staff vacancy factor savings and a small overspend in supplies and services.
- **Policy & Partnerships** – £74k underspent – an improvement of £39k since update 3 – mainly due to underspends in GIS (£35k) and Community Safety (£25k) due to part year staff vacancies and a £50k saving in Performance & Data as we passported core staff costs to capital alongside an in-year vacancy saving due to a career break. These have been offset by an overspend in our corporate subscription costs of £21k and an £18k

overspend in Equalities and Welsh Language where translation demand outstripped available budget, the final overspend on translation was not as high as we originally forecast and is the main reason for the £39k improvement from update 3.

People				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	68	75	22	(6)

People Services has under spent by £6k, the main reasons are as follows:

- **Payroll & People Management** - £13k net underspend – mainly due to savings through the reduction in temporary support hours and the covering of maternity leave in-house rather than backfilling the post which has helped reduce staff spend.
- **Occupational Health** - £20k overspent – the cost of occupational health appointments exceeded the available budget due to increased volume, although overall activity was not as high as predicted in December meaning the final overspend was £11k less than reported in Update 3.
- **Corporate Training** – £44k underspent – due to income exceeding budget expectations and staff savings due to a delay in a post being filled in-year.
- **Organisational Development** - £4k over spent – Inability to meet staff vacancy savings.

LAW & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE (PG)				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	51	48	2	18

## CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY:

Law & Governance has reported an £18k overspend for the 2024/25 financial year. While officers have worked diligently throughout the year to manage budget pressures within the directorate, there has been an adverse variance of £20k compared to the position reported at Update 3. This variance was outside of our control, due to a late-year VAT adjustment in Elections that was not known at the time of the previous update.

Democratic Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(22)	(19)	(19)	19

Democratic Services has over spent by £19k, this is due to:-

- **Members** - £4k over spent – a small over spend spread across employees (£1k) and supplies and services (£3k). This is a £25k adverse swing from Update 3 and is due to projected staff savings from vacancies and reduced co-opted member costs not materialising as expected at outturn.

- **Committee & Elections** – £15k overspent – an increase of £13k since update 3 – this is due to a minor overspend in supplies and printing costs (£2k) coupled with a late year Vat adjustment, resulting from changes in how election grant costs are recovered from central and Welsh government.

## Legal and Land Charges

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	73	67	21	(1)

Legal and Land charges have underspent by £1k, due to:-

- **Legal Services** - £9k over spent – overspend is due to a shortfall in rechargeable income and court fees, this was offset by a part year staff saving and an underspend in supplies and services. Final income figures exceeded previous projections and is the reason for the £17k improvement from Update 3.
- **Land Charges** – £10k under spent – mainly as a result of improved income, savings from a vacant post and reallocation of IT server costs to capital.

## RESOURCES DIRECTORATE

	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	18	(201)	(430)	31

## DIRECTORS COMMENTARY:

The Directorate has generally seen strong financial and budgetary control throughout the year. This has benefited the wider corporate need to support budget recovery efforts. Update 4 and Outturn has however seen an adverse overall swing, with a £430k forecast under spend at month 3 moving into a £31k over spend at outturn.

This swing was caused principally by a need to make prudent provision against potential future costs in respect of its Council's commercial investment portfolio, specifically with Castlegate Business Park. Furthermore, a conscious decision has been taken in light of the Council's overall positive outturn position to fund the 24/25 SOC/SIEM cyber security cost from within the service budget rather than the IT reserve.

More generally the directorate has been able to generate and hold vacancy savings across the directorate in line with wider budget recovery efforts. Further savings have been achieved from hold backing on non-essential spend and only project work being progressed. Income generation more generally has been variable with unique one-off circumstances impacting on overall performance, coupled with out performance in some areas (e.g.

cemeteries). I am comforted at least that forecasts for 2025/26 provide a stronger outlook as tenancies take their full effect with rent free periods falling away and rent reviews and uplifts having a full year effect.

## Finance

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(199)	(197)	(351)	(314)

Finance has under spent by £314k, this is mainly due to -

- **Revenues, Systems & Exchequer** - £107k net underspend:-
  - **Benefits** - £43k under spent - Housing Benefit Subsidy spend was £11k under budget (a £25k swing since update 3). This reflects the benefit applications made during the year, housing benefit subsidy received and outstanding debt at year end. In addition, there was a £32k in year saving which was a combination of additional one off grant income and managed service savings.
  - **Council Tax** - £14k over spent – there are a number of factors that make up this position. There is a £16k residual budget pressure from the Finance restructure against this cost centre. Also, the bad debt provision for court costs had to be topped up by £25k, non-pay costs incurred by the Shared Service were £8k over spent reflecting increases in printing and posting costs. However, these additional costs were partially offset by one off administration grant income of £17k from the Welsh Government and £20k additional summons fee income. The £8k improvement since update 3 is largely associated with additional summons fee income.
  - **Debtors** - £9k under spent - The underspend is due to vacancies within the team that were filled during the year.
  - **Financial Systems Support & Vat** - £53k under spent - A combination of items contribute to this underspend. The salary budget underspent by £23k due to vacancies. There was a £6k managed saving against the system maintenance and development budget as only essential work was undertaken, and recharge income was £24k more than budgeted. This income reflects the work the Team undertakes for schools and administering payments for Homes for Ukraine. The underspend has increased by £7k since update 3, as the team waited for approval to appoint to a vacancy within the Creditors Team.
  - **Revenues System Administration** - £21k over spent - The overspend reflects increased annual contract costs of £24k for the Revenues and Benefits System plus £1k of unmet budgeted employee efficiency savings, offset by £4k managed savings against the system development budget.
  - **Cashiers** - £30k under spent - A vacancy was not filled this year, generating a saving of £21k. All non-essential developments of the income system also remained on hold and generated further savings of £9k. Both these managed savings were included in the council's in year budget management plan.
- **Finance** - £193k under spent – due to full and part year staff vacancy savings.
- **Audit** – £14k under spent – staff savings due to part year vacancies.

## Corporate Health & Safety



Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	(4)

Corporate Health & Safety has returned a £4k under spend due to a saving in supplies & services spend.

### Information, Communication & Technology

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(15)	(15)	(41)	11

The ICT division has over spent by £11k, this is due to:

- **Digital Programme Office** – £44k overspent - previously reporting an underspend due to managed savings in supplies & services but a late decision to fund the 24/25 SOC/SIEM cyber security cost from within the service rather than the IT reserve has pushed the budget into an overspend and is the reason for the adverse swing at outturn.
- **Digital Design & Innovation** - £26k under spent – because of managed staff vacancies.

### Commercial & Corporate Landlord

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	232	11	(38)	338

Commercial & Corporate Landlord has over spent by £338k, due to:

- **Investment Properties** - £541k over spent, due to:–
  - **Newport Leisure Park** - £126k overspent – Newport Leisure Park generated a surplus of £220k in 2024/25 after expenses and loan repayments; however, this was £126k below the budgeted target of £346k. The variance was primarily due to changes in existing tenancy agreements, which led to reduced annual rental income. Additionally, the surrender of previous tenants resulted in increased electricity standing charges. The financial position of Newport Leisure Park is projected to improve in 25-26, due to the elimination of rent-free periods, the reduction of one off cost associated with new tenancy agreements, and a decrease in rates associated with vacant units.
  - **Castlegate Business Park** - £415k overspent – This overspend is primarily driven by two factors, £48,000 incurred as a result of heightened site maintenance costs and service charges associated with vacant units, and £367,000 due to year-end bad debt provisions. The bad debt provisions were prudently assessed to mitigate future risks. The need for these adjustments were highlighted in update 3 and have since been included, representing the main contributors to the increased overspend. If the impacts were to crystallise this is anticipated to take place during 2025/26 and 2026/27. To the extent that the impacts don't fully crystallise this benefit will be released in those future financial years.



- **Landlord Services** – £208k net under spent – mainly due to a £249k underspend in employee costs resulting from full and part year staff vacancies, offset by a shortfall in the 24/25 Property Rationalisation saving, the work to rationalise or repurpose our buildings continues and even though the full saving was not achieved in 24/25 a late improvement in rental income helped mitigate the deficit to only £45k of the original £215k saving target.
- **County Farms & Industrial units** - £138k over spent – Budgeted rental income was not fully realised due to the timing of rent review uplifts and new tenancies, many of which commenced mid-year. As a result, only a partial receipt of the anticipated additional income in 24/25 was achieved. In addition to this, we have seen an increase in expenditure due to an overspend on water rates and the additional in-year running costs of unoccupied units, these void costs were not budgeted and contributed further to the overspend.
- **Cemeteries** – £17k under spent – due to burial income exceeding budget estimates.
- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences** - £114k underspend, primarily due to a combination of full-year and part-year staff vacancies, as well as savings on maintenance and business rates for public conveniences. Additionally, income from external Service Level Agreements increased following a late-year rate uplift. These factors, along with further staff savings from delays in filling vacant posts, contributed to an £83k improvement compared to Update 3.
- **Property Services** – £3k net under spent – employee underspends due to part year staff vacancies have been partially offset by overspends on maintenance and rates within office accommodation.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	6	31	(1,607)	(3,491)
Precepts & Levies				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	3	3	(4)
Minor variances.				
Coroners Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4

<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
The Coroner Service has overspent due to the urgent restructuring of the service as required by the Chief Coroner of England and Wales.				
<b>Archives (Gwent Joint Records)</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
Final fees marginally above budgeted precept.				
<b>Corporate Management</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>(61)</b>
Primarily rate refunds on MCC owned properties following appeal.				
<b>Non-Distributed Costs</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>209</b>
Pension strain (enhancement) costs were above budgeted levels following decisions made by services to permit retirement earlier than the normal pension age.				
<b>Strategic Initiatives</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,766)</b>	<b>(3,354)</b>
WG award of Funding in relation to support for additional NJC pay pressures that have been incurred in services.				
<b>Insurance</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(41)</b>	<b>(298)</b>

A reduction in the provision for unsettled insurance claims made against the authority has led to an underspend at the financial year-end. This reduction in potentially payable claims could not be predicted with certainty at Update 3.

<b>TREASURY &amp; RESERVES</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(283)</b>	<b>(480)</b>	<b>(565)</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>Interest &amp; Investment Income</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>(137)</b>

Cash balances were higher than anticipated in the final quarter allowing larger investments in Money Market Funds and Government deposits. This increased investment and slower than anticipated cuts to interest rates improved returns.

#### **Interest Payable & Similar Charges**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(175)</b>	<b>(339)</b>	<b>(203)</b>

Additional long term borrowing was secured during the final quarter to provide greater cost certainty over future year. This led to a short-term cost of carry which added costs in 2024/25.

#### **Charges Required Under Regulation**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(41)</b>	<b>(41)</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>549</b>

Additional vehicles have been disposed of in Q4 with any outstanding MRP charges provided for in year. The movement will be matched with an equal and opposite movement in Borrowing Cost Recoupment.

#### **Other Investment Income**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(7)</b>

Minor unbudgeted income.				
<b>Borrowing Cost Recoupment</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(248)</b>	<b>(248)</b>	<b>(464)</b>	<b>(842)</b>
Additional borrowing recoupment income was charged for any vehicles disposed of in the final quarter of the year. This improvement is matched by an opposite movement in Charges Required Under Regulation.				
<b>Attributable Costs - Fixed Asset Disposal</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Minor variance.				
<b>Transfer to/from Earmarked reserves</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>895</b>
This reflects year-end decisions to make additional contributions to/from earmarked reserves that were not budgeted.				
<b>FINANCING</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(350)</b>	<b>(350)</b>	<b>(617)</b>	<b>(215)</b>
<b>Council Tax Benefit Support</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s</b>	<b>(350)</b>	<b>(350)</b>	<b>(525)</b>	<b>(552)</b>
Caseload has shown a gradual reduction throughout the year as less claimants have come forward. The number of claimants was below what was envisaged when the budget was set.				
<b>Council Tax</b>				

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	(92)	337
<p>Council tax income is £337k less than budgeted. The council tax base remains healthy and was ahead of the tax base set for the year. However, council tax discounts and exemptions continue to rise which has had a negative impact on the overall outturn position.</p> <p><b>Council Tax Premium:</b> Taking account of payments made and unpaid premiums turning bad in the future, an additional £307k has been collected this financial year. This has been transferred to the Council tax premium reserve to support future housing pressures.</p>				
General Government Grants				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
Income received to budget.				

### 3. School Balances

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

School Reserves in £000's	(A) 2024/25 Opening Reserves (Surplus) / Deficit	(B) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 1	(C) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 2	(D) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 3	(E) Draw/ (Contribution) @ Outturn	(A+E) 2024/25 Year-end Deficit
Cluster						
Abergavenny	143	1,133	1,278	1,592	1,207	1,351
Caldicot	(87)	1,152	776	775	49	(37)
Chepstow	658	800	949	804	330	989
Monmouth	(552)	1,066	1,165	1,180	696	144
Pupil Referral Service	741	778	719	889	906	1,645
<b>Total</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>4,887</b>	<b>5,240</b>	<b>3,187</b>	<b>4,092</b>

3.2. Collective School balances at the beginning of the Financial Year amounted to a deficit of £903,636. The anticipated further draw on reserves at Update 1 was £4,928,604, against a budgeted draw on reserves of £5,015,104, which resulted in a forecast deficit balance of £5,832,251 by year end. At Update 2, the draw on reserves had reduced slightly, however at Update 3, the draw on reserves has increased to £5,240,192, resulting in a forecast deficit balance of £6,143,839 by year end. The outturn draw on reserves is £3,188,083 leaving an overall deficit reserve for schools of £4,091,731

3.3. The movement of individual schools forecast to be in deficit at the end of the year is shown below:

Start of year	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Total: 13	Total: 19	Total: 20	Total: 24	Total: 15
Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow School
Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service
The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	The Dell
Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)
Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni
Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School
Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin
Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston
Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow
Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern
Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet
Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	King Henry VIII 3-19 School	King Henry VIII 3-19 School	King Henry VIII 3-19 School	King Henry VIII 3-19 School
	Goytre Fawr	Goytre Fawr	Goytre Fawr	
	Llantilio Pertholey	Llantilio Pertholey	Llantilio Pertholey	
	Dewstow		Dewstow	

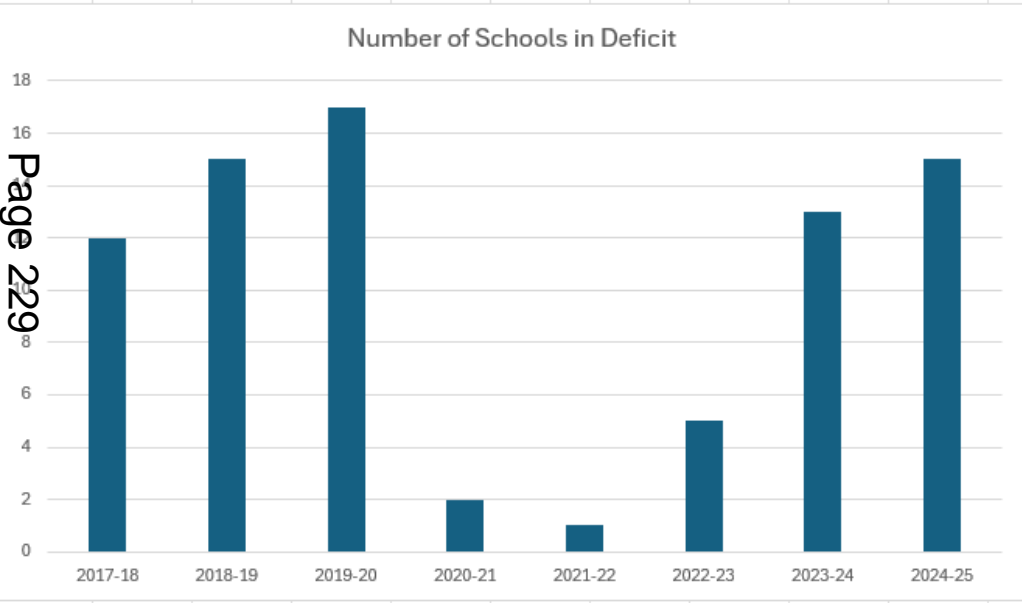
	Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive	
	Llandogo	Llandogo	Llandogo	
	Usk	Usk	Usk	
		Castle Park	Castle Park	
		Cross Ash	Cross Ash	
			Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy
			Undy	
			Kymin View	Kymin View

- 3.4. The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards have also impacted upon budgets.
- 3.5. All schools that are budgeting to register a deficit balance at the end of the 2024/25 financial year are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. These recovery plans will be confirmed with both the Local Education Authority, each School's Governing Body and, in some cases, the plans will need to be agreed by the relevant Cabinet Member. All recovery plans are currently being reviewed, and where required, further support being given.

