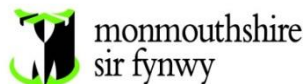


Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 22 September 2025

Notice of meeting:

People Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 30th September, 2025 at 10.00 am,
The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk**

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

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Open Forum. Our Scrutiny Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council website If you would like to speak under the Public Open Forum at an upcoming meeting you will need to give three working days' notice in advance of the meeting by contacting Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk The amount of time afforded to each member of the public to speak is at the Chair's discretion, but to enable us to accommodate multiple speakers we ask that contributions be no longer than 3 minutes. Alternatively, if you would like to submit a written, audio or video representation, please contact the team via the same email address to arrange this. The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting. If combined representations received exceed 30 minutes, a selection of these based on theme will be shared at the meeting. All representations received will be made available to councillors prior to the meeting. If you would like to suggest future topics for scrutiny by one of our Scrutiny Committees, please do so by emailing Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk	

4.	Whole Authority Approach to Wellbeing and Prevention - Scrutiny of a strategy to take forward a whole authority approach to wellbeing and prevention.	1 - 52
5.	Community Meals - Scrutiny of an approach to ensure a good quality and sustainable service model for Community Meals.	53 - 94
6.	People Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and Action List.	95 - 102
7.	Council and Cabinet Work Planner.	103 - 110
8.	To confirm the following minutes:	
8.1.	People Scrutiny Committee - 16th July 2025 (Special Meeting).	111 - 118
8.2.	People Scrutiny Committee - 22nd July 2025 (Ordinary Meeting).	119 - 132
9.	Next Meeting: Tuesday 25th November 2025 at 10.00am.	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jan Butler, Goetre Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Christopher Edwards, St. Kingsmark;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Simon Howarth, Llanelly Hill;, Independent Group
County Councillor Penny Jones, Raglan;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Maureen Powell, Pen Y Fal;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Sue Riley, Bulwark and Thornwell;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Maria Stevens, Severn;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Jackie Strong, Caldicot Cross;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Martyn Groucutt, Lansdown;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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

Welsh Language

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

Public Open Forum

Our Scrutiny Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council [website](#)

If you would like to speak under the Public Open Forum at an upcoming meeting you will need to give three working days' notice in advance of the meeting by contacting Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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

Alternatively, if you would like to submit a written, audio or video representation, please contact the team via the same email address to arrange this. The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting. If combined representations received exceed 30 minutes, a selection of these based on theme will be shared

at the meeting. All representations received will be made available to councillors prior to the meeting.

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

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.

Role of the Pre-meeting

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

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

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

Scrutinising Policy

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

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

General Questions:

Empowering Communities

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

Service Demands

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

Financial Planning

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

Making savings and generating income

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

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

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

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

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

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

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank

SUBJECT: A Whole Authority Preventative Strategy for Supporting Resilient, Healthier Communities

MEETING: People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 30th September 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

To develop a preventative strategy, for adoption across the whole authority, aimed at supporting resilient, healthier communities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For committee members to scrutinise the draft strategy 'Living Well Monmouthshire' and provide comment and feedback prior to its potential endorsement by Cabinet.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The strategy is intended to support the delivery of the Council's Community and Corporate Plan with specific emphasis on:

- A Fair Place, where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced; and
- A Connected Place, where people feel part of a community and valued.

3.2 The overall aim of the strategy is that, *"Residents, especially our more vulnerable and deprived residents, are enabled to live healthier and independently for longer – boosting their wellbeing as well as delaying or reducing their call on statutory services."*

3.3 The strategy is building on well-established foundations including:

- The council has strong relationships with key partners including health brought together under the Integrated Services Partnership Board;
- Many parts of the council have developed multi-agency approaches to working preventatively with people;
- Key services, such as Adult Social Care are undertaking programmes of work aligned with the strategy such as the reablement pathway and the provision of information and advice;
- The Integrated Wellbeing Network* is well established in the Local Authority linking with many community-based support organisations;
- There is a strong focus within the Local Authority of keeping physically active, engaging with nature and building peer support;
- The council is seeking to develop data analytics to better understand population needs.

3.4 The introduction of the Living Well strategy is well-timed from a policy perspective and aligns with the Welsh Government ambition to become a Marmot nation. The Future Generations Commission Report (2025) states,

“The Health and Well-being mission is to transform how public bodies in Wales keep people healthy, shifting the focus towards prevention and long-term well-being”.

In similar vein, Investing in a Healthier Wales – Prioritising Prevention (Public Health Wales, 2025) states,

“Despite the fragility of public sector finances, now is the time to prioritise investment in people’s health and well-being. Such investment can reverse the decline in the nation’s health, address the root causes of health inequalities and enable the people of Wales to live longer, healthier and happier lives.”

3.5 In the first instance, the strategy intends to focus on supporting adults who are near to or needing statutory support, with particular attention to those individuals or communities who are the most vulnerable or at risk of ill-health due to social and environmental factors.

3.6 Implementation of the strategy will depend on three core working principles: -alignment, targeting and collaboration. The strategy will be delivered via interconnected workstreams taken forward concurrently with an iterative approach to learning and review as the work evolves. Within each workstream, there is an expectation to facilitate and promote the active involvement of others including residents, colleagues, partners, volunteers and organisations involved in community based support.

3.7 The initial workstreams, which are detailed in appendix 2, illustrate some of the tasks and activities that will be undertaken. The workstreams include:

- Data and Evaluation
- Practice models and service mapping
- Commissioning and the use of community assets
- Partnerships
- The provision of information and advice
- Communications

3.8 For residents, key outcomes that we are seeking include:

- Increase in overall healthy life expectancy;
- People are enabled to live well and independently, preventing and delaying the need for statutory services;
- People are more physically and mentally active, and their overall wellbeing is improved;
- People have easy access to specific information and advice relevant to their health and wellbeing;
- People have access to individualised community-based support to help them improve their long-term wellbeing;
- People have more (social) interactions and more opportunities to volunteer;
- People are shaping how community wellbeing services are designed and implemented.

3.9 It is proposed that implementation would be driven through a cross-directorate working group overseen via a joint programme board.

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

4.1 The Living Well strategy seeks to reduce health inequalities and improve quality of life and wellbeing across communities in the County, ensuring that those who need it the most have access to community-based support. Working to support good wellbeing outcomes for people is central objective, particularly those with protected characteristics including age and disability.