Financial Year-end	Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's
2015-16	(1,156)
2016-17	(269)
2017-18	(175)



2018-19	232
2019-20	435
2020-21	(3,418)
2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23	(4,257)
2023-24	904
2024-25	4,092



4. Capital budget Outturn

4.1. The summary Capital outturn position is as follows:

	Slippage B/F	Original Budget	Budget Adjustments	Slippage to 2025/26	Revised Budget 2024/25	Actual Outturn	Variance to budget at Outturn
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
<b>Expenditure</b>							
Capitalisation Directive	387	3,358	0	(63)	3,682	3,682	0
Development Schemes Over £250k	8,222	100	5,717	(9,083)	4,956	4,699	(257)
Development Schemes Under £250k	2,013	590	926	(3,304)	225	1,503	1,278
Schools & Education	8,604	19,507	(8,784)	(33)	19,294	19,294	0
Infrastructure	3,250	6,345	497	(3,958)	6,134	5,330	(804)
ICT Schemes	765	303	126	(272)	923	687	(236)
Property Maintenance	1,279	2,139	739	(667)	3,490	2,717	(773)
Renovation Grants	110	900	379	(192)	1,197	1,197	0
Low Cost Home Ownership	27	0	148	0	175	175	0
Section 106	1,156	0	656	(1,454)	358	358	0
Specific Grant Funded	2,795	500	10,889	(6,009)	8,175	8,167	(8)
Vehicle Leasing	0	1,500	60	0	1,560	930	(630)
Fixed Assets Purchased from Revenue	0	0	68	0	68	68	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>28,606</b>	<b>35,242</b>	<b>11,423</b>	<b>(25,033)</b>	<b>50,238</b>	<b>48,806</b>	<b>(1,430)</b>
<b>Financing</b>							
Supported Borrowing	0	(2,436)	0	0	(2,436)	(2,436)	0
General Capital Grant	0	(2,502)	0	0	(2,502)	(2,502)	0
Grants and Contributions	(3,596)	(13,850)	(15,577)	8,860	(24,163)	(24,164)	0
S106 Contributions	(1,121)	0	(1,065)	1,621	(565)	(565)	0
Unsupported Borrowing	(22,325)	(10,554)	5,338	13,661	(13,880)	(14,583)	(703)
Earmarked Reserve & Revenue Funding	(148)	(253)	(166)	272	(295)	(282)	13
Capital Receipts	(1,415)	(4,148)	47	619	(4,897)	(4,275)	622
Leasing	0	(1,500)	0	0	(1,500)	0	1,500
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>(28,606)</b>	<b>(35,242)</b>	<b>(11,423)</b>	<b>25,033</b>	<b>(50,238)</b>	<b>(48,806)</b>	<b>1,430</b>

4.2. The capital expenditure at outturn showed a net under spend £1,430,000. This was due to the following schemes:

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Scheme	Budget	Over / (Under) spend	
Infrastructure	10,092	(804)	The total infrastructure budget for the year was £10m. £5.3m of this was spent in year, with a further £3.9m being carried forward to 2025/26 to complete specific works. The remaining budget of £804k will not be carried forward and will instead be repurposed in 2025/26 as a contingency budget to mitigate capital budget risks developing.
Property Maintenance	4,158	(773)	The total budget for the maintenance of assets for the year was £4.1m. £2.7m of this was spent in year, with a further £667k being carried forward to 2025/26 to complete specific works. The remaining budget of £733k will not be carried forward and will instead be repurposed in 2025/26 as a contingency budget to mitigate capital budget risks developing.
Vehicle Leasing	1,560	(630)	Expenditure required for the replacement of vehicles was lower than the anticipated budget following full assessment of service needs.
IT Schemes	1,194	(236)	System upgrades and Network replacement budgets have not been fully utilised in year and formed part of the re-purposing of budget as part of the 2025/26 budget build.
Crick Road Care Home	0	(166)	Final retentions lower than anticipated.
Other schemes	58,267	(121)	Minor underspends across a number of schemes that reflect variances in the final scheme costs.
Capital contingency fund	0	1,300	£1.3m of released budgets will be carried forward to 2025/26 as a contingency budget to mitigate capital budget risks developing in year. This can either be on schemes already in progress and facing additional cost pressures, or to meet new risks that were not foreseen at budget setting stage.
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,271</b>	<b>(1,441)</b>	

#### 4.3. Capital Slippage

4.4. Capital slippage for the year was £25.032 million. Schemes reporting slippage are:

Scheme	Slippage £000's	Comment
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ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	4,368	Slippage required to align with revised scheme programme of works as agreed with the grant awarding body
Welsh Medium School and Nursery	2,696	Slippage required to align with revised scheme programme of works as agreed with the grant awarding body
Wye Bridge Monmouth	2,166	Initial phases of work were pushed back to allow wider programme of resurfacing works to be carried out within the area. These works faced delays due to external issues with third parties, which has meant that a revised schedule of works is required for Wye Bridge. Whilst some initial design and feasibility works will be carried out within 2025/26, it is recommended that this budget is slipped forward to 2026/27 to align with the revised schedule.
Capital Capital Region City Deal	1,948	Re-profiling of contributions as required by the programme of works delivered by the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,867	Multi-year scheme which relies on suitable properties being identified to match demand requirements
Asset Investment Fund	1,781	Remaining budgeted designated to cover any ongoing capital expenditure required on investment properties. This allocation ensures that sufficient funds are available to address maintenance, improvements, and other capital-related expenses, thereby safeguarding the value and functionality of our investment assets.
Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	1,421	Acquisition strategy in development to formalise arrangements in respect of buying properties to address homeless issue & support the implementation of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2025-26.
Capital contingency fund	1,300	£1.3m of released budgets will be carried forward to 2025/26 as a contingency budget to mitigate capital budget risks developing in year. This can either be on schemes already in progress and facing additional cost pressures, or to meet new risks that were not foreseen at budget setting stage.
Carriageway Resurfacing	648	Contractor workload, has led to delays on planned works that will be completed in 2025-26
Flood Recovery Grant	595	Wye Bridge Resurfacing project was due to start in March but was put on hold as WG were undertaking works on the A40 in Monmouth so was pushed forward to April to accommodate - funding needs to be slipped in order to pay for the works.
Placemaking programme	412	Slippage due to Town Council / SPF contributions received, therefore required for 2025/26 applications against this scheme which require match funding.

Property Maintenance	387	Required for essential schemes delayed by contractor engagement
Reconstruction of Bridges and walls	352	Re-surfacing works delayed on Wye Bridge project. No compliant bids were received in the first tender process so have to go back out to tender and this will take us into the 2025/26 financial year.
RE:FIT Programme	292	Funding needed to pay for the outstanding costs on phase 1 including retention payment along with M&V (external monitoring and verification reporting) and O&M (ongoing maintenance and remote monitoring costs) that were capitalised as part of the Salix funding application business case.
NHLF Woodland Investment Grant	248	Due to unforeseen delays caused by contractors, it is necessary to defer the grant funding to finalise the scheme in 2025-2026.
Clydach Gateway Reinstatement and Devil's Bridge Associated Works A465	248	The grant funding will need to be deferred to the 2025-26 to complete the project, as agreed with the grant awarding body.
Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum	234	The Shirehall budget will need to be deferred, as agreed at the Business Cabinet on 20.05.2025, to partially finance the delivery stage of the project, subject to the outcome of the NHLF bid.
School Refurbishment	229	Delays in contractor engagement for urgent essential maintenance. Projects planned for 2025-26, and some have commenced.
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	192	Late unplanned grant has produced an underspend, which is requested to slip forward to invest in further works. We currently have 75 open referrals for vulnerable people who are in desperate need of an adaptation. We have already committed a large portion of this year's budget already, and so, any new applications we get from now onwards may have to wait until next year for delivery. This is having a negative effect not only on peoples' lives but also impacts Social Care and Health. The slippage will allow us to continue the DFG programme in earnest and try to make inroads into clearing the backlog and meeting our own internal targets and Welsh Government targets for delivering DFGs
Trellech Primary Nursery Childcare Scheme	191	Completion of Nursery scheme to be completed in 2025-26, as improvement works have commenced

Wye Bridge Chepstow	190	Scheme is shared with Glos C.C. - material sampling and testing works (£50k) are currently on hold as we are waiting on the results of a study being undertaken by SWTRA/TFW on the adjacent trunk road network that could influence what we need to do on the bridge
Solar Farm Development Cost	150	No progress was made in 2024-25 due to the uncertainty of availability of grid connections and the use for the energy generated. In addition, there was uncertainty over the service provider we were intending to use and the impact of the delay in the replacement LDP. Works will now be started in 2025/26 as scheme needs to progress alongside the RLDP
Depots – Feasibility works: Transport Depot South of County	149	Consultants have been commissioned to undertake the design and feasibility works. Initial discussions have taken place; however, progress has been stalled due to the amended timescale for the RLDP, health and safety priority works in existing depots and capacity issues. The replacement depot remains a key requirement to facilitate fleet transition and consolidate operations.
RS Data Hall Migration	149	Decommissioning work did not start in earnest until late March, Torfaen have confirmed works will be completed this year so funding needs to be slipped.
Decarbonisation Investment / Surveys	144	Due to capacity issues, schemes delayed in delivering decarb investment projects, although progress was made with pool covers through MonLife. Surveys will be undertaken across our properties so further schemes will be identified.
Grant Match Funding Support Allocation / Schemes	136	Progress of schemes dependent upon identifying suitable grant streams, so reliant upon third parties. Slippage is to be repurposed to fund 2025/26 programme
MUCH Project (Magor with Undy Community Hall)	135	Final fitting out stage to be completed in 2025-26
Depot H&S Improvements	113	Work will be completed in 2025-26
Mounton House Refurbishment	104	Work will be completed in 2025-26
Footway Reconstruction	103	Work will be completed in 2025-26
Social Care Case Management System Replacement	98	Grant received during the year has allowed core budget to be carried forward and assessed as part of overall project costs.
Various small schemes	79	Small PROW schemes, Safety Fence upgrades, Signage upgrades and disabled facilities

Capitalisation Directive	63	Minor shortfall in qualifying spend which will be committed in 2025/26
Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	58	This scheme is continuing into 2025-26 as affected woodland is identified
County Farms Maintenance & Reinvestment	51	Funding required for slurry lagoon works as a result of change in regs. Extra works to be carried out on two barns in 25/26 Insurance claim may not be successful for MCC due to poor maintenance.
Projects to Safely and Effectively Open Schools to the Community Outside Traditional Hours	49	Projects started and will be completed in 2025-26 as opportunities allow
Access for All	48	Slippage required to complete existing improvement programme
NLCF RUR2 Llanelly Hill Hub Project	45	Slippage required to complete scheme in 2025-26, contracts already agreed and work part complete.
Monmouth Leisure Centre/Pool Redesign	33	The funding will need to be deferred to cover the works that have been completed at Monmouth LC.
Brilliant Basics Fund – WG- Tintern Welcome	31	Due to unforeseen delays caused by contractors, it is necessary to defer the grant funding to finalise the scheme in 2025-2026.
SharePoint Online Implementation	24	Slippage required to ensure all costs of implementation have been met fully in year.
ATF - Caldicot Greenway	20	Scheme due for completion early 2025-26 due to slight delays out of Council control
Monmouth Sportsground Sport Courts Installation - SW	19	Due to unforeseen delays caused by contractors, it is necessary to defer the grant funding to finalise the scheme in 2025-2026.
Other Small Schemes	11	Work will be completed in 2025-26
S106 Schemes	1,454	Delays in planning / public consultations and contractor engagement, have led to delays on various schemes

#### 4.5. Useable Capital Receipts Available

- 4.6. The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. The full balance of capital receipts is committed to future capital investment meaning there is little scope to support additional capital investment. This also means that the level of capitalisation direction support is profiled to taper down to zero over the medium term.