4.2 The strategy is fundamentally aligned to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act through promoting a stronger long-term focus on prevention, early intervention, collaboration, and community involvement. The strategy actively seeks to ensure that people have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, no matter what their background or circumstance. The strategy seeks to ensure that the council establishes and reinforces collaborative ways of working that will promote people's physical and mental well-being, and over the long-term will help build communities that are resilient and well-connected.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

	Benefits	Dis-benefits
Adopt a whole authority preventative strategy. RECOMMENDED	<p>Adopting a strategy will provide a coherent approach to addressing inequalities and supporting positive wellbeing outcomes across communities.</p> <p>The strategy will support people to live well and independently for longer, reducing or delaying the need for more intensive services.</p> <p>The strategy will offer the council a framework to communicate with residents and partners about promoting positive wellbeing in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>The strategy will support the delivery of the Community & Corporate plan and take the council forward in becoming a resident-centred organisation.</p>	<p>Adopting a strategy will have a resource implication in respect of workforce time.</p> <p>Service and practice models may need to be realigned.</p>
Do not adopt a whole council strategy	Not adopting a policy would mean that business carries on	Problems are not addressed and there is less opportunity to intervene in a coordinated way

NOT RECOMMENDED	<p>as usual, minimising any impact on existing services.</p> <p>Services / resources would not be required to realign or adapt in order to meet the objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>Cross-directorate working and implementing governance / oversight arrangements can present challenges and take time. These challenges would be avoided through maintaining a business as usual approach.</p>	<p>to address inequalities in health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>Given the wider regional and national policy context, Monmouthshire's unique perspective and contribution to this area of work would risk getting lost.</p> <p>Opportunity to maximise resources, including existing or new grants, might be lost.</p>
------------------------	---	--

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The development of a transparent performance and evaluation framework has been identified as a key workstream. The framework needs to balance ambition and realism and contain clearly articulated objectives. The lived experience of people will be central alongside a range of different measures and milestones to help track whether planned actions are being implemented. Measures will include qualitative and quantitative population indicators incorporating the use of social stories. Where possible measures will align to existing performance evaluations.

7. REASONS:

7.1 The Living Well strategy has been developed in response to a number of people and organisational drivers. Monmouthshire faces significant health and social challenges driven by an aging population, health inequalities, and socio-economic disparities. There is an aging population – more than a third of our residents are aged over 65 and this proportion is predicted to increase significantly in the coming years.

7.2 Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is higher than the average in Wales, however, people living in more deprived areas have a shorter healthy life expectancy and experience the negative effects of aging sooner compared to those in the least deprived areas.

7.3 From a service perspective, the changes in population needs are resulting in greater numbers of people needing formal care and support. The increasing complexity of people's needs requires higher-cost support placing increased cost pressure on council budgets. These pressures are not solely felt by social services, but occur also within a range of other support areas such as housing and homelessness, community safety, debt advice and public protection.

7.4 With money tied up in acute provision, it is challenging to use the resources for preventative work. There is a pressing need to find new ways of working to address these service pressures and help increase financial sustainability across the Council. The strategy represents an opportunity to address these challenges proactively by working in partnership to tackle the

underlying issues affecting people's health and wellbeing, and through the provision of effective, coordinated and targeted community based-support.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The cost of the implementing the Living Well Strategy has not been assessed yet. This is not considered to be an inhibitor at this point, as some early activity can be delivered within existing resources. As the programme develops, we will identify needs for additional funds or the potential for reallocation of existing resources.

8.2 There are some initial steps that could be undertaken to better understand and mitigate the financial risks and issues associated with the strategy, as well as a number of mechanisms which could be utilised to secure future additional resources. These are detailed within the draft strategy and include: -a more streamlined approach to grant utilisation; realignment of current resources; increased understanding of returns on investment to support the development of viable business cases and joint bids for additional grants.

9. CONSULTEES:

Members Seminar, June 2025

Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

Cabinet Member for Equalities & Engagement

Cabinet Members

Senior Leadership Team

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 draft strategy

Appendix 2 initial implementation plan

11. AUTHOR:

Jane Rodgers

Strategic Director

janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Is my report exempt?

In some instances it may be necessary to submit a report to a committee but withhold the whole report, or part of that report, due to the sensitive nature of information contained within it.

There are specific circumstances in which a report may be considered exempt which are set in legislation. When writing your report bear in mind the following circumstances to consider whether your report should be exempt;

Local Government Act, Schedule 12A, Part 4;

12. Information relating to a particular individual
13. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
14. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
15. Information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
16. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
17. Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
 - a. To give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - b. To make an order or direction under any enactment
18. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

If you are unsure if the report should be exempt or not you should contact Democratic Services or the Monitoring Officer for further advice and guidance. The principal to bear in mind however is that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

If your report is to be exempt you should let Democratic Services know as soon as possible if you have not already done so when adding the item to the forward plan of the relevant committee.

When submitting your report to Democratic Services for publication with the agenda you must also include an exemption certificate which give details as to why the report is exempt and not for publication. This certificate will be publicly available with the agenda in place of the report so the reasoning for the exemption should be made clear on this form. The exemption certificate is available overleaf.

Further information on definitions and exemptions is available within the Local Government Act at the following link; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/schedule/12A>

SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

Meeting and Date of Meeting: [Insert date and meeting](#)

Report: [Insert report title](#)

Author: [Insert author](#)

I have considered grounds for exemption of information contained in the background paper for the report referred to above and make the following recommendation to the Proper Officer:-

Exemptions applying to the report:

[\[Enter the section and reason of the exemption, as defined by the Local Government Act set out above e.g – This report will be exempt under paragraph 12 of Schedule 12A – Information relating to a particular individual\]](#)

Factors in favour of disclosure:

Openness & transparency in matters concerned with the public

Prejudice which would result if the information were disclosed:

[\[Give a brief indication of what information would be disclosed and the impact of its disclosure\]](#)

My view on the public interest test is as follows:

Factors in favour of disclosure are outweighed by those against.

Recommended decision on exemption from disclosure:

Maintain exemption from publication in relation to report

Date: [Insert date](#)

Signed: [Signed by report author](#)

Post: [Insert post](#)

I accept/I do not accept the recommendation made above

Signed: [\[Signed by Chief Officer / Head of Service / Chief Executive\]](#)

Date: [Insert Date](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

Living Well Monmouthshire

A Preventative Strategy for Resilient, Healthier Communities

This strategy is a key component for delivering the overarching purpose of MCC's Community & Corporate Plan: **"We want Monmouthshire to be a zero-carbon county supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life"** and two of the Plan's objectives:

A Fair Place, where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced

- People are supported when they need help and are given the opportunity to build their resilience as individuals, families and communities
- Citizens work with the Council and their own communities, helping them to take action and shape their futures

A Connected Place, where people feel part of a community and valued

- High quality social care and community-based support which enables and empowers people to live their lives on their terms
- Healthy and sustainable places and communities, where health inequalities that exist within and between communities have been reduced

Aim

Recognising the growing gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, and the impact that this has on individuals, families and council services, our aim is that:

Residents, especially our more vulnerable and deprived residents, are enabled to live healthier and independently for longer – boosting their wellbeing as well as delaying or reducing their call on statutory services.