<b>Capital receipt balances</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Balance as at 1st April	9,984	6,082	4,033	1,877	422
Capital receipts used for financing	(418)	(557)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,682)	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	0
Capital receipts Received	198	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	0	2,278	603	303	0
<b>Forecast Balance as at 31st March</b>	<b>6,082</b>	<b>4,033</b>	<b>1,877</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>372</b>



Budget savings performance 2024-25

Appendix 2

	Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Outturn	Variance to Budgeted Savings	Percentage met	Comment
			£000	£000		
	Social Care & Health	(4,972)	(3,650)	1,322	73.4%	
	Learning, Skills and Economy	(3,172)	(3,103)	69	97.8%	
	Infrastructure & Place	(927)	(470)	457	50.7%	
	Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	(1,079)	(961)	118	89.1%	
	People, Performance and Partnerships	(86)	(86)	0	100.0%	
	Law & Governance	(33)	(33)	0	100.0%	
	Resources	(595)	(548)	47	92.1%	
	Corporate Costs & Levies	(77)	(77)	0	100.0%	
	Totals	(10,940)	(8,928)	2,013	81.6%	

Ref	Social Care & Health	Total Saving / Recovery	Outturn	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
SCH3/4	Childrens services - Placement and Practice Change - Reviewing high-cost placements and developing in house placement	(1,300)	(1,197)	103		Savings to date of identified placements totals £1M
SCH2/5/7/16	Adults services - Directorate staffing review - reducing the workforce within adult services	(1,464)	(1,464)	0		

SCH6/8/9/10 /14/15	Adults services - practice change agenda by managing demand, strengthening oversight and controlling costs	(1,130)	(292)	838		Review work is ongoing and we are looking at a plan to introduce some short term additional resource to accelerate this area of work. In addition, we are still actively pursuing CHC opportunities as they arise
SCH11	Adults services - Reduction in Adult partnership arrangements for Gwent service delivery models - Shared lives, Emergency duty, Frailty, Regional partnership team	(55)	(49)	6		We negotiated with Caerphilly CBC who host a regional Shared Lives partnership a £49K refund on built up reserves by Caerphilly from years of unspent partner funding.
SCH12	Adults services - Transformation Team structure - reduction in core workforce	(30)	(30)	0		
SCH18	Adults services - Savings from service relating to borrowing to afford Severn View replacement	(105)	(105)	0		
SCH18	Review and increase of directorate schedule of fees and charges across Social Care & Health	(388)	(388)	0		
SCH19	Public protection - Hold vacant Environmental Health Officer post	(23)	(23)	0		
Energy	Year-on-year change in energy cost	(102)	(102)	0		
SCH17	Review the legal non residential weekly charge cap from £100 to £120	(375)	0	375		WG not progressing
	<b>SCH Totals</b>	<b>(4,972)</b>	<b>(3,650)</b>	<b>1,322</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Learning, Skills and Economy</b>	<b>Total Saving / Recovery</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		

CYP2	CYP support - Release expected reserve from rebates for solar panel on schools	(120)	(51)	69		Solar panels not generating the expected budgeted income
CYP3	CYP Support - Freeze vacancy in student access team	(34)	(34)	0		
CYP4	Net saving on ALN placements. Reduce the cost of out-of-county and specialist placements by investing in the quality and capacity of local, community and specialist resource basis.	(534)	(534)	0		Receipt of a WG grant, plus a number of ALN pupils leaving Independent Schools and the costs for ALN pupils receiving EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) Bespoke packages, not being as much as previously forecast has resulted in the net savings being achieved
CYP5	ALN & Standards - Continue to hold a vacancy open in the Most team	(20)	(20)	0		
CYP6	ALN & Standards - Reduction in Education Achievement Service contribution of 10%	(35)	(35)	0		
CYP7	Stop contributions to Gwent Music, leaving hardship fund in place	(39)	(39)	0		
CYP8	Increase Breakfast club charges	(70)	(70)	0		
Energy	Year-on-year change in energy cost	(820)	(820)	0		
CORP2	Teachers pension grant funding	(1,500)	(1,500)	0		
	<b>LSE Totals</b>	<b>(3,172)</b>	<b>(3,103)</b>	<b>69</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Infrastructure &amp; Place</b>	<b>Total Saving / Recovery</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		
C&P1	Savings from the disposal of street sweepings through Siltbuster recycling plant	(20)	(20)	0		
C&P2	Fees & charges - Uplift in garden waste collection costs 10%.	(75)	(75)	0		

C&P3	Waste and street services - Restructure to reduce staff costs and not replace frozen post	(50)	(50)	0		
C&P5	Reduce EPA numbers to reflect uptake of Town Team approach	(25)	(25)	0		
C&P6	Remove Council Car	(8)	(8)	0		
C&P10	Review the provision of small vehicle home to school transport contracts with a view to bringing in house	(93)	(93)	0		
C&P11	Increase the cost of concessionary transport seats from £440 to £484 (10% uplift)	(3)	(3)	0		
C&P12	Decarbonisation - Increase renewable energy generation opportunities across our estate to reduce demand on grid supply	(50)	(50)	0		
C&P14	Planning income target increased	(50)	0	50		Not Achieved - income target not reached due to a reduction in planning applications driven by the undertainty around the economy.
C&P16	Fees & Charges - Increase fees by 10% for street naming and numbering, licences, road closures and S.38 inspections	(33)	(33)	0		
C&P18	10% Uplift in Car Parking Charges	(66)	(66)	0		
C&P20	Fees & charges - Increase SAB pre-application charges by 10% and increase the income target to reflect increased service uptake	(2)	(2)	0		
C&P21	Fees & Charges - Increase SAB application budgeted income target by £25k each year for the next two years	(25)	(18)	7		Partially achieved - reduced applications resulted in only £18k of the £25k target being achieved.
Energy	Year-on-year change in energy cost	3	3	0		

C&P22	Fees & Charges - Trade waste fees, sale of bags & bins etc... 10%	(30)	(30)	0		
C&P23	Homelessness - Rapid rehousing transition - reduce the number in unsuitable and costly accommodation	(400)	0	400		Not Achieved - occupancy will not start until new financial year due to planning permission delay. This pressure was part offset by windfall grant funding within the wider Housing budget.
	<b>I&amp;P Total</b>	<b>(927)</b>	<b>(470)</b>	<b>457</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Customer, Culture and Wellbeing</b>	<b>Total Saving / Recovery</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		
ML1	Realign services within the Town/Market Hall in Abergavenny to improve their potential and ensure continued service delivery	(20)	(20)	0		
ML2	Museums - Close Abergavenny and Chepstow museums an additional day a week and review business support	(40)	(10)	30		Delayed restructure has lead to the sections inability to achieve the full savings , restructure has been completed Jan 2025. Overall savings shortfall has been off set by additional income in Monlife.
ML3	Close Old Station Tintern for one day a week on Mondays from 1st April 2024, except for four bank holidays	(10)	(10)	0		
ML4	Attractions - To use £60k from SPF grants for 2024/25 to cover core staffing whilst delivering Todays' Heritage Tomorrow and Creative Futures.	(60)	(60)	0		

ML5	Countryside & Culture - Additional income for additional project management and project delivery costs from grants assumption of £25k	(25)	(25)	0		
ML6	Countryside Access Income Generation - realign the Countryside Access team to maximise the ability to recover project management and related costs from project budgets and increase income generation.	(35)	(35)	0		
ML7	Countryside & Culture - Stop contributing to Abergavenny TIC as part of Market Hall reconfiguration.	(10)	(10)	0		
ML8	Countryside & Culture – Recover officer time and project management costs directly associated with the delivery of section 106 funded green infrastructure and recreation schemes.	(15)	(15)	0		
ML9	Leisure, Sports & Outdoor Adventure - Move to cost neutral services, creating a multi-function site with re-engage PRU and social services	(70)	(70)	0		
ML10	Leisure centres - Change closing times - Weekday Closing 21:30 weekend closure 16:30	(140)	(140)	0		
ML11	Reduced Youth club provision - Explore alternative delivery models for open access youth provision, including community youth clubs	(20)	(20)	0		

ML12	Marketing and Memberships Service Redesign - achieve efficiencies by realigning services between departments, reviewing and realigning posts and enhancing the front-of house software provision for collecting membership payments.	(50)	(50)	0		
ML13	High level management restructure – Area management model	(120)	(32)	88		In progress, delay to structure implementation due to consultation - Income generation in leisure has offset shortfall in staffing savings
Energy	Year-on-year change in energy cost	(437)	(437)	0		
F&C's	Increase in fees and charges for discretionary services in line with the increase costs of delivering these services	(27)	(27)	0		
Page 243	<b>CCW total</b>	<b>(1,079)</b>	<b>(961)</b>	<b>118</b>		
Ref 243	<b>People, Performance and Partnerships</b>	<b>Total Saving / Recovery</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		
CEO2	Policy - Training & Workforce Development - Staffing re-alignment (£65k) Partnership working in online training delivery (£10.5k)	(76)	(76)	0		
CEO3	Payroll & HR - Release of contingency budgets for implementation of e-recruitment	(10)	(10)	0		
	<b>PPP Totals</b>	<b>(86)</b>	<b>(86)</b>	<b>0</b>		

Ref	Law & Governance	Total Saving / Recovery	Outturn	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
LG2	Vacancy Freeze - Paralegal post	(33)	(33)	0		
	<b>LG Totals</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>0</b>		
Ref	Resources	Total Saving / Recovery	Outturn	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
RES1	Commercial Investments – Reversal of income pressure to reflect the forecast improvement in rental income across the commercial investment portfolio (excludes NLP and Castlegate)	(208)	(162)	46		Income target was not fully realised due to the timing of rent review uplifts and new tenancies, many of which commenced mid-year.
RES2	Income - industrial units, cemeteries, County farms - consistently exceeded their income targets over the last number of years, so budgets are being increased to reflect this	(100)	(100)	0		
RES3	Property services - Gwent police collaboration - Increasing Income to reflect projections	(50)	(50)	0		
Energy	Year-on-year change in energy cost	(220)	(220)	0		
RES5	SRS Contribution reduction following identification of efficiency savings	(17)	(16)	1		
	<b>Resources Totals</b>	<b>(595)</b>	<b>(548)</b>	<b>47</b>		



Ref	Corporate Costs & Levies	Total Saving / Recovery	Outturn	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
CORP3	Fire SCAPE pension	(77)	(77)	0		
	Corporate Costs & Levies Totals	(77)	(77)	0		

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### Appendix 3 - Capitalisation directive 2024/25

Directorate	Expenditure	Justification to capitalise	Amount £000s
I&P	PTU Software - Route/pupil optimisation.	Driving a digital approach	22
LSE	System software implementation	Driving a digital approach	84
RES	Implementing digital design & innovation	Driving a digital approach	404
	<b>Sub-Total Driving a digital approach</b>		<b>509</b>
All	Capitalisation of redundancy costs - non-schools	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	284
All	Capitalisation of Pension Strain linked to redundancies	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	350
I&P	Investment in Decarbonisation team	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	106
LSE	Capitalisation of redundancy costs -schools	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	256
I&P	Transport - Move to electric/Hydrogen fleet	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	141
RES	Waste - Service Transformation costs	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	794
I&P	Homelessness Prevention Project	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	200
SCH	Supported Living project	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	90
PPP/LG	Improvement & organisational development team	Funding the cost of service reconfiguration	303
	<b>Sub-Total Funding the cost of service reconfiguration</b>		<b>2,523</b>
SCH	Joint Local authority working (GWICES, Sc. 33, Frailty, regional safeguarding board, Gwent foster fee harmonisation and care home pooling	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	166

I&P	Contribution to the City Deal partnership	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	79
I&P	Passenger Transport - Sharing Senior Management with Newport CC	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	42
SCH	Deprivation of liberty safeguards	Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies	86
	<b>Sub-Total Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies</b>		<b>373</b>
I&P	Procurement SLA with Cardiff	Sharing back-office and administrative services	277
	<b>Sub-Total Sharing back-office and administrative services</b>		<b>277</b>
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3,682</b>

#### Appendix 4 - Movement in individual school balances

School reserve balances (Surplus) / Deficit	At 31st March 2023	In Year Movement	At 31st March 2024	In Year Movement	At 31st March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Comprehensives</b>					
Caldicot	(227,499)	579,936	352,437	(85,181)	267,256
Chepstow	352,451	500,587	853,038	277,952	1,130,990
King Henry VIII	(785,180)	785,180	0	0	0
Monmouth	(599,192)	369,535	(229,657)	197,735	(31,922)
<b>Sub Total Comprehensives</b>	<b>(1,259,420)</b>	<b>2,235,237</b>	<b>975,817</b>	<b>390,507</b>	<b>1,366,324</b>
<b>Middle</b>					
King Henry VIII 3-19	0	329,197	329,197	1,056,972	1,386,169
<b>Sub Total Middle</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>329,197</b>	<b>329,197</b>	<b>1,056,972</b>	<b>1,386,169</b>
<b>Primaries</b>					
Archbishop R Williams	(31,060)	4,239	(26,821)	(55,323)	(82,144)
Cantref	(196,350)	85,933	(110,417)	8,922	(101,495)
Castle Park	(105,297)	30,251	(75,046)	56,304	(18,742)
Cross Ash	(101,453)	42,986	(58,467)	43,790	(14,677)
Deri View*	(26,326)	26,326	0	0	0
Dewstow	(275,059)	217,499	(57,560)	51,255	(6,305)
Durand	(55,199)	(3,506)	(58,705)	(34,692)	(93,397)
Gilwern	(151,764)	174,688	22,924	(7,206)	15,718
Goytre Fawr	(72,125)	64,781	(7,344)	(36,302)	(43,646)
Kymin View	(88,378)	11,511	(76,867)	140,353	63,486
Llandogo	5,941	(23,596)	(17,655)	10,243	(7,412)
Llanfoist	(171,434)	45,949	(125,485)	37,865	(87,620)
Llantilio Pertholey	(72,714)	11,966	(60,748)	(14,015)	(74,763)
Llanvihangel Crucorney	(119,219)	22,353	(96,866)	13,258	(83,608)
Magor Vol Aided	(215,776)	54,257	(161,519)	(44,605)	(206,124)
New Pembroke Primary	(203,307)	32,231	(171,076)	(96,968)	(268,044)
Osbaston Church in Wales	(12,750)	86,238	73,488	(9,680)	63,808
Our Lady's & St Michael's Catholic Primary	17,078	4,177	21,255	32,634	53,889
Overmonnow	(7,662)	132,066	124,404	130,825	255,229
Raglan	(195,485)	20,104	(175,381)	14,092	(161,289)
Rogiet	(21,439)	86,860	65,421	103,791	169,212
Shirenewton	(185,338)	55,395	(129,943)	(974)	(130,917)
St Mary's (Chepstow)	(95,024)	25,021	(70,003)	(360)	(70,363)
The Dell	23,912	57,082	80,994	77,188	158,182
Thornwell	(4,257)	99,447	95,190	73,593	168,783
Trellech	(157,692)	57,639	(100,053)	7,524	(92,529)
Undy	(167,025)	25,516	(141,509)	(703)	(142,212)
Usk CV	(268,295)	176,876	(91,419)	72,307	(19,112)
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	(20,789)	191,254	170,465	115,614	286,079
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	(52,678)	69,341	16,663	58,553	75,216
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trefynwy	0	0	0	88,855	88,855
<b>Sub Total Primaries</b>	<b>(3,026,964)</b>	<b>1,884,884</b>	<b>(1,142,080)</b>	<b>836,139</b>	<b>(305,941)</b>
<b>Other</b>					
Pupil Referral Unit	30,707	711,453	742,160	903,018	1,645,178
<b>Sub Total Other</b>	<b>30,707</b>	<b>711,453</b>	<b>742,160</b>	<b>903,018</b>	<b>1,645,178</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>(4,255,677)</b>	<b>5,160,771</b>	<b>905,094</b>	<b>3,186,636</b>	<b>4,091,730</b>

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## Appendix 5 - Capital Budget Revisions – Grants and contributions

During the 2024/25 financial year, the Council has received a number of new grants and external contributions that weren't included in the original capital budget approved at the start of the year.

According to the Council's financial rules, any changes to the capital budget that are fully funded by grants or outside contributions must be approved by Cabinet.

This report outlines the changes that now need Cabinet approval. These changes are either:

- New grants or contributions that have been received, or
- Adjustments to existing grants or contributions that were already part of the budget. This could be due to final grant allocations being lower/higher than indicative values, or if the timing of expenditure differs to the grant timings.