Objectives

A - Healthier Lifestyles

Residents (especially those most at risk of ill-health) increase their physical, mental and social activity, maintain a healthy diet and avoid harmful habits

B - Individual Resilience

Residents (especially those experiencing loneliness and isolation) build connections in their local communities, through which they can access support when needed

C - Community Resilience

Communities (especially in our more disadvantaged areas) have a diverse network of active and inclusive clubs, societies and associations that help reduce loneliness and isolation, and enable people to look out for and support each other

Approach

There are three interdependent strategic pillars: **Alignment, Targeting, Collaboration**

1. Alignment

- 1.1. We will take a **whole-authority approach** to wellbeing and prevention. with close cross-departmental collaboration and working to a shared understanding of definitions, goals and practice models.
- 1.2. This will require a clear **governance/management framework** that is decisive, can reallocate resources when required and supports innovative practices.

- 1.3. **Monitoring indicators and mechanisms** will be developed to support decision making and accountability, with service areas able to report to SLT and Cabinet on their alignment with the objectives of the strategy and any gaps that could be filled.

2. Targeting

- 2.1. We will **prioritise supporting those who are near to needing statutory support** – individuals at risk and cohorts of residents experiencing levels of deprivation that make them vulnerable to early ill-health.
- 2.2. This will require us to be **data driven** so that we can identify the vulnerable individuals and cohorts, and to respond in the most appropriate way.
- 2.3. We will endeavour to strike an **optimum balance** between targeted (cohort and individual) and whole population (universal) approaches.

3. Collaboration

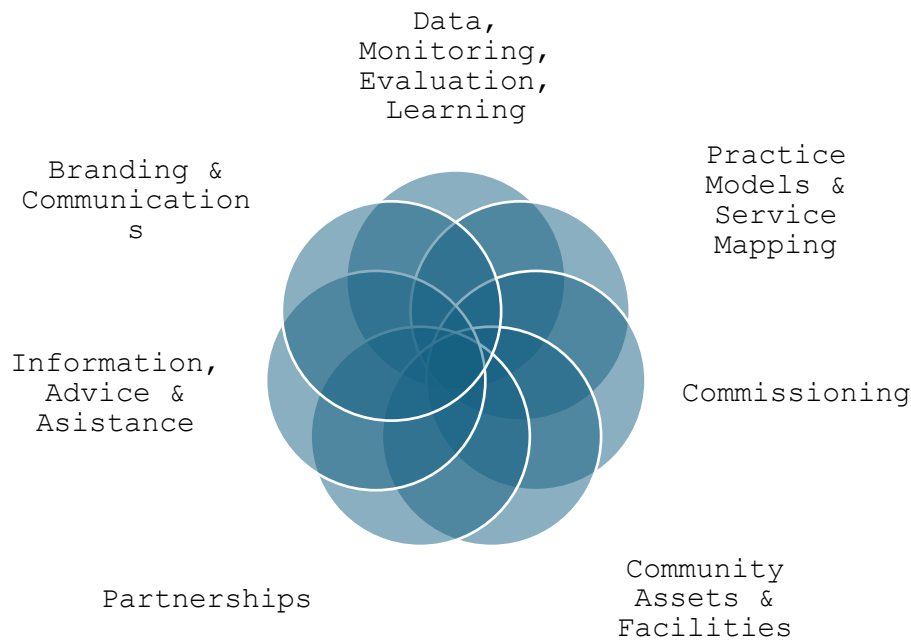
- 3.1. Recognising that we cannot achieve these objectives on our own, we will build a **partnership of statutory and third sector organisations and businesses** to promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in Monmouthshire.
- 3.2. This will be facilitated by developing clear **messaging and branding** to use internally and externally to build support for our goals and approach.
- 3.3. Wherever possible, we will **coproduce plans** with our target communities.

What success might look like for residents

- Increase in overall healthy life expectancy with a reduction in differences between demographics, so people are enabled to live well and independently, preventing and delaying the need for statutory services for as long as possible
- People are more physically and mentally active, and their overall wellbeing is improved (physical and psychological) with decreased rates of mental ill-health
- People have easy access (through multiple means) to specific information and advice relevant to their health and wellbeing, and more people have access to individualised community-based support to help them improve their long-term wellbeing.
- People have more (social) interactions and more opportunities to volunteer (especially in more deprived areas of the county), so they feel more connected and confident in accessing ad hoc support from their community when needed
- People are shaping how community wellbeing services are designed and implemented, and communities have the wellbeing support they need and have increased resilience as a result

Workstreams and Projects

The strategy will be delivered through several workstreams within and across Directorates, designed to have an immediate to medium term (5 year) impact. Smaller project work sits within the workstreams. The workstreams are inter-dependant, moving forward in correlation rather than sequentially. The intention is for the work to create foundations and mechanisms which will support the evolution of preventative working over time. Activity is designed to have an impact at both a community level and at an individual level. The current workstreams are set out within a separate document.



Whilst the strategy depends on a whole council approach, it is recognised that some service areas will be at the forefront of implementation. These include:- Social Care, Housing, Community Development, Adult Learning, Mon Life, Community Hubs, Place Making.

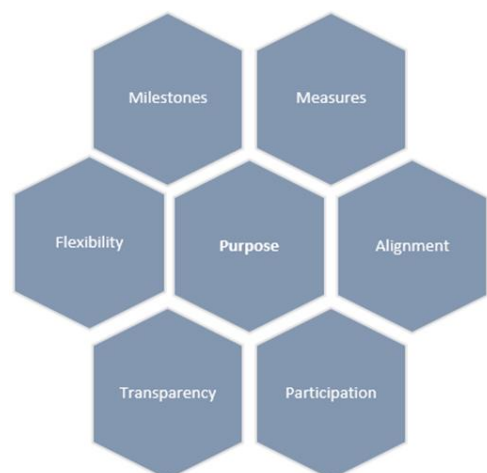
Approach to Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation

Reviewing and evaluating the progress and impact of activity within the workstreams is essential for guiding the strategy, driving accountability, and ultimately achieving positive outcomes—especially in prevention, where the benefits often unfold over time and may be difficult to quantify. We will adopt an iterative approach to learning and flexibility in design so that we can build on success, use windows of opportunity when they arise and adapt where required.

Our approach will use milestones and a range of different measures to assess impact. A preventive approach is best captured by the lived experience of people: those whose lives are improved, risks reduced, and communities strengthened. This will be placed at the heart of the evaluation while balancing ambition, realism, and transparency.

Our approach to evaluation will be built on several foundational principles:

- Clarity of **Purpose**: Articulating aims in terms of human experience and wellbeing
- **Milestones**: To help track whether planned actions are being implemented. These provide a bridge between activity and outcome: even if population-level measures take longer to shift, milestones evaluate progress towards them.
- Meaningful **Measures**: Selecting population indicators (those most representative of the outcome of the aim) and programme indicators (both qualitative and quantitative that can be reliably collected and monitored by a project being implemented). Some measures, such as healthy life expectancy, are influenced by a constellation of societal, economic, and environmental factors. These will be tracked because progress signals broader movement toward the aims of the strategy.