Scheme Category	Scheme	Budget revision
Asset Management Schemes	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,172,474.46
	County Farms Maintenance & Reinvestment	149,210.43
	School Refurbishment Grant	274,789.57
	Schools Repair & Maintenance Grant	976,787.24
School Development Schemes	S106 Castle Park Primary Remodelling Works 2023-24	439,286.00
	Trellech Primary Nursery Childcare Scheme A9480	519,709.00
	Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School Nursery	-590,000.00
	Welsh Medium School and Nursery	2,776,699.00
	Capital Support for Learners with ALN	488,394.66
	Early Years – Childcare Capital Funding	380,000.00
	King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	-3,505,090.87
	S106 - King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	195,000
ICT Schemes	Social Care Case Management System Replacement	97,891.84
	WG -Broadband Fund for the Llanthony Community Scheme	-8,189.22
	Upgrade of CAPITA 1 system CYP	55,000.00

Scheme Category	Scheme	Budget revision
<b>Inclusion</b>	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	275,235.28
	Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	220,643.00
	Enable – Support for Independent Living WG	158,339.18
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b>	Safer Routes in the Community	138,490.43
	LTF Severn Tunnel Junction Improvements 2019-20	280,000.20
	Vinegar Hill Development Undy CCR	4,650.00
	Road Safety Capital Grant	163,800.00
	20 MPH Capital Grant	40,000.98
	RRF - A466 Wyndlciffe Rock Stabilisation	50,116.00
	RRF - A4136 Staunton Road Stabilisation	349,532.99
	Local Transport Fund	569,000.00
	Clydach Gateway Reinstatement and Devil's Bridge Associated Works A465	250,000.00
	Woodside Usk Flood Alleviation Scheme Grant	77,181.00
	Recycling Vehicles and Boxes	34,967.40
	Repair Reuse fund -WASTE	-16,160.55
	SPF – Abergavenny Market Hall	39,313.09
<b>Other Schemes</b>	ATF - Caldicot Greenway	751,825.34
	ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	4,615,924.00
	ATF - Monmouth Wye AT Crossing	210,301.34
	ATF - Monmouth Kingswood Gate AFL	49,766.82
	WG – Resilient Roads Fund Grant	6,593.83
	UK Gov - Levelling Up Fund	5,000.00
	ATF Bridge Connections	-67.5
	Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	564,437.00
	ATF – Caldicot Education and Leisure Access	884,944.66
	ATF – Multi-User Route	281,465.18
	ATF – ATNM Dropped Kerbs and Quick Wins	185,024.50



Scheme Category	Scheme	Budget revision
	B4245 Magor/Undy to Rogiet	-210,540.00
	Grant –Match Funding Support Digital Twin - Operational Dept/ ZE Vehicles	-150,000.00
	Grant –Match Funding Support Auxillary Power - To provide a zero emissions solution to the provision of meals on wheels vehicles with an auxiliary load requirement	-75,060.00
	Monmouth STP Replacement (Sport Wales / WG)	118,366.62
	Flood Recovery Grant 2020 - 23	217,854.20
	Mardy Park Minor Works - ABUHB	-90,050.00
	Placemaking Grant programme	585,056.65
	7-43 Newport Road, Caldicot: development	-71,000.00
	UKSPF -Monmouthshire Circular Economy	9,349.58
	UKSPF - Don't Mess with Monmouthshire	78,111.83
	ATF – Core Chepstow	100,000.00
	ATF – Core Usk School	86,381.05
	ATF – Core Gilwern School	109,574.40
	ATF – Core Counters	20,205.00
	AFT – Core Pavements	48,922.00
	Monmouth Sportsground Sport Courts Installation - SW	116,500.00
	Coal Tip Safety Grant - WG	90,245.00
	NLCF RUR2 Llanelly Hill Hub Project	144,500.00
	UKSPF – Inclusive Community Spaces	166,886.49
	UKSPF – Caru Cymru	26,339.98
	UKSPF – Todays Heritage Tomorrow	7,546.00
	UKSPF – Gwent Green Grid	55,500.03
	UKSPF – Creative Futures	26,672.82
	UKSPF – Destination Monmouth	50,292.45
	UKSPF – Chepstow All Ability Outdoor Activity Space	136,104.00
	UKSPF – External Projects	429,995.41
	Granicus UKSPF	10,000.00
	UKSPF – L.C. Environmentally Friendly Chlorine Creation	130,000.00
	UKSPF – Creativity Connected	35,341.33
	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure - County Hall	27,509.54

<b>Scheme Category</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Budget revision</b>
	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – Raglan Depot	18,753.41
<b>Regeneration Schemes</b>	S106 – Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme	-205,378.68
	S106 - Cas Troggi Play Area, Caldicot	95,000.00
	S106 – Church Farm (3) Beneficiary Sites	144,456.00
	S106 - Rockfield View Play Area, Undy	24,629.00
	S106 - Additional recreation land at Knollbury	33,000.00
	S106- Mardy Playing Field - play improvements	120,000.00
	S106 - Bailey Park play area remedial works	13,230.00
	MF – Tudor Road Drainage Monmouth	-4,000.00
	Local Places for Nature	284,293.66
	NHLF Woodland Investment Grant	250,000.00
<b>Vehicle Program</b>	Leasing - Home To School Transport	59,939.65
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>16,676,813.70</b>



<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE – JULY 2025</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> July 2025</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>WHOLE AUTHORITY</b>

## **1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1. To provide the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context. The report outlines the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and the medium term, and outlines the context for developing a balanced budget.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1. Note the updated projected revenue budget shortfall of **£13.6 million** for 2026/27 and a cumulative shortfall of **£38.0 million** over the medium term.
- 2.2. Note the outline budget setting timetable as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.3. Note the progress against the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) delivery plan, as detailed in Section 14 of Appendix 1.

## **3. KEY ISSUES:**

### **Background**

- 3.1. The Council reviews its budgetary position annually and produces a rolling 4-year plan, known as the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This plan considers the financial context at both the local and national level together with forecast available resources and budgetary pressures in arriving at a forward financial projection.
- 3.2. This report presents the six-monthly update of the Council's MTFP and outlines the context and framework for the budget for the financial year 2026/27, together with a high-level indication of the financial outlook over the medium term.
- 3.3. The updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) projects a £13.6 million budget gap for 2026/27, rising to a cumulative £38.0 million by 2029/30. This reflects updated assumptions around pay inflation, non-pay inflation, superannuation rates, and service pressures.

- 3.4. The Council has operated in a challenging financial environment since 2010, delivering over £83 million in savings in that time, and absorbing more than £31 million in cost pressures in the last two years alone. Despite these pressures, the Council has maintained a strong track record of financial resilience and effective resource management.
- 3.5. The Council faced significant in-year pressures in 2024/25, particularly in Children's and Adult Social Care, Homelessness, and Additional Learning Needs. These were driven by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, inflationary pressures, high interest rates, and workforce challenges. Early forecasts projected a deficit of up to £4 million. However, through targeted recovery actions and additional unbudgeted grant funding, the Council achieved a £1.239 million surplus before transfers to reserves. This outcome has helped to stabilise the Council's reserves and reduce future financial risk.

### **Forward Outlook and Planning Implications**

- 3.6. The financial outlook for 2026/27 remains highly uncertain. National and local factors - including economic conditions, policy changes, demographic shifts, and new responsibilities - are expected to influence the Council's operating environment. The UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), published in June, and the anticipated Welsh Government spending review will provide further clarity on future funding levels.
- 3.7. In light of these developments, it is essential that the assumptions, modelling, and risk assessments underpinning the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are reviewed and updated. This review must reflect:
- The current economic climate and its implications for service demand and cost pressures
  - Revised assumptions aligned with the Council's strategic policy objectives
  - The need for a more agile and responsive financial planning framework.

### **External context**

- 3.8. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is shaped by the broader UK economic context and public spending decisions, particularly those made by the UK Government and passed through to the Welsh Government. Since the 2025/26 budget was set, the UK economy has experienced stagnant growth, with weak private sector activity and investment. Rising employment costs and global uncertainties have dampened business confidence, while consumer spending is expected to slow. Fiscal policy remains tight, limiting the potential for economic stimulus. Labour market conditions are softening, with employment growth slowing and wage pressures expected to ease, contributing to a more stable inflation outlook.
- 3.9. However, inflation risks remain elevated due to external pressures such as geopolitical tensions, rising energy and food prices, and new trade tariffs. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) remains above 3%, raising concerns about inflation expectations and wage demands. Elevated gilt yields reflect market concerns over fiscal credibility and global economic uncertainty. These factors have significant implications for the Council's financial planning, requiring careful review and updating of budget assumptions for 2026/27 and beyond.

### **Funding context**

- 3.10. The Council's revenue budget for 2025/26 is primarily funded through the Welsh Government settlement (60.5%), with the remainder (39.5%) coming from council tax. These two funding streams are central to the Council's medium-term financial planning. However, the broader funding context has been shaped by over a decade of public sector austerity, which has significantly constrained the resources available to Welsh Government and, in turn, local authorities. While recent years have seen positive settlements in cash terms, these have not kept pace with inflation or the increasing demands placed on councils, resulting in real-terms reductions in funding.
- 3.11. Monmouthshire has experienced a variable funding pattern, receiving below-average settlements in 12 of the past 15 years. This reflects a combination of factors, including its demographic characteristics, dispersed population, and comparatively strong ability to generate income through local taxation. Even during periods of national funding growth, Monmouthshire's allocations have tended to be more modest.
- 3.12. While more recent settlements have begun to recognise the vital contribution of councils - particularly during the pandemic and cost-of-living challenges – the ongoing wider economic and political environment has meant that the increasing demands and responsibilities placed on Councils have not always been fully recognised with additional funding.
- 3.13. The Final Local Government Settlement for 2025/26 introduced a funding floor of 3.8%, ensuring that every local authority in Wales received at least a 3.8% increase in core revenue funding compared to the previous year. This approach helped create a fairer distribution of resources and provided additional support to councils like Monmouthshire, which would have otherwise received a lower increase under the standard funding formula. Looking ahead, the 2026/27 settlement is expected to follow a similar pattern. It will be essential for local government to clearly communicate its evolving role and the growing demand pressures to Welsh Government throughout the budget process.

### **Reserves and School balances**

- 3.14. The Council's usable revenue reserves have been significantly drawn down over recent years, particularly during 2022/23 and 2023/24, to support budget proposals and recovery measures. This followed a temporary replenishment during the COVID-19 pandemic through substantial Welsh Government support.
- 3.15. 2024/25 saw a modest improvement in general reserves, however this was offset by a £3.187 million increase in the schools reserve deficit, bringing the cumulative schools position to a £4.1 million deficit. Despite additional investment in school budgets for 2025/26, further reserve use is forecast, weakening the Council's financial resilience.
- 3.16. Monmouthshire's Council Fund remains at 5% of the net revenue budget, a level considered prudent for managing short-term risks. However, the Council has the lowest reserve cover in Wales, which heightens its exposure to financial risk. Many reserves are earmarked for specific services or timing adjustments, leaving limited flexibility for strategic use. This has prompted a renewed focus on strengthening budget management and in-year financial discipline, alongside a revised reserves policy aimed at protecting and rebuilding reserve levels over the medium term.

- 3.17. Schools receive funding through the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), which totals £60.45 million in 2025/26 - around 27% of the Council's net budget. While schools are responsible for managing their own budgets, the Council retains oversight of their financial performance. Reserve balances vary widely across schools, with some maintaining healthy surpluses and others facing significant deficits. The final position for 2024/25 showed a £3.187 million increase in the overall schools deficit, with 15 of 35 schools now operating in deficit. This was lower than forecast due to late grant funding and cost-saving measures.
- 3.18. The financial challenges facing schools are compounded by the legacy of the pandemic, inflationary pressures, and rising pay costs. Schools are also expected to contribute to wider Council savings and deliver on Welsh Government reforms, including the Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act. These pressures have not always been fully funded, and future investment in education will need to be carefully balanced against the Council's overall financial position. A strategic, evidence-based approach will be essential to ensure sustainability and equity across the school system.

### **UK Government Spending review and WG budget announcement**

- 3.19. The UK Government's June 2025 Spending Review has provided a clearer medium-term funding framework for the Welsh Government, with day-to-day spending allocations confirmed through to 2028–29 and capital grants through to 2029–30. While this offers greater certainty, the funding profile is frontloaded, with more generous allocations in 2026/27 followed by tighter budgets in subsequent years. Day-to-day spending is projected to grow by 1.4% annually in real terms, but capital funding is expected to decline after 2026/27. Most of the additional funding is linked to NHS and school spending in England, implying limited growth for other public services in Wales. This creates a more challenging fiscal environment for future Welsh budgets, particularly post-election.
- 3.20. Although the settlement is described as the largest in real terms since devolution, its historical context reveals a more cautious trajectory for public service funding. The scope for new spending commitments in Wales is likely to be constrained unless additional revenue is raised through devolved taxation.
- 3.21. The Welsh Government announced on the 1 July 2025 that it will publish a one-year budget in October 2025, which will increase departmental budgets in line with inflation. This budget will include a pool of unallocated funding, reserved for the next Welsh Government following the 2026 Senedd election.
- 3.22. The outline Draft Budget, detailing high-level allocations for each department, will be published on 14 October, followed by a more detailed Draft Budget on 3 November. The Final Budget will be released on 20 January 2026, with a debate and vote scheduled for 27 January.
- 3.23. For Monmouthshire, the Spending Review reinforces the prudence of current MTFP assumptions, which anticipate modest growth in grant funding. When adjusted for inflation, these assumptions reflect real-terms reductions in funding. The anticipated Welsh Government Spending Review is expected to provide further clarity for future financial planning.

## **Budget assumptions and updated budget modelling**

- 3.24. The Council's medium term budget model is reviewed and updated on a six-monthly basis, incorporating the latest data and assumptions to reflect changing financial conditions. This process is informed and supported by external data from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the Wales Fiscal Analysis unit, and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). These sources help validate and challenge the assumptions used, ensuring the model remains robust and evidence-based.
- 3.25. The latest modelling for 2026/27, incorporating revised assumptions and emerging pressures, indicates a projected budget deficit of £13.6 million. While this represents an early view of the financial landscape, it highlights the ongoing challenges facing local government. The budget process remains dynamic, and figures will continue to be refined, but the scale of the projected gap underlines the need for continued financial discipline and strategic planning.
- 3.26. The medium-term financial outlook remains highly uncertain. While current budget assumptions are based on inflation stabilising and public spending aligning with independent forecasts, there are significant downside risks that could worsen the projected budget shortfalls. The forthcoming Welsh Government Comprehensive Spending Review is expected to provide greater clarity on future funding, enabling more informed planning. However, the latest modelling highlights substantial budget gaps over the coming years, with cumulative shortfalls rising from £13.6 million in 2026/27 to £38 million by 2029/30.

## **Bridging the gap between expenditure and available resources**

- 3.27. As the Council prepares its 2026/27 budget, it must carefully evaluate the scope for further savings through service efficiencies or reductions, while also exploring opportunities to generate additional income or secure external funding. Having delivered significant efficiencies since 2010, many services are now operating at the minimum level required to meet statutory duties. In this context, a strategic and evidence-led approach is essential to ensure that resident needs continue to be met within a financially sustainable framework.
- 3.28. Persistent cost pressures, underfunded responsibilities, and funding settlements that have not kept pace with inflation have increased reliance on reserves and one-off capital receipts to balance the budget. With reserves now at comparatively low levels and limited scope for further efficiencies, the Council faces a significant financial challenge. Addressing this will require a forward-looking response focused on long-term reform, financial resilience, and service transformation - particularly within the three highest-spending areas: Social Care & Health, Learning, Skills & Economy, and Infrastructure & Place.
- 3.29. The Council's programme of change provides a strategic framework for reshaping services to meet resident needs within available resources. This is not just a response to financial pressures but a proactive effort to modernise and improve outcomes. Progress is being made, but greater coordination and discipline are needed to align and report on the various strands of work. Establishing strong foundations will enable better assessment of progress and allow the Council to adapt its approach as needed.

3.30. Key areas of change include digital collaboration, preventative wellbeing strategies, data-driven decision-making, leadership alignment, community-centric service design, workforce development, and asset optimisation. A more centralised approach to assessing the value and alignment of grant funding is also being developed. Robust governance, risk management, and organisational capability will underpin the successful delivery of this programme. This integrated approach is essential to bridging the gap between expenditure and resources while maintaining the Council's commitment to high-quality, resident-focused services.

3.31. The proposed milestone dates for the next steps in the process are outlined below:

Review of latest of budget modelling using updated assumptions & data	September 2025
Budget workshops – SLT/Cabinet/Officers	October 2025
High level pressure & saving mandates produced for Cabinet scrutiny	October 2025
MTFP update report - Cabinet	November 2025
Final pressure & saving mandates to be produced	December 2025
Budget assumptions, pressures and savings to undergo further Cabinet scrutiny	December 2025
Consideration of Welsh Government Provisional settlement	December 2025
Set Council tax base - ICMD	December 2025
Consideration of draft revenue & capital budget proposals - Cabinet	January 2026
Scrutiny of Proposals - Select Committees	January & February 2026
Public Consultation for 2026/27 budget	January & February 2026
Consideration of scrutiny, consultation, final pressures, savings & assumptions	February 2026
Consideration of Welsh Government Final settlement	February 2026
Final budget proposals - Cabinet	March 2026
Formal Council Tax Resolution & Budget Proposals - Council	March 2026

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

4.1. This is a contextual report and therefore carries no direct impacts.

#### **5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

5.1. This report provides an update on the Council's financial planning and provides an early overview of the process for the 2026/27 budget setting process. When budget proposals are developed and brought forward for consultation an option appraisal will be completed for each substantive saving and pressure.



- 5.2. The Council's programme of change is not solely driven by financial constraints, but by a commitment to shaping services that meet the needs of communities and align with the aims set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. It also recognises the importance of designing services for long-term sustainability – that will require a careful balance of choices and priorities.

## **6. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

- 6.1. Whilst the nature of this report does not require any evaluation, the annual budget process is reviewed on an ongoing basis and based on feedback received from the public, members and officers. Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team review the process and feedback and recommendations for improvement.
- 6.2. The six-monthly MTFP update is part of the evaluation criteria set as part of the MTFS and which includes the reporting of update against the delivery plan as contained in appendix 1.

## **7. REASONS:**

- 7.1. To provide the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context. The report outlines the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and the medium term, and outlines the context for developing a balanced budget.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 8.1. There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

## **9. CONSULTEES:**

Strategic Leadership Team  
All Cabinet Members  
Performance and Overview Scrutiny committee

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

***Appendix 1*** – Medium Term Financial Plan update – July 2025

## **11. AUTHORS:**

Jonathan S. Davies  
Head of Finance (Acting Section 151 Officer)

## **12. CONTACT DETAILS:**

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

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Medium term financial plan update – July 2025

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- 1.1. The Council’s Medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and plan (MFTP) are the link between its long-term policy objectives and its financial capacity. It seeks to ensure that the Council’s strategic objectives can be achieved within the confines of the financial resources available.
- 1.2. The MTFS, as approved, committed to a six-monthly update of the MFTP, including an update of progress against the performance framework and delivery plan embedded within the MTFS. The first of these updates was received by Cabinet in October 2024 and was subsequently updated as part as part of the final budget that was endorsed by Cabinet and approved by full Council in March 2025.

Event	Date	Details
MTFS Approval	July 2024	MTFS approved with commitment to six-monthly MFTP updates
First MFTP Update	October 2024	Received by Cabinet on 16th October
Final 2025/26 Budget Approval	March 2025	Final budget endorsed by Cabinet and approved by full Council that included an updated MFTP forecast
Second MFTP Update	July 2025	This document

## 2. Strategic Financial Context and Outlook

### 2.1. Overview

- 2.2. The Council’s financial planning has been shaped by a consistent and disciplined approach in response to a prolonged period of fiscal constraint. Since the 2009 financial crisis, the Council - like many across Wales and the UK- has operated within a challenging financial environment. Over the period from 2010/11 to date, the Council has delivered over **£83 million** in budget savings. In the last two financial years alone, it has absorbed more than **£31 million** in cost pressures.

### 2.3. Financial Performance and Resilience

- 2.4. Despite these pressures, the Council has maintained a strong track record in delivering value for money and managing public resources effectively. It has successfully navigated the impacts of austerity, economic recession, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 2.5. The 2024/25 financial year has seen the continuation of financial headwinds which are impacting upon the Council's service operating environment.
- 2.6. The ongoing cost of living crisis and broader socio-economic challenges are increasing demand for Council services, especially in Children's and Adult Social Care, Homelessness, and Additional Learning Needs. Pressures from the wider public sector, particularly Health, are adding complexity to social care needs. Despite falling headline inflation, some services still face rising costs and supply chain issues. High interest rates, expected to persist longer than initially forecast, add financial strain. Additionally, staff shortages continue to affect some Council departments.
- 2.7. The first two financial updates received by Cabinet in October and December 2024 indicated significant pressure on the Councils budget of between £3m and £4m. Cabinet subsequently endorsed mitigating action to develop a structured approach to tackling the forecast deficit through a range of budget recovery measures.
- 2.8. At outturn, the Council successfully mitigated the overall cost pressures through these ongoing targeted actions, and through additional unbudgeted grants and contributions. This has culminated in a gross expenditure budget surplus of £1.239 million prior to transfers to reserves, representing a 0.6% variance against the approved budget.
- 2.9. The final budget position has helped to stabilise the Council's reserves, providing a stronger financial foundation and helping to reduce future financial risks.
- 2.10. **Forward Outlook**
- 2.11. Looking ahead to 2026/27, the financial outlook remains uncertain. Significant changes at both national and local levels are expected to influence the Council's operating environment, including economic conditions, policy shifts, additional responsibilities, and changes in demographic trends.
- 2.12. The UK Government Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) published in June, and the anticipated Welsh Government CSR will help provide further clarity on the medium term outlook for local government funding.
- 2.13. **Implications for Financial Planning**

2.14. In light of these developments, it is essential that the assumptions, modelling, and risk assessments underpinning the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are reviewed and updated. This review must reflect:

- The current economic climate and its implications for service demand and cost pressures.
- Revised assumptions aligned with the Council's strategic policy objectives.
- The need for a more agile and responsive financial planning framework.

## 2.15. Strategic Response

2.16. While the Council's budget process has consistently maintained a medium-term focus, the current funding context, increasing service demands, and the cumulative impact of previous efficiency savings present a highly complex environment for setting the 2026/27 budget. The Council's response must therefore be:

- **Strategic and evidence-led**, ensuring decisions are informed by robust data and analysis.
- **Targeted**, focusing on areas of greatest need and opportunity.
- **Reform-oriented**, supporting long-term sustainability through the wider programme of change.

## 3. External context

- 3.1. The MTFP is set within the context of the UK economic position and public expenditure plans, with the decisions made by the UK Government and the subsequent funding levels it passes onto Welsh Government having a direct impact upon the expenditure plans of the Council.
- 3.2. Since the 2025/26 budget was set, the UK economy has experienced broadly flat GDP growth, with limited momentum in private sector activity and business investment. This stagnation is largely attributed to rising employment costs and ongoing global uncertainties, which are dampening business confidence. Consumer spending is also expected to soften, and with fiscal policy acting as a constraint on both business and consumer sentiment, any meaningful boost to economic growth is likely to depend heavily on increased government spending.
- 3.3. Labour market conditions are showing signs of easing, with employment levels retreating from recent highs and employment growth projected to remain weak in the near term. Although private sector wage growth and services inflation remain elevated, the Monetary Policy

Committee (MPC) anticipates a gradual decline in wage pressures, forecasting wage growth to slow to around 3.7% by the end of 2025. This softening labour market is expected to exert downward pressure on both wage growth and services inflation, contributing to a more stable inflation outlook over time.

- 3.4. However, near-term inflation risks have increased due to several external factors. Rising oil and gas prices, influenced by geopolitical tensions such as the Israel-Iran conflict, along with new US tariffs and increasing food prices, are pushing consumer prices higher. With the Consumer Price Index (CPI) already above 3% due to regulated price increases, there is growing concern among policymakers about the impact on household inflation expectations and wage demands. Additionally, gilt yields have remained elevated, driven by concerns over fiscal credibility in the UK and US, uncertainty surrounding US monetary and trade policy, and inflationary pressures from higher energy prices.
- 3.5. The context outlined above has significant implications for the Council's medium term financial planning. These implications are summarised below and are central to the update of the budget assumptions for 2026/27 and over the medium term.

Factor	Planning Implications
<b>Inflation</b>	Increased costs across supplies and services, contractual arrangements calculated via CPI/RPI, impact on pay awards.
<b>Supply chains</b>	Disruption to availability of materials, parts and supplies leading to increased costs for alternative/expedited solutions.
<b>Labour market</b>	Shortage of staff and external professional expertise leading to increased costs for commissioned services and agency staff, real living wage implications.
<b>Energy prices</b>	Impact on energy costs across Schools, Leisure centres, Offices, and Street Lighting, fuel costs for Council vehicles and for contracted transport providers.
<b>Interest Rates</b>	Implications on the cost of borrowing and the affordability of the capital programme.
<b>Economic &amp; political landscape</b>	The future level of funding for public services is influenced by both economic and political factors. Global events - such as trade tariffs, conflicts, or political unrest can shift the UK Government's financial priorities. In addition, domestic policy

	decisions, like prioritising spending on healthcare, can also affect how much funding is available for other public services.
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4. Funding context

4.1. 60.5% of the funding of the Council’s revenue budget for 2025/26 came from the Welsh Government settlement, with the remaining 39.5% through council tax income. The assumptions for these funding elements are fundamental in developing robust medium term financial plans.

4.2. **Welsh Government settlement**

4.3. The public sector austerity measures that were enacted from 2010 onwards have impacted on the resources available to Welsh Government and consequently local government over a sustained period.

4.4. Recent funding settlements in cash terms are outlined below. When taking into account inflation over the period, there has been a significant real terms reduction in funding capability for local government.

Financial Year	Monmouthshire Settlement (Cash terms)	All Wales Settlement (Cash terms)
2011/12	-1.7%	-1.4%
2012/13	-1.8%	0.2%
2013/14	6.5%	6.6%
2014/15	-4.4%	-3.4%
2015/16	-4.3%	-3.4%
2016/17	-3.0%	-1.3%
2017/18	0.0%	0.2%
2018/19	-0.5%	0.2%
2019/20	-0.3%	0.2%
2020/21	3.0%	4.3%



2021/22	3.9%	3.8%
2022/23	11.2%	9.4%
2023/24	9.3%	7.9%
2024/25	2.6%	3.3%
2025/26	3.8%	4.5%

- 4.5. Over this period, local government in Wales has received negative settlements from Welsh Government in four of the fourteen financial years. In comparison, Monmouthshire has received negative settlements in seven of those years.
- 4.6. Whilst the most recent financial years have seen positive settlements for Monmouthshire, critically this has reflected the key role local councils have had in supporting communities through the pandemic period, and in continuing to help address both its legacy impact and the resultant cost-of-living crisis.
- 4.7. As a consequence, when taking into account the additional demand and responsibilities placed upon the Council, these settlements have been below inflation, and therefore reflect real term reductions in funding.
- 4.8. Monmouthshire has received below average settlements in twelve of the fifteen years noted above. The reasons for this are complex and involve consideration of the Council's relative spending requirement when taking into account factors such as population numbers, demographics, sparsity and dispersion, and critically the Council's relative ability to raise income through local taxation.
- 4.9. It is important to note that in years where average Welsh Government settlement is lower than notional (all-Wales) Council tax increases, Monmouthshire tends to receive a below average settlement. It is currently anticipated that 2026/27 will see a recurrence of this, as was experienced in 2025/26.
- 4.10. **Implications of the UK Government Spending review**
- 4.11. The UK Government's recent Spending Review, announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves on 11 June, has set out a clearer medium-term funding framework for the Welsh Government.
- 4.12. The Wales Fiscal Analysis unit published their analysis in June 2025 on the implications of the spending review on the Welsh Government budget. In summary it concluded the following important points:

- 4.13. *The return to a multi-year spending review offers greater certainty, with block grants for day-to-day spending confirmed through to 2028–29 and capital grants through to 2029–30. This clarity is particularly significant as it will shape the fiscal context for the upcoming Senedd election and inform the development and scrutiny of party manifesto commitments.*
- 4.14. *The Welsh Government’s day-to-day spending is projected to grow by around 1.4% per year in real terms, factoring in devolved tax revenues. However, capital spending is expected to decline after a brief increase in 2026/27, with the capital block grant falling by 3.6% between 2025–26 and 2029–30. Much of the additional funding stems from increased NHS and school spending in England, which accounts for approximately 91% of the new funding for Wales in 2028–29. While this allows for some growth in NHS funding in Wales, it implies tight or flat budgets for other public services.*
- 4.15. *The funding profile is also frontloaded, with more generous allocations in 2026–27 followed by leaner years. This benefits the current Cabinet Secretary for Finance, who may avoid cuts in the pre-election budget. However, the post-election Cabinet Secretary could face real-term reductions in non-NHS spending of around 1.4% annually in 2027–28 and 2028–29, presenting a more difficult fiscal landscape in the latter part of the review period.*
- 4.16. *Although the Spending Review describes the settlement as the largest in real terms since devolution, this is less impressive when viewed in historical context. The average annual growth in day-to-day spending over the current UK Parliament is 1.6%, down from 2.6% in the previous term. This indicates that, despite Labour’s increased departmental spending relative to its manifesto, the overall trajectory for public service funding remains cautious and constrained.*
- 4.17. *Looking ahead, the scope for significant new spending commitments in Welsh party manifestos appears limited unless parties are willing to consider raising additional revenue through the Welsh Rates of Income Tax. The fiscal rules and political promises of no major tax increases at the UK level further constrain flexibility. As such, Welsh political leaders will need to make tough choices about spending priorities and prepare for the possibility that future budgets may need to adapt to changing economic conditions or unforeseen pressures”.<sup>1</sup>*
- 4.18. *The Welsh Government announced on the 1 July 2025 that it will publish a one-year budget in October 2025, which will increase departmental budgets in line with inflation. This budget will include a pool of unallocated funding, reserved for the next Welsh Government following the 2026 Senedd election.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Spending Review 2025 – the implications for Wales - Thinking Wales - Meddwl Cymru - Cardiff University](#)

- 4.19. The approach is described as responsible and forward-looking, aiming to balance certainty for public services during an election year with flexibility for the next administration. The outline Draft Budget, detailing high-level allocations for each Cabinet Secretary, will be published on 14 October, followed by a more detailed Draft Budget on 3 November. The Final Budget will be released on 20 January 2026, with a debate and vote scheduled for 27 January.
- 4.20. The above context suggests that the current modelling assumptions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) shown below - which anticipates modest growth in grant funding over the medium term, remains a prudent basis for financial planning and should continue to inform projected budget gaps.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	<i>Sensitivity to 1% change £000's</i>
WG Grant funding change assumption	1.30%	0.90%	1.10%	1.10%	1,352

- 4.21. When taking into anticipated levels of inflation over the same period, this would reflect real terms reductions in funding levels for the Council.
- 4.22. Welsh Government are expected to publicise their own Comprehensive Spending Review in the coming months, but at the time of writing no formal publication date has been set. It is expected that this will provide further clarity on future year financial settlements for Councils which will further aid medium term financial planning.
- 4.23. **Council Tax**
- 4.24. The updated Council Tax planning assumption is currently modelled at a 3.95% increase for each year of the MTFP.
- 4.25. Council tax income accounts for nearly 40% of the Council's overall income, which proportionately is the highest in Wales. The level of Council tax income will consequently always be an important consideration for the Council in being able to support local services.