- **Alignment:** Utilising and aligning to existing performance evaluations, including milestones and measures set in the Council's Community & Corporate Plan.
- **Participation:** Involving individuals, families, and communities in telling their story and using their voices, feelings, and relationships to inform evaluations of progress. This will require development in approaches to capturing lived experience.
- **Transparency:** Sharing results and insights openly to build trust and accountability.
- **Flexibility:** Adapting measures and methods as contexts and evidence evolve.

Transparency, adaptability, and stakeholder involvement are keys to making evaluation a driver of change. As the strategy matures, the framework itself should evolve, reflecting new insights and ensuring that the aims of the strategy are achieved.

Governance

Implementation of the strategy will depend on a whole council approach cross-cutting numerous teams and service areas. It will require a strong and committed governance approach to drive the implementation of the strategy; support buy-in, accountability and increase opportunities for critical thinking.

The proposed governance structure

A **Programme Board** will receive update reports from the steering group including review of milestones and measures. Based on recommendations from the steering group the Board will support the development of next steps regarding workstream activities and provide oversight as to when more formal decision making might be required. The Board will be accountable to the Leader / Cabinet.

- Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Cabinet Member for Equalities & Engagement
- Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism
- Chief Officer, Health & Social Care
- Chief Executive
- Director for Public Health, ABuHB
- 3rd Sector Representative.

A **Steering Group** will report to the Programme Board and will comprise of the workstream leads plus other key individuals relevant to the activities in progress. The steering group will shape the implementation of the work as it evolves, whilst ensuring that established milestones are met. The group will be multi-disciplinary and will include partnership representation. It is critical that within this group the interdependency of the workstreams is understood and that learning results in shared decision making and impactful action.

Current membership:

- Chief Officer, Social Care
- Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement
- Integrated Wellbeing Network Lead
- Wellbeing Early Intervention & Prevention Lead
- Head of Housing Services
- Strategic Partnerships Lead
- Performance & Data Insight Manager
- Leisure Services Manager
- ABuHB Public Health lead for Monmouthshire

For additional oversight, progress against the strategy will be reporting annually into the [People Scrutiny committee](#).

Approach to Engagement and Participation

Engaging with others is central to promoting the aims of the Living Well strategy. Seeking to promote healthier, happier lifestyles, promoting access to wellbeing support for all and enabling independence for longer are aims that by their very nature can only be achieved through partnership and collaboration. A consistent approach to communications both internally and externally will be critical.

For the purposes of implementing the strategy, engagement is understood to be a process and not an event. Within each workstream, there is a clear expectation to facilitate and promote the active involvement of others. This will look differently depending on the workstream or the nature of the activity. An iterative stakeholder analysis will be undertaken to support this, and specific projects will agree the level and type of engagement activity that would be the most relevant and appropriate to the task at hand with reference to the 'ladder of engagement'.

The 'Ladder of Engagement and Participation'

There are many different ways in which people might participate in health depending upon their personal circumstances and interest. The 'Ladder of Engagement and Participation' is a widely recognised model for understanding different forms and degrees of patient and public involvement, (based on the work of Sherry Arnstein⁷). Patient and public voice activity on every step of the ladder is valuable, although participation becomes more meaningful at the top of the ladder.

Devolving	Placing decision-making in the hands of the community and individuals. For example, Personal Health Budgets or a community development approach.	Devolving
Collaborating	Working in partnership with communities and patients in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Collaborating
Involving	Working directly with communities and patients to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. For example, partnership boards, reference groups and service users participating in policy groups.	Involving
Consulting	Obtaining community and individual feedback on analysis, alternatives and / or decisions. For example, surveys, door knocking, citizens' panels and focus groups.	Consulting
Informing	Providing communities and individuals with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, opportunities, solutions. For example, websites, newsletters and press releases.	Informing

Alongside of our health colleagues key stakeholders include:

- All council colleagues
- People with lived experience and volunteers
- Town and Community Councils
- Interest Groups (e.g. Age Friendly Community)
- 3rd and Voluntary organisations and housing associations
- Future Generations Office
- Gwent and other Local Authorities
- Relevant universities and centres of research

Finance & Resources

The cost of the implementing the Living Well Strategy has not been assessed yet. This is not considered to be an inhibitor at this point, as some early activity can be delivered within existing resources. As the programme develops, we will identify needs for additional funds or the potential for reallocation of existing resources.

There are some initial steps that could be undertaken to better understand and mitigate the financial risks and issues associated with the strategy, as well as a number of mechanisms which could be utilised to secure the additional resources required. These are listed below.

- At present wellbeing support and services depend heavily on the use of insecure short-term grants dispersed throughout the council with different terms and conditions. This strategy presents an opportunity to align grant usage more centrally in order to avoid duplication and support shared wellbeing objectives using the framework and governance of the Living Well Strategy.
- Internal service mapping and development will help ensure that current resources are aligned to the policy intent wherever possible. Equally, a consolidated outcomes-based commissioning plan, aligned to population needs, will ensure maximum value for money against the strategy's aims.
- Transferring money from costly acute services to upstream preventative services is hard to achieve but remains a long-standing ambition for the Council. Projects and activity within the Living Well workstreams must be reviewed / evaluated from a 'return on investment' perspective to support the evidence base and the development of business cases for increased resource.
- Preventative wellbeing and reducing the determinants of health outcomes is a national policy objective presenting opportunities to apply for grants which can support innovation and project work associated with the strategy. Using the strategy to establish shared objectives with 3rd sector organisations and health has the potential to bring in additional resources.

Undertaking these initial steps should underpin the development of a consolidated financial strategy which will in turn support longer-term change. In terms of human resource, the work so far has benefited from time taken from people's existing roles. The implementation of the strategy would benefit from some dedicated project support.

Appendix 1: Definitions

We all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we look out for each other, doing the things that matter to us.

1. Well-being

Well-being is more than being healthy. It is about being safe and happy, having choice and getting the right support, being part of a strong community, having friends and positive relationships, hobbies, work or learning. The elements of well-being (as defined by the SSWB(W) Act are shown in the image. While all elements have equal importance, it is likely that some will be more relevant to one person than another.

Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

Definition of well-being for adults

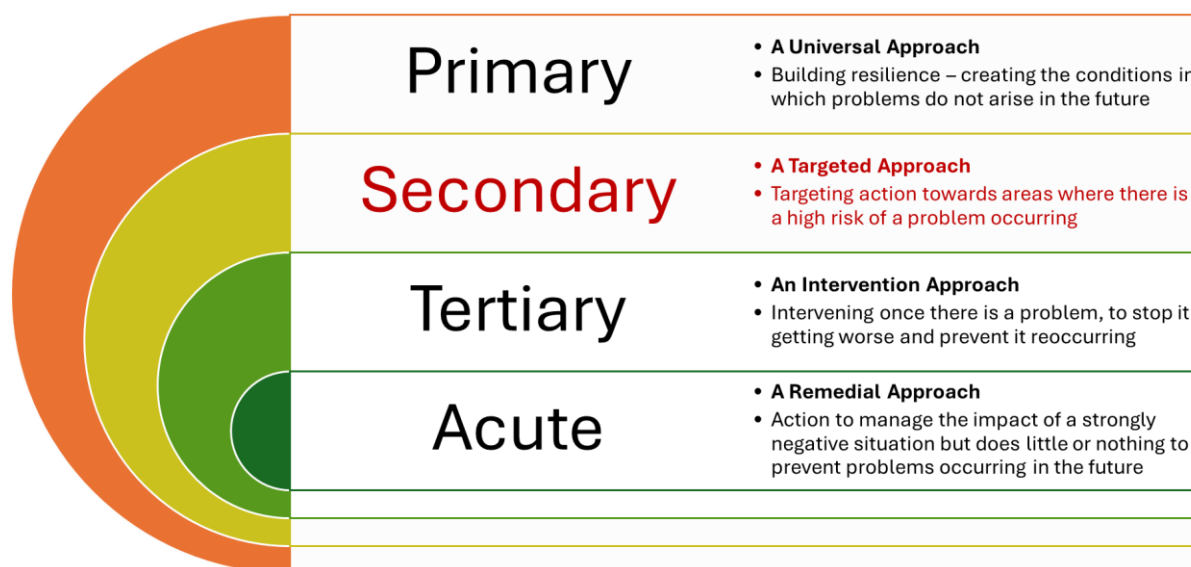


2. Prevention

Early Intervention and Prevention is ensuring access to support to prevent situations from getting worse, and to enhance the maintenance of individual and collective well-being. Centres on increasing preventative services within communities to minimise the escalation of critical need.

Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

Prevention is working in partnership to co-produce the best outcomes possible, utilising the strengths and assets that people and places have to contribute. Breaking down into four levels, each level can reduce demand for the next:



Future Generations Commission

Appendix 2: Drivers & Evidence Base

Population needs

Monmouthshire faces significant public health and social challenges driven by an aging population, health inequalities, and socio-economic disparities.

Monmouthshire has an **aging population** – more than a third of our residents are aged over 65 and this proportion is predicted to increase significantly in the coming years.

Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy in Monmouthshire is higher than the average in Wales, with life expectancy 84 years for females (66 years healthy life expectancy) and 80 years for males (66 years healthy life expectancy). Monmouthshire does experience levels of **inequality**, with people living in more deprived areas having a shorter healthy life expectancy and experiencing the negative effects of aging sooner compared to those in the least deprived areas.

Driving this well-being crisis are a combination of:

- **Lifestyle** factors- insufficient physical mental and social activity combined with poor diet, smoking and alcohol consumption

There are significant differences in life expectancy within the county. Physical inactivity, poor diet, smoking, and alcohol consumption contribute to health disparities. In Monmouthshire nearly sixty percent of adults report meeting physical activity guidelines a week, just over half of adult residents are overweight or obese, around fifteen percent of adults are current smokers and around a quarter of adults reporting drinking above the guidelines for alcohol a week.

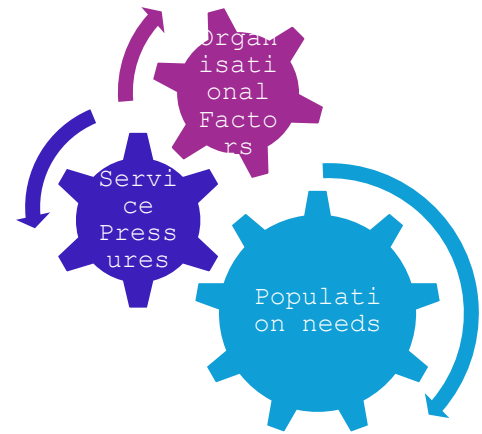
Mental Health plays an important role in well-being. Nearly one in ten adults in the county report having mental health conditions. The rate of loneliness in the county is around fifteen percent of people, loneliness can have a detrimental effect on mental and physical well-being. Monmouthshire is also projected to see a significant increase in dementia cases in the next ten years.

- **Environmental** factors – inadequate housing, poor air quality, limited access to green spaces etc

Monmouthshire has an older, less energy efficient housing stock than many parts of the country. This contributes to fuel poverty, particularly in rural areas where some properties might lack central heating, that can impact the health of residents. Air quality, particularly in Management Areas, poses health risks. Access to green spaces in the County varies by area, especially in more deprived communities, limited access can reduce the benefits utilising green space can have on well-being.

- **Infrastructure** factors – limited or no public transport, uneven access to community spaces, etc

The nature of the rural county in Monmouthshire makes it harder for some people to access basic services, such as transport and health provision. Infrequent public transport can mean longer travel times for access to employment and local services and results in an over-reliance on cars which not everyone has access to. Public and private return travel times to services such as doctors' surgeries, libraries or leisure centres in Monmouthshire are also generally higher than other areas in Wales. For example, some communities are ranked among the most deprived in Wales for access to services. This poses further challenges, particularly combined with limited public transport, for elderly residents.



House prices in Monmouthshire are amongst the highest in Wales. This is compounded by the limited availability of private rental properties and rising monthly rents. High property prices, a shortage of affordable private rented accommodation and the increasing cost of living have all contributed to a rising homelessness challenge in the county.

- **Economic** factors – lack of financial resilience and increases in cost of living puts additional strain on individual and family life

In Monmouthshire, households in genuine poverty often live close by others who are extremely affluent. Research shows that this relative income inequality is associated with worse outcomes in things as diverse as health, crime levels and social cohesion. Poverty affects different groups in different ways. Women are more likely to be in low-paid jobs, with fewer savings than men and therefore at an increased risk of poverty. Households in which someone is disabled are also at higher risk of being in relative income poverty.

More people are at risk of falling into poverty with the continued high costs of living. People are having to spend a higher proportion of their income on essentials such as food and energy. Around one in ten households in Monmouthshire are living in material deprivation and income levels vary significantly in some parts of the county.

The ratio of house prices to workplace-based earnings makes property ownership unaffordable for some. This can particularly make it difficult for young people to live and work locally, leading to outward migration and potential impacts on community viability and health.

All of these factors can impact an individual's well-being and increase pressures across services.

Service pressures

These changes in population needs result in **greater numbers of people needing care**, with more of them having **complex needs that require higher-cost support**. Combined with increasing costs of providing care at home and residential placements, this is placing increased cost pressure on council budgets and the council tax residents pay.

These population needs are also resulting in an increasing number of individuals and families requiring **additional public service support** from services such as housing support, homelessness, Mental health, health, community safety, debt advice and support services.

With money tied up in statutory provision, it is challenging to preserve or enhance spending into the preventative space. There is a pressing need to find new ways of working to address these service pressures and put social care support onto a more sustainable footing.

Organisational factors

The Council's **Community and Corporate Plan** has a clear commitment to tackling inequality and promoting wellbeing.

The Council recognise that well-being is about far more than treating people when they need support, there are many factors that can have an impact on our health including the environment, housing, what we do for work, how much we earn, our lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These **wider determinants of health**, sometimes called the social determinants, can impact in either a positive or negative way on physical and mental health. The Council is committed to working with partners across Gwent as part of the Public Services Board (PSB) and the Institute of Health Equity to tackle these by becoming what is known as a **Marmot Region**.

While many parts of the council support the wellbeing of residents, there isn't a common understanding of **targeted** prevention, or a shared commitment to how we address health inequalities.

The planning and budgeting of preventative approaches is further hindered by the challenges of measuring the effectiveness of preventative work and its impact on residents and services.

Third sector organisations face challenges on their sustainability.

Legislation & Policy Drivers

The **Social Services & Well-being** (Wales) Act (2014) imposes duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers that require them to work to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support. One of the principles of the act is services will promote the prevention of escalating need and the right help is available at the right time.

The **Well-being of Future Generations** (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a duty on public bodies to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle meaning that the body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To achieve this are five ways of working that public bodies need to think about to apply the principle, one of which is prevention - how acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives. In the **Future Generations report 2025** the Future Generation Commissioner for Wales made a recommendation related to Health & well-being that public bodies should include prevention as a core strategic objective in corporate strategies and planning.

The Council's **Community & Corporate Plan** 2022-2028 sets a clear purpose for Monmouthshire to be a zero carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. This is supported by six well-being objectives, including a Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued.

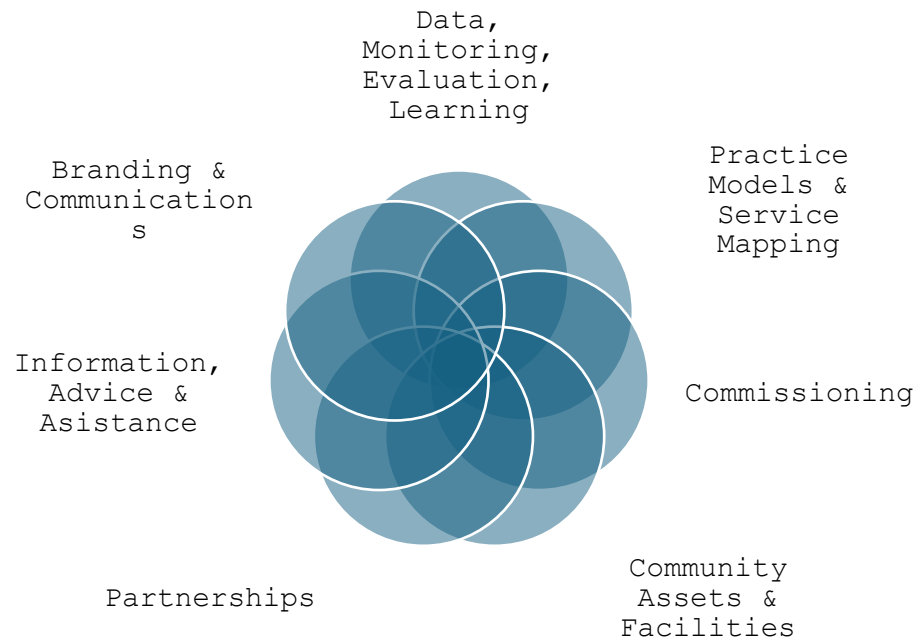
Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health Equity and the Social Determinants is a report drawn up in partnership between **Gwent Public Services Board** (PSB) and the Institute of Health Equity that aims to narrow the health divide across the region. The Gwent PSB has adopted the eight principles set out in the Building a Fairer Gwent report as the framework for action to reduce inequalities as part of its Well-being Plan. The Gwent PSB, have formally agreed to work in partnership to use this approach as the basis for the response to improve well-being and reduce health inequalities.

LIVING WELL MONMOUTHSHIRE - Implementation Plan

The implementation plan underpins the strategy from an action perspective. It is an initial plan that will evolve and develop over time as actions progress. This plan is designed to articulate our goals and the reasons behind our new approach to partners and stakeholders both within and external to the council.

We have identified these initial workstreams to support the development of a range of actions that are achievable, have the potential to impact positively on both individuals and communities, deepen understanding and provide foundations

which have the potential to support the strategy over time. These workstreams are interconnected and will progress in parallel. As the project develops, the workstreams will be refined iteratively.



An initial cross-directorate working group has been established. This group will adopt a programme approach with appropriate governance to maintain a common understanding of our purpose, ensuring coherence and a joined-up, action approach.

Workstream: Data, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning			
Description:		Using data and evidence to inform the allocation and prioritisation of resources is a critical component of the strategy, particularly considering limited resources and rising demand. A deeper understanding of our communities and population should help guide where we focus our energy and attention, and who we seek to engage with. Assessing the effectiveness of the strategy is essential to ensure resources are utilised efficiently. Ongoing evaluation further enables adaptation to evolving circumstances and will help maintain the long-term value and impact of initiatives.	
What we want to achieve (outcome focused)	What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (inc milestones)	Who is the lead person
To use data and evidence provided by the Council and its partners to ensure that resources are targeted appropriately to support wellbeing and address inequality across the County.	<p>Complete a review of existing population evidence, data and analysis to inform initial planning and targeting in the strategy.</p> <p>Work with the Council's data collaboration and partners to develop a more detailed understanding of our communities, including at lower geographies and population levels, focused on the Marmot principle to strengthen the role of ill health prevention.</p>	Dashboard developed to provide data to inform the ongoing development of the strategy (April 2026)	Richard Jones, Performance & Data Insight Manager
To regularly assess progress and evaluate the impact being achieved to guide the efficient use of resources	Develop a measurement framework to evaluate progress and people / population outcomes of the strategy.	Annual performance review of the strategy completed (Sept 2026)	

to support wellbeing and address inequality.	To further develop the measures in the measurement framework to ensure they focus on the outcomes our actions are targeted on.		
--	--	--	--

Workstream:		PRACTICE	
Description:		To maintain a consistent focus on wellbeing we need a shared definition and understanding of good practice and its application across various services and teams within the Council. We want front-facing practitioners to feel confident in discussing what matters with individuals recognizing both individual strengths and barriers to accessing support. Our aim is to facilitate and enable, rather than simply provide. This person-centred approach is already embedded in many parts of the council - the strategy aims for this to be the guiding principle for all initial points of contact. We want practice to be informed by other councils and partners who share our ambitions, enabling us to benefit from and contribute to on-going practice development, research, and evaluation.	
What we want to achieve (outcome focused)	What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (inc milestones)	Who is the lead person
Develop consistent practice approach across directorates & skill development so that there is a clear focus on wellbeing and person-centered practice across the council.	Define and share the Council's (strengths-based) practice model Undertake deep dive of specific services / teams. Create a 'best practice' exercise that enables frontline staff to reflect upon what best practice means for their service area and how well they achieve this. Identify and share examples of good practice across directorates Report on and consider the actions required to support practice / service development i.e training	A shared practice model is in place across the council (Oct 2025) Learning opportunities which are focused on practice development and the aims of this strategy are in place (Jan 2026)	Nicki Needle, IWN Lead Ashley Morgan, Wellbeing Early Intervention & Prevention Lead

	needs, changes to recruitment, service delivery transformation or use of resources.		
Research, review and share good practice being undertaken by us and by other public bodies in Wales, the UK and internationally so that this informs and provides an evidence base for our work.	Use established national bodies (e.g. FGs commissioner, Older Persons Commissioner) to build learning about other council wide, strategic approaches.		