Financial Year	Band D Council Tax £*	Band D Council Tax (All Wales average) £*	Increase over Previous Year	All Wales average increase
2015/16	1094.98	1087.91	4.95%	4.36%
2016/17	1138.23	1127.40	3.95%	3.63%
2017/18	1183.19	1161.65	3.95%	3.04%
2018/19	1241.76	1219.07	4.95%	4.94%
2019/20	1315.64	1294.22	5.95%	6.16%
2020/21	1380.76	1354.02	4.95%	4.62%
2021/22	1434.47	1402.51	3.89%	3.58%
2022/23	1476.79	1433.42	2.95%	2.20%
2023/24	1564.66	1512.48	5.95%	5.52%
2024/25	1686.70	1630.83	7.80%	7.82%
2025/26	1,818.26	1746.58	7.80%	7.10%
* Council only charge - excludes the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, and Community Council Precepts				

- 4.26. Consideration of any increase in 2026/27 will need to be given to local context, such as the affordability for communities, balanced against the ongoing need to meet increasing demand and cost pressures of essential services.
- 4.27. The modelling assumption used for 2026/27 at the current planning stage is reflective of the current budget gap driven by the pressures being seen on Council services, balanced alongside the expected funding from other income streams for the Council, including Welsh Government settlement.
- 4.28. Cabinet have not yet made any consideration of the level at which Council Tax will be set for 2026/27, and the rate of increase used is for illustrative purposes only at this stage.
- 4.29. **Fees & Charges for services**

- 4.30. Fees and charges make a significant contribution to the Council's budget, with £24.8m budgeted to be received in 2025/26. Any significant changes to fees and charges are presented for consideration as part of the Council's draft budget proposals and are ultimately approved by Council at final budget setting stage.
- 4.31. The annual planning assumption is that Fees and charges will normally increase at a minimum of the prevailing inflation rate.

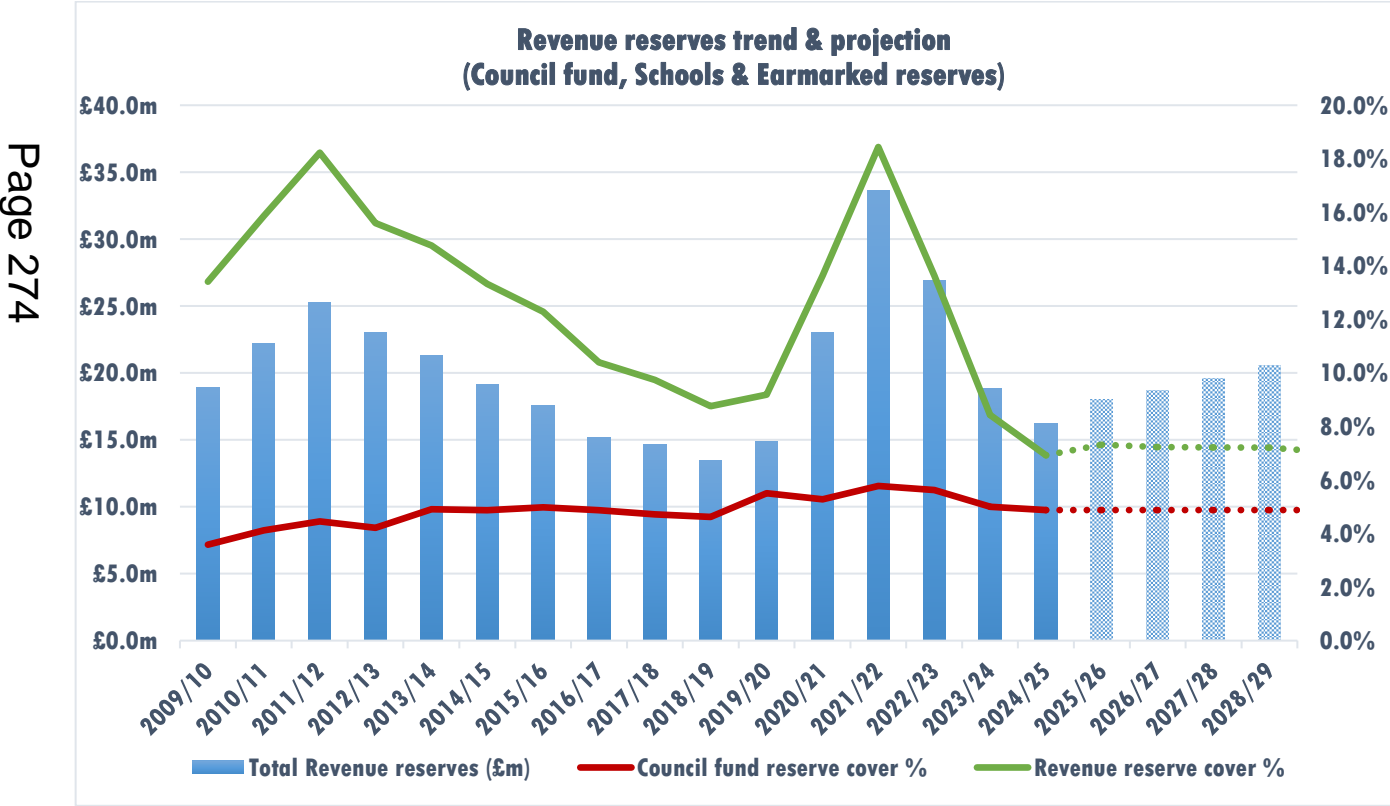
## **5. Current year budget**

- 5.1. The context outlined above continues to impact on the Council's finances in the current financial year.
- 5.2. The first full financial update for 2025/26 will not be considered until September, however early indications are of developing cost pressures and income shortfalls against the approved budget. These are currently in excess of the £850,000 contingency budget that is held.
- 5.3. The Council will need to draw on its successful experience from 2024/25 to bring forward prompt mitigating action by services in order to deliver at least a balanced outturn position by year end.
- 5.4. Notably, the 2025/26 budget continues to be supported by £3.7 million of capital receipts under the Welsh Government's directive on the flexible use of capital receipts. Originally introduced in 2019/20 as a short-term measure to facilitate investment in service transformation and reduce medium-term service costs, this approach was not intended to be a long-term funding strategy. However, the sustained need for service reform over the past five years has necessitated the continued use of this flexibility to support the delivery of cost-reduction initiatives.
- 5.5. The inherent pressures noted above will need to be assessed for their impact upon the 2026/27 budget and over the medium term unless suitably mitigated through service changes, additional funding or alternative recurrent service savings.

## **6. Reserves**

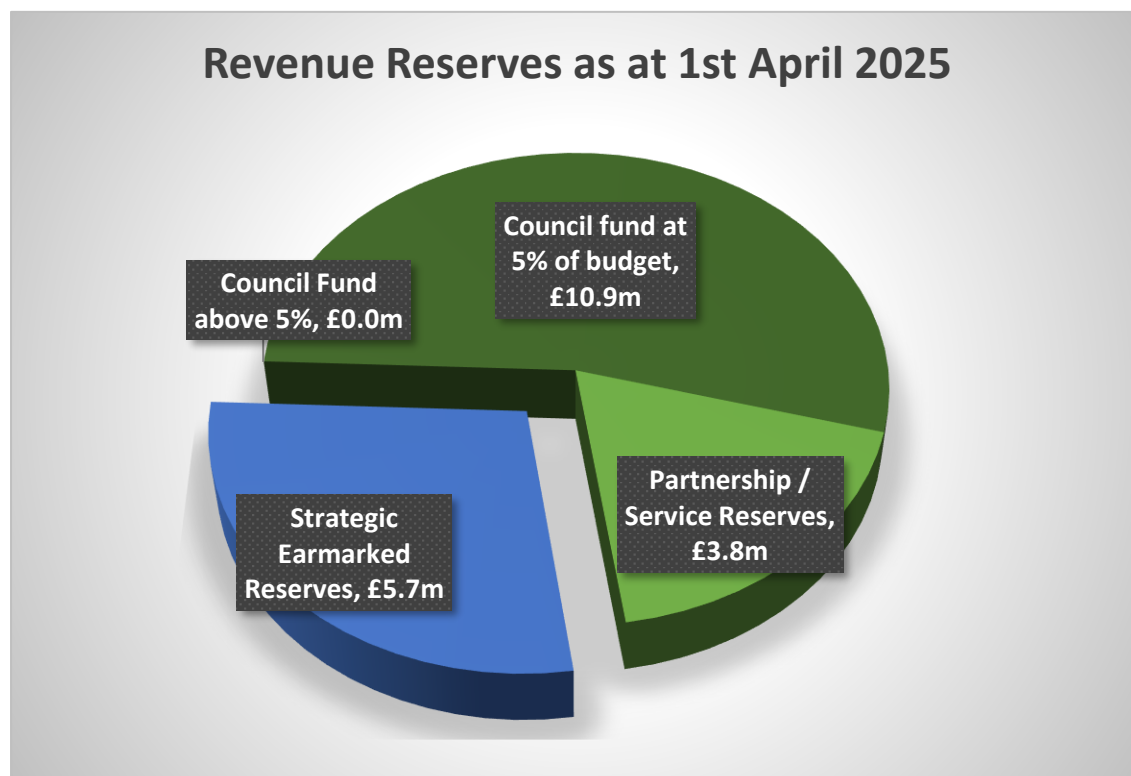
- 6.1. The Council's usable revenue reserves have been significantly depleted due to the need to support both the budget proposals and subsequent recovery measures during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This follows a period during the COVID-19 pandemic when reserves were partially restored through substantial Welsh Government funding.

- 6.2. The decisions to utilise reserves were made with careful consideration. Without this intervention, the Council would have faced severe and immediate impacts on service delivery. A balanced approach was necessary in light of the inflationary pressures and increased demand arising from the cost-of-living and public health crises.
- 6.3. Although the 2024/25 financial year saw a modest replenishment of the Council Fund and earmarked reserves, this was outweighed by a £3.187 million increase in the schools reserve deficit, bringing the cumulative schools reserve position to a £4.1 million deficit. Despite additional investment in schools' base budgets for 2025/26, a further draw on reserves is currently forecast. This trend weakens the Council's balance sheet, undermines financial resilience, and heightens risk exposure by reducing available resources.
- 6.4. The current and projected levels of the Council's usable revenue reserves are detailed below:



- 6.5. The Council Fund remains at 5% of the net revenue budget, a level deemed prudent and sufficient to manage short-term financial risks.

- 6.6. Over the medium term, overall reserve levels are expected to remain relatively stable. However, it is important to note that Monmouthshire currently has the lowest reserve cover as a percentage of net revenue budget in Wales<sup>2</sup>. This necessitates a revised reserves policy that prioritises the protection of revenue reserves to safeguard against both anticipated and unforeseen risks. Strengthened budget management and in-year financial discipline will be essential to promptly identify overspends and implement mitigating actions or savings.
- 6.7. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that many reserves are earmarked for specific services, partnerships, or timing adjustments, leaving a limited proportion available for strategic use, as outlined below:



6.8. The 2025/26 budget planning framework emphasised the need to place the Council on a path toward long-term financial sustainability, including the

preservation of an appropriate and prudent level of reserves.

<sup>2</sup> [Audit Wales report on financial sustainability of local government, December 2024 – Table 3](#)

- 6.9. The framework established clear principles for the use of general and earmarked reserves, including a commitment to avoid reliance on revenue reserves to balance the budget.
- 6.10. The reserves policy will continue to evolve to ensure that revenue reserves are both protected and replenished over the medium term, thereby maintaining the Council's capacity to respond to future financial risks.

## 7. Schools' budgets and reserve balances

- 7.1. The Council allocates funding to schools through an annual delegated budget, known as the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), for which each school's governing body holds direct responsibility. However, the Council retains a key oversight role in monitoring the overall financial performance of schools.
- 7.2. For the 2025/26 financial year, the total ISB delegated to schools amounts to **£60.45 million**, representing approximately **27%** of the Council's net budget.
- 7.3. The majority of school funding is provided by the Council, which receives resources for pre-16 education through the Welsh Government's local government revenue settlement and local taxation. Post-16 education funding is allocated via specific Welsh Government grants. Schools may also generate supplementary income through voluntary contributions, donations, and the rental of premises to community groups.
- 7.4. Schools begin each financial year with reserve balances that reflect cumulative surpluses or deficits from previous years.
- 7.5. The trend in net school reserve balances over the past ten years is as follows:

Year	Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's
2015/16	(1,156)
2016/17	(269)
2017/18	(175)
2018/19	232



2019/20	435
2020/21	(3,418)
2021/22	(6,956)
2022/23	(4,257)
2023/24	905
2024/25	4,092

- 7.6. The final financial position for 2024/25 showed a significant use of reserves, leading to an overall increase of £3.187 million in the total schools' deficit. As a result, 15 out of 35 schools are now operating in deficit. Earlier forecasts had predicted the deficit could reach £5.0 million, but this was reduced due to cost-saving measures and additional grant funding received later in the year.
- 7.7. There is considerable variation in financial performance across schools. While some continue to deplete their reserves, raising concerns, others maintain relatively healthy surpluses.
- 7.8. Pandemic-related grants temporarily boosted school balances, masking underlying structural deficits in some schools.
- 7.9. Over the past decade, ISB funding has generally increased at a rate exceeding the Council's own settlement from the Welsh Government. However, during and immediately following the pandemic, this trend reversed, coinciding with a period of substantial grant funding to schools.
- 7.10. The legacy of the pandemic continues to affect schools, particularly in areas such as attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, and additional learning needs. Addressing these challenges has required increased staffing and specialist support, driving up costs.
- 7.11. The post-pandemic period has also seen sustained inflation and higher pay awards for teaching and non-teaching staff - costs that have not always been fully funded.
- 7.12. Schools have also been expected to contribute to addressing the Council's broader budgetary pressures during successive challenging financial years.

- 7.13. Concurrently, schools are required to implement the Welsh Government's long-term education reform agenda, including the Curriculum for Wales, reducing absenteeism, closing the attainment gap, and meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act.
- 7.14. In light of the current funding context and the structural deficits within some schools, the level of future investment in education will be a critical consideration in the upcoming budget process.
- 7.15. The Council's approach must be evidence-based and strategically balanced, taking into account the variability in school financial positions, the overall budget gap, and the need to develop a sustainable, balanced budget.