Workstream		Service Mapping		
Description		We need to ensure services are aligned to the aims of the strategy. What services are provided is equally important as how they are offered, including the degree to which resources are targeted towards addressing vulnerability either at a community or individual level. To ensure the optimal alignment we need to have a good understanding of the current service and practice landscape. We have already completed much of the groundwork for this, so are now able to focus on the outcomes that are being achieved and any adjustments that may be required to ensure our resources align to the Living Well strategy.		
What we want to achieve		What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead
Review current mapping and conduct a gap analysis of wellbeing services currently delivered by MCC, through grant and core funding.		Build on the existing mapping of wellbeing support services across the authority to identify the extent to which resources are targeting towards vulnerable individuals and cohorts.	A working map of wellbeing services and support across the authority which can highlight gaps in current service delivery and guide decision making (DEC 2025)	Sharran Lloyd, Community & Partner Development Manager
Analyse and identify how services could be tailored to support better wellbeing outcomes for people and reduce inequality		Build shared understanding of people / service outcomes currently being achieved.	A first draft of an 'as is' 'to be' pathway (FEB 2025)	
		Cross reference mapped services against population data and needs assessments to identify gaps that exist in current service delivery.		

	Determine the service landscape required to best meet the aims of the Living Well strategy, together with the resources required.		
--	---	--	--

Workstream	Commissioning			
Description	We want to implement a commissioning framework that fosters collaboration in order to enhance community-based services. Our goal is to ensure these services are accessible, inclusive, and adaptable to the needs of individuals and communities. By working closely with our commissioned partners, we seek to build a shared understanding of community strengths and needs, focusing on promoting inclusivity and addressing inequities. We recognize that a robust and vibrant network of community-based support services is crucial for resilient communities, health, and wellbeing. Our objective is to support sustainable community-based services, maximize volunteering opportunities, and achieve the best outcomes for people.			
What we want to achieve	What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead	
<p>A full understanding of what community-based support is available, both formal and informal.</p> <p>Formulate a comprehensive approach to commissioning preventative and early intervention initiatives throughout the council, aligned with findings from the service mapping gap analysis</p>	<p><u>Phase 1 actions:</u> Ensuring equity is considered as part of the SLA/MOU/Contracts we give out as MCC.</p> <p>For Cabinet to consider a policy position for awarding contracts/funding, where equity of delivery is demonstrated (third party contracts)</p> <p>Aligning commissioning intentions with the gaps analysis to ensure we are using funding effectively in</p>	<p>Cabinet adopts a policy position prioritizing equity in third-party awards</p> <p>Equity clauses are embedded in all MCC contracts and funding agreements</p> <p>Commissioning decisions aligned with the gaps analysis</p> <p>Legacy funding reviewed and reallocated based on presenting needs</p>	Sharran Lloyd, Community & Partner Development Manager	

	<p>areas of most need, and we avoid roll-over legacy funding</p> <p>Clearly articulate our expectations for organisations, specifically using a strengths-based and equity-focused approach</p> <p><u>Phase 2 actions:</u> Respond to population support needs and gaps, with a clear understanding of finances/resources available</p> <p>Develop co-production approaches to address identified population needs, and, when appropriate, include individuals in the process of defining those needs</p>	<p>Expectations for strengths-based, equity-focused delivery developed</p> <p>Co-production approaches developed for priority areas</p> <p>Individuals with lived experience engaged in defining needs</p> <p>Needs identified and available resources prioritised</p>	
--	---	--	--

Workstream	COMMUNITY ASSETS & FACILITIES			
Description	To support the Living Well Strategy people and communities need vibrant and inclusive places where they can meet and access support. The County already has many such community spaces, but some areas are better served than others and accessibility can be problematic. We want to ensure that community spaces actively support the aims of the Living Well strategy with a sense of collaboration and partnership around shared goals and achieving best outcomes for people.			
What we want to achieve	What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead	
<p>Create a thorough overview of all known community hubs/venues across the county</p> <p>Work collaboratively to ensure that there is a vibrant mix of accessible community facilities and venues across the county to support the aims of the Living Well strategy</p>	<p>Mapping venues to create a visual map illustrating geographical placement of identified community venues and how they support wellbeing and the outcomes that are achieved.</p> <p>Survey front line practitioners to gain an understanding of their knowledge and potential gaps from their perspective.</p> <p>Set up small collaborative working group comprising of LA officers, Vol Sector officers and community members to help define</p>	<p>Agreed criteria for ‘What makes a great community hub/venue’ (SEPT 2025)</p> <p>Complete first phase assessment surveys re ‘Venues of excellence’ and conclude findings (SEPT 2025)</p> <p>An initial map of wellbeing venues that can help to inform understanding and next step actions aligned to the strategy (JAN 2026)</p>	<p>Ash Morgan; Wellbeing Early Intervention & Prevention Lead.</p>	

	<p>'What makes a great community hub/venue?</p> <p>Champion those who excel and support those who wish to improve through training and signposting to grant funding programmes (possibly RIF Capital funding programme to support phase 2)</p> <p>Identify a pilot (town or population cohort) to survey venues in detail and create draft 'as is' 'to be' pathway.</p>		
--	---	--	--

Workstream		Partnerships		
Description		Successful implementation of the Living Well Strategy hinges on extensive partnership working. Key partners include 3 rd sector and voluntary organisation; other Local Authorities and Health. Fortunately, some of our key partners are already leading the way in placing an increasing emphasis on community-based wellbeing and preventative approaches to maintaining healthier lifestyles. Of particular relevance, is ABuHB's strategic ambition to implement Place Based Care. Locally designed services, risk stratification and targeted prevention based on deepened knowledge of community needs are fundamental to the tenets of Place Based Care. Achieving good outcomes for people will be further enhanced by ensuring maximum alignment between partnership plans and the council's Living Well strategy.		
What we want to achieve		What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead
A wellbeing coalition where ethos, objectives and activities align operationally and strategically between MCC and key partner agencies / organisations		Use the Integrated Services Partnership Board (ISPB) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish shared commitments • Clarify roles and responsibilities • Mobilise resources into preventative, wellbeing activity Develop shared priorities with Public Health, Primary & Community Care, the Age Friendly Partnership and the 3 rd sector in the	An established implementation plan for Place Based Care (Nov 2025) Shared outcome / performance targets regarding specific population measures (Nov 2025)	Jane Rodgers; Director Social Care