## 8. Budget assumptions and the projected budget gap

- 8.1. The Authority's medium term budget modelling is reviewed regularly and reported into the Performance & Overview scrutiny committee and Cabinet on a six-monthly basis. The model contains the base budgets of the Authority overlaid with assumptions that are then updated in the light of updated data and information. This allows prudent changes to be made to the modelling to enable the gap between resources and expenditure to be highlighted.
- 8.2. External data from sources such as the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), and the Wales Fiscal Analysis unit support the budget assumptions applied within the modelling.
- 8.3. This is further supported by the work that Welsh Local Authorities produce through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), that allows validation and challenge of the assumptions made throughout the budget process.
- 8.4. The latest budget planning assumptions are shown below which reflect the updated assumptions following new data and information coming forward:

Budget assumptions 2026/27	Previous assumption	Updated Assumption	Impact of 1% change in £000's
<b>Expenditure:</b>			
Pay award (non-teaching staff)	2.30%	3.00%	1,099

Pay award (teaching staff – from September 2026)	2.30%	3.00%	419
Superannuation rates	25.3%	23.90%	668
Non-pay inflation	0.00%	2.00%	1,279
Service pressures (non-schools)	£7.5m	£7.5m	
Service pressures (schools)	£0.0m	£0.0m	
Borrowing cost pressures	£1.0m	£1.0m	
Fire levy	3.95%	3.95%	62
<b>Income and Efficiencies:</b>			
Staff vacancy factor (non-schools)	3.00%	3.00%	659
Fees and charges	2.00%	2.00%	217
<b>Funding:</b>			
Welsh Government Settlement (AEF)	1.3%	1.3%	1,352
Council Tax (MCC) - Band D increase	3.95%	3.95%	786
Capitalisation direction support	£2,358,000	£2,708,000	

88. The updated review of the assumptions contained in the modelling suggested a number of prudent proposed changes:

<b>Pay award (non-teaching staff)</b>	<p><b>Increase from 2.3% to 3.0%.</b></p> <p>Assumptions had previously been based on forecast movements in inflation in line with the target of 2% over the medium term, recognising that there is often a lag effect within pay negotiations.</p> <p>The latest Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) forecasts anticipates a more gradual decline in wage pressures, forecasting wage growth to slow to around 3.7% by the end of 2025. It is therefore felt prudent to revise this assumption upward at the current time.</p>
<b>Pay award (teaching staff)</b>	<b>Increase from 2.3% to 3.0% (September 2026 onwards).</b>

	<p>The independent pay review body has recommended a 4% increase for the academic year starting September 2025. Whilst it is yet to be accepted, this forms the basis of the forecast for the 5/12ths that will fall into the 2026/27 financial year. The projection for the 2026/27 academic year is in line with non-teaching staff at 3% for the reason outlined above.</p>
<p><b>Superannuation rates</b></p>	<p><b>Reduce from 25.3% to 23.9%.</b></p> <p>The Council's Local Government Pension Scheme valuation review in 2025 has resulted in revision to the Councils contribution rate, with a stepped reduction recommended from 24.9% in 2025/26 to 21.9% in 2028/29. This has resulted from an improved overall pension funding position within the fund.</p> <p>The Teacher's Pension Scheme (TPS) was subject to its actuarial review which increased contributions with effect from 1st April 2024 and funded via Welsh Government grant.</p>
<p><b>Non-pay inflation</b></p>	<p><b>Increase from 0% to 2.0%.</b></p> <p>Over more recent years a non-pay inflation factor of 0% has been used for modelling purposes, in favour of relying on more evidence-based pressures being brought forward from services.</p> <p>This was adjusted in 2025/26 following reflection upon previous budget rounds and the significant impact that inflation has had on final cost pressures experienced by services. At this stage, an allowance of 2% remains prudent. This assumption will be further considered as better information becomes available.</p>
<p><b>Service pressures (non-schools)</b></p>	<p><b>Maintain at £7.5m.</b></p> <p>Provision is made within the budget modelling for "unidentified pressures" of £7.5m in each of the 4 years of the medium-term financial plan and based on the level of pressures that have historically presented themselves and been accommodated as part of the budget process.</p>

	<p>When considering the gross pressures included within the 2024/25 budget outturn, coupled with early indications of cost pressures on the 2025/26 budget, this assumption remains prudent. An initial review of recurrent pressures impacting 2026/27 will be made in the early stage of the budget process and will be the subject to rigorous review and challenge with the aim of reducing and mitigating their impact.</p>
<b>Service pressures (schools)</b>	<p><b>Maintain at £0.0m.</b></p> <p>Given the funding context as outlined in Section 6 above, the level of further investment in schools over and above meeting new pay and non-pay pressures, will be a key consideration during the budget process.</p> <p>The additional recurring £1m of funding added to schools' budgets for 2025/26 will provide ongoing support for pressures being experienced.</p> <p>Any further investment will need to be carefully balanced with overall funding landscape for the Council, the need to set a balanced budget, and the need for schools to operate within a financially sustainable budget.</p>
<b>Borrowing cost pressures</b>	<p><b>Maintain at £1.0m.</b></p> <p>A full review of the revenue cost of existing and planned capital expenditure will be undertaken during the budget process. At this early stage, as a net borrower, the prevailing interest rate environment. Coupled with capital programme commitments, is expected to create further cost pressure of £1.0m in 2026/27.</p>
<b>Staff vacancy factor (non-schools)</b>	<p><b>Maintain at 3%</b></p> <p>Services have consistently experienced a challenging labour market with a shortage of available staff in some discrete service areas which has led to pressure on existing staff structures, and increased costs for commissioned services and agency staff.</p> <p>A vacancy freeze initiated as part of the budget recovery action during over recent years is expected to maintain a degree of vacancy throughout staffing structures leading into 2026/27.</p>

<b>Fees and charges</b>	<p><b>Maintain at 2%</b></p> <p>As a general rule, the council's policy is based on full cost recovery with inflationary uplifts considered annually to ensure that the Council recovers its costs for the services it provides. Whilst a blanket uplift is not applied, an increase in line with inflation is expected unless there is a clear evidence base to do otherwise. With inflation proving stickier than previously anticipated, this assumption will be kept under constant review.</p>
<b>Welsh Government Settlement (AEF)</b>  Page 282	<p><b>Maintain at 1.3% increase</b></p> <p>Welsh Government have not provided an indication of future year financial settlements, with Councils therefore modelling potential scenarios for their medium term financial planning using the support of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Wales Fiscal Analysis unit.</p> <p>A Comprehensive Spending Review is expected to be forthcoming from Welsh Government which will provide more certainty on funding allocations in the medium term.</p> <p>However in periods of comparatively low funding settlements, Monmouthshire has historically received a below Wales average increase due to the factors that influence individual Authority settlements.</p>
<b>Council Tax increase</b>	<p><b>Maintain at 3.95%</b></p> <p>The assumption of council tax increases are solely for modelling purposes and Cabinet have not yet considered the level at which Council Tax will be set for 2026/27.</p> <p>With Council tax income accounting for nearly 40% of the Council's overall income, which proportionately is the highest in Wales, this is clearly an important consideration.</p> <p>Consideration will need to be given to local context, such as the affordability for communities, balanced against the ongoing need to meet increasing demand and cost pressures of essential local services.</p>

<b>Fire levy</b>	<p><b>Maintain at 3.95%</b></p> <p>The Council is required to pay a levy and annual contribution towards the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. A planning assumption of a 3.95% increase has now been modelled ahead of the process of consultation and engagement with constituent Councils. This increase is reflective of the expected pressure on SWFRA budgets.</p>
<b>Energy</b>	<p>The Council procures its energy through a purchasing consortium, benefiting from regular market intelligence and data updates to inform budget planning. As the budget-setting process progresses, the financial impact of revised energy tariffs will be evaluated across the Council's operational estate, street lighting infrastructure, and the solar farm.</p> <p>Given the volatility of external market conditions, the energy cost landscape remains fluid. This necessitates ongoing monitoring and responsive management, including the potential implementation of mitigation strategies. These may involve reassessing the Council's decarbonisation initiatives and identifying opportunities to reduce overall energy consumption.</p>

- 8.6. The effect of these revised assumptions and pressures being incorporated into the updated modelling is shown below for 2026/27, indicating a projected budget deficit of £13.6m.
- 8.7. This represents an early assessment of the budget landscape for 2026/27. The budget process is always a dynamic one, and all figures will be revised during the process. The funding outlook for local government does, however, remain challenging and the projected budget gap a very real one.

2026/27 projected budget gap	(£000's)	
<b>2025/26 Balanced Budget</b>		<b>0</b>
<b><u>Pay</u></b>		
Superannuation rate	-668	
Pay inflation - non-teaching	3,243	

Pay inflation - teaching	1,385	
		<b>3,940</b>
<b><u>Non-Pay</u></b>		
Non-pay inflation	2,558	
Fire Levy	244	
Service pressures (non-schools)	7,500	
Service pressures (schools)	0	
Waste Adjustment	3,035	
Indicative budget savings	-819	
Treasury, Corporate & Reserves	1,456	
		<b>13,974</b>
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
Council tax increase	-3,106	
WG settlement increase	-1,758	
Fees & Charges	-434	
Reduction in capitalisation directive support	1,000	
		<b>-4,298</b>
<b>Budget Gap</b>		<b>13,616</b>

## 9. Budgetary Risk

- 9.1. In preparing the Council's 2026/27 budget, a number of financial uncertainties persist, driven by limited forward-looking information and a volatile economic environment that continues to place pressure on public services. In this context, it is essential to maintain a robust risk management framework that enables the identification, assessment, and mitigation of financial risks wherever possible.
- 9.2. The principal risks currently influencing the Council's financial planning are summarised below:



<b>Service pressures</b>	There is currently limited clarity regarding the recurrent budget pressures that will carry forward, as well as new pressures anticipated for 2026/27. This uncertainty presents a challenge in accurately forecasting service demands and associated costs.
<b>National living wage / Real living wage</b>	<p>The Council's pay structure, particularly at the lower end, is directly influenced by increases in the National Living Wage. Each financial year must begin with the lowest pay scale meeting or exceeding the NLW expected in the following April.</p> <p>Although no forecasts are currently available, historical trends show that even during periods of low inflation, the NLW has typically increased by at least 4%, with the exception of 2021.</p> <p>The limited headroom at the lower end of the pay scale may necessitate a review of the Council's grading structure. Additionally, as a Real Living Wage employer, the Council ensures all staff and apprentices are paid at or above this level, which is closely aligned with NLW movements.</p> <p>The NLW also has significant implications for commissioned care services, where the Welsh Government expects local authorities to ensure care workers are paid in line with the NLW.</p>
<b>Economic factors</b>	Inflation and interest rate fluctuations continue to impact the cost of goods, services, and borrowing, placing additional pressure on the Council's financial position.
<b>Delivery of budget saving proposals</b>	81.6% of the £10.9 million in-year savings for 2024/25 were delivered - broadly consistent with historical performance. However, this highlights a potential risk in achieving full delivery of savings targets for 2026/27.
<b>Variations to settlement Assumptions</b>	Each 1% change in the Welsh Government settlement equates to approximately £1.3 million, significantly influencing the Council's ability to plan and deliver services effectively.
<b>Income</b>	<p>The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to affect household disposable income, which in turn impacts demand for income-generating Council services.</p> <p>The new responsibilities under the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for Waste are yet to be fully embedded within services, with the corresponding funding levels being based upon future disposal performance.</p>

<b>Debt recovery</b>	Similarly, financial pressures on households are affecting the Council's ability to recover debts, including Council Tax and charges for services.
<b>Capacity for service change delivery</b>	High vacancy levels across Council services may limit the organisation's capacity to implement strategic service changes and transformation initiatives.

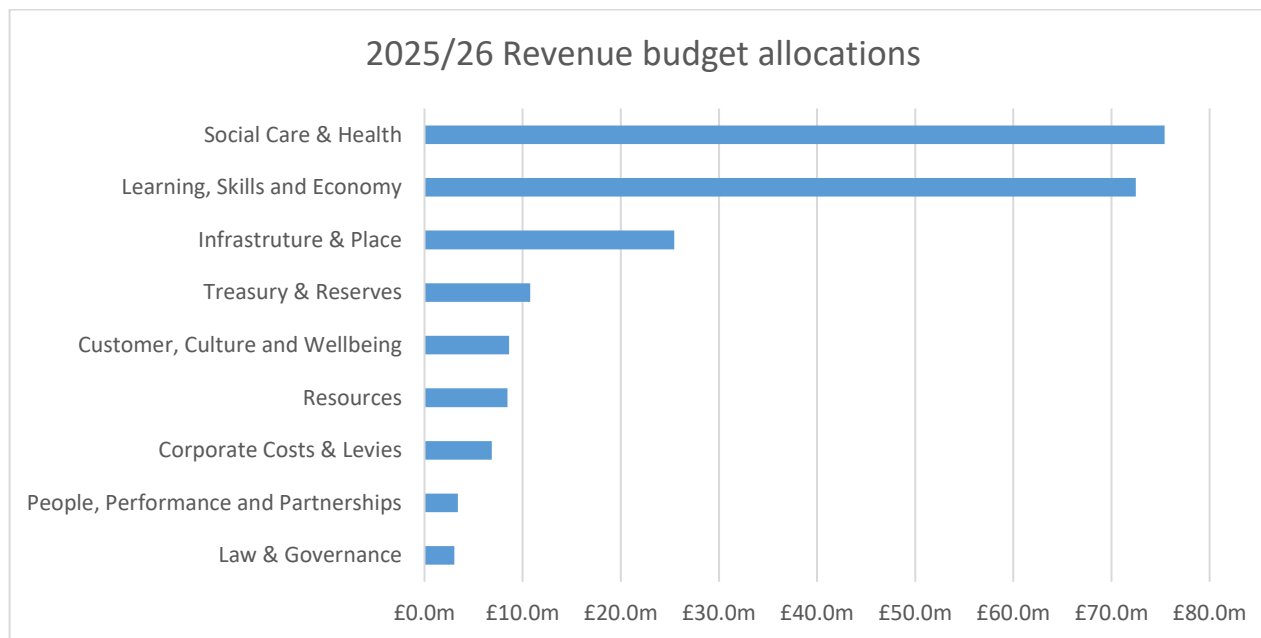
10. Medium term outlook

- 10.1. The medium term outlook remains very uncertain at the current time. Budget assumptions have been revised and based on the premise that inflation will remain under control, and that public spending by UK Government and the consequential impact on local government in Wales are in line with independent analysis. There are a lot of downside risks that could still play out and that could adversely impact further the budget shortfalls modelled over the medium term.
- 10.2. It is anticipated that the Welsh Government Comprehensive Spending Review will provide greater clarity on funding levels over the medium term that will allow service changes to be considered and planned over a more certain timeframe.
- 10.3. The most up to date modelling indicates significant budget gaps over the medium term:

Budget shortfall	In Year (£m)	Cumulative (£m)
2026/27	13.6	13.6
2027/28	8.4	22.0
2028/29	8.0	30.0
2029/30	8.0	38.0

11. Bridging the gap between expenditure and available resources

- 11.1. As the Council prepares for the 2026/27 budget and looks ahead over the medium term, Cabinet must carefully assess the extent to which further cost savings can be achieved through service efficiencies or reductions. This assessment must also consider the potential for mitigating budget shortfalls through additional funding streams or income generation.
- 11.2. Since 2010, the Council has responded to sustained financial austerity by delivering significant efficiencies across services. Many areas are now operating at the minimum level required to meet statutory obligations. In light of the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and beyond, a more strategic, evidence-led approach is essential to ensure that resident needs continue to be met within a financially sustainable framework.
- 11.3. Persistent cost pressures, coupled with funding settlements that have not kept pace with inflation or rising demand, and the introduction of new, often underfunded responsibilities, have led to a growing reliance on savings, efficiencies, and the use of reserves and capital receipts to balance the budget.
- 11.4. With reserve levels now comparatively low and the scope for further efficiencies increasingly constrained, the Council faces a significant financial challenge. Addressing this will require a deliberate and forward-looking response - one that prioritises long-term reform, financial resilience, and the transformation of service delivery.
5. Of the Council's £227 million service delivery budget, 77% is allocated to three core service areas: Social Care & Health; Learning, Skills & Economy; and Infrastructure & Place (including Waste, Housing, Planning, Highways, and Transport). Achieving financial sustainability over the medium term will necessitate substantial and targeted programmes of change within these high-expenditure areas.



## 11.6. The Council's programme of change

- 11.7. The Council's evolving programme of change, underpinned by strong financial governance, provides the strategic framework through which services will be reshaped to meet resident needs within available resources. This programme is not simply a response to financial pressures but also a proactive effort to modernise and improve outcomes.
- 11.8. Positive progress continues across the programme of change. To maximise its impact, there is a requirement for coordination and discipline to how this work is captured, aligned, and reported. Doing so will help create a more coherent and connected picture of the overall programme, even though different elements are at varying stages of development.
- 11.9. By putting strong foundations in place, better assessment can be made of the quality and direction of the work underway, ensuring that the outcomes being achieved are moving the Council in the right direction. This will also allow the Council to quickly adapt and refine approach as needed.

11.10. Equally important is identifying what the Council is not doing or may need to stop doing, given the limits on capacity, resources, and funding. Making these choices will be key to delivering meaningful and sustainable change.

11.11. Key areas of ongoing change include:

- **Digital Collaboration:** Leveraging technology to streamline operations, improve service accessibility, and reduce costs.
- **Whole-Authority Strategy for Wellbeing and Prevention:** Shifting focus from reactive services to preventative approaches that improve long-term outcomes and reduce demand.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Embedding the systematic use of data and evidence in policy development and service planning.
- **Leadership Alignment:** Ensuring senior leadership is fully engaged and aligned with transformation objectives to drive cultural and operational change.
- **Community-Centric Service Design:** Enhancing resident engagement and co-design to ensure services are responsive, inclusive, and locally relevant.
- **Workforce and Organisational Culture:** Investing in staff development, fostering innovation, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.
- **Asset optimisation:** The strategic asset management plan is building on identifying underutilised or surplus assets and transforming for new, more effective uses that align with community needs and policy goals.
- A more centralised co-ordination and **assessment of value/outcome/alignment of specific grant funding** streams with our future direction of travel.
- **Appropriate and fit for purpose governance, risk management and capability** – ensuring that all of the above and below is underpinning with sound arrangements to keep the business safe and secure, for delivery and implementation to be overseen, and impacts and outcomes successfully delivered.

11.12. This integrated approach to change is essential to bridging the gap between expenditure and available resources, while maintaining the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality, resident-focused services.

### **Budgetary Framework for 2026/27**

11.13. The budget framework will be underpinned by the set of strategic budget principles approved as part of the MTFS in July 2024:

### MTFS Strategic Budget Principles

1. To maintain financial management arrangements that will be sufficiently robust to support the delivery of financial plans and mitigate corporate risks.
2. A citizen facing budget focused on mitigating any potential impacts of inequality or climate change.
3. A balanced budget reflecting objectives, priorities and commitments set out in the Council's Community and Corporate Plan.
4. Council budgets to be continually reviewed to ensure resource allocations are delivering value money and continue to align to the delivery of priority outcomes.
5. Budgets set without budget shortfalls having general recourse to reserve funding. In year spending will be met by in year funding.
6. The Council Fund (general reserve) will be maintained at a minimum of 5% of Net Revenue Expenditure (excluding the Schools Delegated budget) over the period of the MTFS.
7. An affordable and acceptable level of council tax increase with qualifying households being encouraged to access all dispensations they are entitled to receive.
8. To increase existing fees and charges. As a minimum fees and charges will be increased to match cost inflation. The Council will review opportunities to introduce new fees as appropriate.
9. To manage, wherever possible, any necessary reduction in the workforce through turnover rather than through specific voluntary or compulsory redundancy programmes.
10. To optimise the use of specific grant funding across the Council, taking advantage of legitimate opportunity to offset existing core cost through direct charge to the funding stream.
11. To sustain services through the development of strategic partnering arrangements with other local authorities, public sector partners, town and community councils, and third sector organisations.
12. Informed estimates will be factored into the MTFP for cost pressures anticipated to result from inflation, demand increases, growth and investment.

### MTFS Strategic Budget Principles

13. To maintain a budget contingency budget of no less than £1m from 2025/26 with specific criteria for its use. No reduction in the budget is permissible unless there is a clear and realistic plan for reinstating the budget within the Medium Term.
14. To optimise the use of land and buildings and consider alternate uses or disposal where there is not a clear ongoing case for continued use.
15. To be open to using capital receipt balances to support one-off revenue expenditure associated with service reform and to reviewing existing capital programme commitments not yet entered into.
16. Capital investment decisions will support the Council's corporate priorities and mitigate any statutory risks taking account of the return on investment and robust business cases.
17. Prudential borrowing will only be used to support the capital programme where it is affordable and sustainable within the Council's overall borrowing limits and the revenue budget over the long term.
18. To act in accordance with council's risk appetite in determining the amount of risk that the council is willing to seek or accept in the pursuit of its objectives.

### Capital programme

- 12.1. In the current climate of financial constraint, capital investment must remain within affordable limits. Demand for capital resources continues to exceed availability, making the prioritisation of projects, securing external funding, and collaboration with partners essential to meeting investment needs.
- 12.2. The capital programme is subject to the same external pressures affecting the revenue budget, including inflation, supply chain disruptions, and internal resourcing challenges. These factors are contributing to delays and reduced delivery capacity within existing capital budgets.
- 12.3. While ongoing condition surveys and monitoring help identify and manage risks, the ageing asset base will inevitably require increasing levels of investment to maintain or refurbish infrastructure to acceptable standards.

12.4. Annual capital allocations for asset maintenance and refurbishment are targeted at the highest-priority backlog issues, focusing on assets in the poorest condition and associated risks. Estate optimisation, asset disposals, transfers, and strategic capital projects will also be used to mitigate risk, although these measures will not fully address the total backlog.

12.5. The current draft capital MTFP is outlined below:

Scheme	Final Budget 2025/26	Indicative Budget 2026/27	Indicative Budget 2027/28	Indicative Budget 2028/29	Indicative Budget 2029/30
<b>Expenditure</b>	£	£	£	£	£
Property Maintenance	1,872,357	1,653,357	1,653,357	1,653,357	1,653,357
Property Maintenance Fees	236,194	236,194	236,194	236,194	236,194
County Farms Maintenance	300,773	300,773	300,773	300,773	300,773
Upgrade School Kitchens	39,725	39,725	39,725	39,725	39,725
<b>Asset Management Schemes</b>	<b>2,449,049</b>	<b>2,230,049</b>	<b>2,230,049</b>	<b>2,230,049</b>	<b>2,230,049</b>
Bergavenny 3-19 school	12,232,076	0	0	0	0
<b>School Development Schemes</b>	<b>12,232,076</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Carriageway major works	1,136,540	1,136,540	1,136,540	1,136,540	1,136,540
Carriageways & Structures – additional improvements	2,743,000	1,312,000	1,312,000	1,312,000	1,312,000
Safety fence upgrades	76,181	76,181	76,181	76,181	76,181
Footway Reconstruction	197,453	197,453	197,453	197,453	197,453
Reconstruction of bridges & retaining walls	449,041	449,041	449,041	449,041	449,041
Road safety & trafficman programme	161,508	129,508	129,508	129,508	129,508
Signing upgrades & disabled facilities	38,091	38,091	38,091	38,091	38,091
Street Lighting Defect Column Programme	171,408	171,408	171,408	171,408	171,408
Flood Alleviation Schemes	30,427	11,427	11,427	11,427	11,427
Drainage & Gully works	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000
Structural Repairs - Public rights of way	437,091	118,091	118,091	118,091	118,091
Surveys and Closures - Public rights of way	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	170,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Transport Schemes</b>	<b>6,075,740</b>	<b>4,204,740</b>	<b>4,204,740</b>	<b>4,204,740</b>	<b>4,204,740</b>



Capital Region City Deal	730,200	730,200	730,200	730,200	730,200
S106 Schemes	287,524	0	0	0	0
<b>Regeneration Schemes</b>	<b>1,017,724</b>	<b>730,200</b>	<b>730,200</b>	<b>730,200</b>	<b>730,200</b>
Disabled Facilities Grant	900,000	900,000	900,000	900,000	900,000
Access for all - Schools	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Access For All	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
<b>Inclusion Schemes</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>
ICT Hardware replacement	126,000	260,000	260,000	260,000	260,000
Network Estate replacement	100,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
SRS capital reserve contribution	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000
Business world upgrade transition	40,000	0	0	0	0
Asset Management software transition	51,000	0	0	0	0
Ransomware & security	84,500	42,000	42,000	42,000	42,000
<b>ICT Schemes</b>	<b>462,500</b>	<b>413,000</b>	<b>413,000</b>	<b>413,000</b>	<b>413,000</b>
Vehicle Leasing	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
<b>Vehicles Leasing</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>
Capitalisation Directive	3,707,500	2,357,500	1,357,500	0	0
<b>Capitalisation Directive</b>	<b>3,707,500</b>	<b>2,357,500</b>	<b>1,357,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Fixed Asset Disposal Costs	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Match Funding of Grant applications	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
Contingency budget	0	560,000	560,000	560,000	560,000
<b>Other Schemes</b>	<b>550,000</b>	<b>1,110,000</b>	<b>1,110,000</b>	<b>1,110,000</b>	<b>1,110,000</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>29,194,590</b>	<b>13,745,490</b>	<b>12,745,490</b>	<b>11,387,990</b>	<b>11,387,990</b>
<b>Funding</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Supported Borrowing	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)
Unsupported Borrowing	(18,068,566)	(4,256,990)	(4,256,990)	(4,256,990)	(4,256,990)
Grants & Contributions	(3,333,524)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)
Reserve Funded	(103,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)
Capital Receipts	(3,757,500)	(2,407,500)	(1,407,500)	(50,000)	(50,000)

Vehicle Lease Financing	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(29,194,590)</b>	<b>(13,745,490)</b>	<b>(12,745,490)</b>	<b>(11,387,990)</b>	<b>(11,387,990)</b>
<b>(Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

- 12.6. The Council's Capital Strategy sets out the framework for making and managing capital investment decisions aligned with corporate objectives. It ensures a consistent, informed, and transparent approach to investment planning. The Capital Strategy will be refreshed and presented alongside final budget proposals to Council in March 2026.
- 12.7. While the core capital programme remains in place and supports infrastructure investment, significant backlog pressures persist outside the programme due to affordability constraints. These pressures carry varying levels of risk that must be actively managed and mitigated.
- 12.8. All schemes within the indicative programme will be reviewed for timing and alignment with strategic priorities. Non-urgent projects may be deferred to focus resources on priority schemes or to release capital receipts for wider service redesign.
- 12.9. The Capital Programme for 2026-2030 will be reviewed during the budget-setting process to ensure revenue implications are accurately reflected and that capital plans remain affordable, prudent, and sustainable.
- 12.10. The capital receipts summary below shows the expected level of receipts and planned usage, highlighting the balances available in the next few years. Future investment in capital schemes, is in part dependent on future success of achieving capital receipts as it mitigates the requirement for borrowing.

### 13. Budget Process and Timetable

- 13.1. In the context of all the above, setting a balanced budget for 2026/27 will be significantly challenging and will involve difficult decisions that will allow Cabinet to align and deliver the aims and aspirations set out in its revised Corporate and Community plan, and within the confines of available funding. The work required needs to involve Members and Monmouthshire communities as early in the process as possible.
- 13.2. The draft milestone dates in developing the budgetary process for 2026/27 is as follows:

Review of latest of budget modelling using updated assumptions & data	September 2025
Budget workshops – SLT/Cabinet/Officers	October 2025
High level pressure & saving mandates produced for Cabinet scrutiny	October 2025
MTFP update report - Cabinet	November 2025
Final pressure & saving mandates to be produced	December 2025
Budget assumptions, pressures and savings to undergo further Cabinet scrutiny	December 2025
Consideration of Welsh Government Provisional settlement	December 2025
Set Council tax base - ICMD	December 2025
Consideration of draft revenue & capital budget proposals - Cabinet	January 2026
Scrutiny of Proposals - Select Committees	January & February 2026
Public Consultation for 2026/27 budget	January & February 2026
Consideration of scrutiny, consultation, final pressures, savings & assumptions	February 2026
Consideration of Welsh Government Final settlement	February 2026
Final budget proposals - Cabinet	March 2026
Formal Council Tax Resolution & Budget Proposals - Council	March 2026

## 14. Progress against the MTFS Delivery plan

- 14.1. The medium term financial strategy (MTFS) approved by Council in July 2024 outlined the delivery plan that will convert the MTFS into practice. The plan contains the actions proposed in accordance with the strategy document. These align to the strategy's key aims and objectives.
- 14.2. There was a commitment made to provide a six-monthly update on progress against the delivery plan to monitor progress of the plan against the core objectives. The latest update of progress is outlined below:

Action No.	Action/Description	Outcome/Output	Milestones			Timescale for completion	Responsible Officer/Body	Progress update July 2025
			25/26	26/27	27/28			
Page 296	Develop a Change and Improvement plan to enable delivery of required savings over the medium term	Programme of work developed with overarching governance to enable delivery to be co-ordinated	✓	✓	✓	Continual but next milestone is input into 26/27 budget process – Autumn 2025	Cabinet/SLT	Programme evolving to formally capture ongoing change processes.
2	Delivery of budget holder training	Refresh and rollout of training to all budget holders	✓	✓	✓	Autumn 2025	Head of Finance	
3	Self-assessment of compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code	Self-assessment to identify further actions to improve the Council's financial management		✓	✓	March 2026	Deputy Chief Executive	
4	Independent financial resilience review to be undertaken	Independent review to highlight and further areas for improvement		✓		March 2026	Deputy Chief Executive	

5	Enhance approach to modelling future growth, demand, demographic and inflationary pressures in the MTFP		✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Head of Finance	Work is progressing on developing more evidence based data metrics to support the budget process. Some of this has already been embedded within the updated assumptions in this plan update
6	Revenue reserves (including school balances) and useable capital receipt review to be undertaken in line with the revised reserves policy	Rationalisation of revenue reserves	✓			July 2025	Deputy Chief Executive; Head of Finance	Completed as part of 2024/25 outturn and endorsed by Cabinet
7	Financial risk register to be maintained and regularly updated	To ensure that suitable mitigations are in place against key financial risks	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Head of Finance	Risks have currently been identified and updated as part of this plan update. Also captured through various risk registers.
8	Annual review of fees and charges	To benchmark and assess fees and charges to ascertain scope for further income potential	✓	✓	✓	December 2025 and annually	Head of Finance	

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