	<p>implementation of Place Based Care</p> <p>Share and jointly analyse population data to inform actions and priorities</p> <p>Develop shared 'strengths-based' practice approaches with partner agencies particularly with regard to people with more complex needs</p>		
--	--	--	--

Workstream		Access to information, advice and assistance		
Description		Being able to access helpful information when you need it, in a range of different ways underpins people's ability to get the right support for them at an early point. We know that this is not always available and can be hard to maintain. We want to be able to overcome some of the real barriers people face when accessing information and early help support recognising that some people need additional (bespoke) support to access the community doing things they enjoy and making social connections.		
What we want to achieve		What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead
<p>Accessible information that helps people achieve good wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>A good understanding of community-based support that is available. Services that are in place so that barriers to accessing support can be overcome through individual approaches were required.</p>		<p>Gain insight from systems (MCC Webpages, Helpdesk and MCC Hub systems and FLO) and key people around what information is commonly requested.</p> <p>Identify people and organisations who provide a 'first contact' / IAA function and create a community of interest for this group</p> <p>Evaluate the impact of 'community conversations'</p> <p>Use this to inform community strengths and identify gaps in provision</p>	<p>IAA workers in place within adult social care (Dec 2025)</p> <p>An initial evaluation of 'community conversations' to help inform further development (Feb 2025)</p> <p>Increase community capacity builders / links workers. (Sept 2026)</p> <p>A sustainable way of sharing up to date information about services and community wellbeing. (Sept 2026)</p>	<p>Nicki Needle, IWN Lead</p> <p>Ashley Morgan, Wellbeing Early Intervention & Prevention Lead</p>

	<p>(e.g. related to specific support services or around community links or community capacity builders).</p> <p>Look into how digital innovation might support access to up-to-date wellbeing information for practitioners and residents.</p>		
--	--	--	--

Workstream	Branding & Communications		
Description	Being able to succinctly capture the purpose and key messages of the Living Well strategy will support communications and engagement with residents. A clear 'brand' identity and effective communications can encourage the strategy to take root in the DNA of the council and its partners. Reporting on progress will help keep the aims of the strategy at the forefront of people's minds and motivate people to get on board		
What we want to achieve	What actions we will take	How we will measure progress (milestones)	Lead
A clear and memorable brand and identity for the Strategy with an agreed approach to communications so that people both inside and outside of the council are clear about our objectives and desired outcomes.	Undertake a stake holder analysis Create communication products	A coherent and agreed logo, strap line and key messages is in place (Oct 2025)	Paul Sullivan; Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement

This page is intentionally left blank



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Integrated Impact Assessment Template

(incorporating Equalities, Socio-economic Duty, Future Generations, Welsh Language Measures, Corporate Parenting)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Jane Rodgers janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk Phone no: E-mail:	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal The development of a whole authority preventative strategy for supporting resilient, healthier communities. The overall aim of the strategy is that, “Residents, especially our more vulnerable and deprived residents, are enabled to live healthier and independently for longer – boosting their wellbeing as well as delaying or reducing their call on statutory services.”.
Name of Service area Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	Date 19 th Sept 2025

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

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	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 Consider the impact on our community in relation to age, e.g. how do we engage with older and younger people about our services, access issues etc. Also consider what issues there are for employment and training.	The strategy has a positive impact on older people – working together to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability <i>Consider the impact and what issues there are around each of the disability needs groups e.g. access to buildings/services, how we provide services and the way we do this; producing information in alternative formats, employment issues etc.</i>	The strategy has a positive impact on people with disability – working together to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Gender reassignment <i>Consider the provision of inclusive services for transgender people and groups. Also consider what issues there are for employment and training.</i>	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact
Marriage or civil partnership <i>Same-sex couples registered as civil partners have the same rights as married couples and must be provided with the same benefits, such as survivor pensions, flexible working, maternity/paternity pay and healthcare insurance. Consider the impact of your proposal on these rights.</i>	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	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?
Pregnancy or maternity <i>A woman is protected from discrimination during her pregnancy, maternity leave and 26 weeks from the day she gives birth. Including the provision of services, goods and facilities and recreational or training facilities. Consider the impact of your proposal on these protections.</i>	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact
Race <i>What will the proposal do to promote race equality with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between different racial groups. Think about the potential to affect racial groups differently. Possible issues include providing translation/interpreting services, cultural issues and customs, access to services, issues relating to Asylum Seeker, Refugee, Gypsy & Traveler, migrant communities and recording of racist incidents etc.</i>	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact
Religion or Belief <i>Consider the impact e.g. dietary issues, religious holidays or days associated with religious observance, cultural issues and customs. Also consider what issues there are for employment and training.</i>	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sex Consider what issues there are for men and women. Will this impact disproportionately on one group more than another e.g. equal pay, responsibilities for dependents, issues for carers, access to training, employment issues.	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact
Sexual Orientation Consider the provision of inclusive services for e.g. older and younger people from the Lesbia, Gay and Bi-sexual communities. Also consider what issues there are for employment and training.	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact

2. The Socio-economic Duty

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.

Socio-economic disadvantage can be defined as living in less favorable social and economic circumstances than others in society. It also includes social justice, which is about reducing inequalities by working towards more equal distribution of wealth and opportunities so everyone can achieve their full potential.

Consider how the proposal could affect the following vulnerable groups:

Armed Forces Community (including veterans)

Single parents

Vulnerable families

Single adult households

Carers

Students

People living in the most deprived areas

Pensioners

Homeless People

People misusing substances

People who have experienced the asylum system

People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic Duty</u>	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering from socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts in relation to the Socio-economic disadvantage?
<p><i>Think of what evidence you have about socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in relation to this proposal. Will it impact disproportionately on certain groups? Can the proposals be improved to reduce inequalities of outcome?</i></p>	<p>“What the evidence tells us More and more people are falling into poverty with inflation going up quicker than incomes. People are having to spend a higher proportion of their income on fuel and energy, the cost of which rose significantly in 2022. Data shows that 9,500 households in our county are in poverty (defined as those who earn below 60% of the median income). One in ten people are living in households in material deprivation while 23.4% of children in Monmouthshire, nearly a quarter of the total, live in poverty” Community & Corporate plan.</p> <p>Through this strategy residents, especially our most vulnerable and those who face deprivation are better enabled to live healthier and independently for longer – boosting their wellbeing as well as delaying or reducing their call on statutory services.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>

3. Policy making and the Welsh language

What are the effects that the proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated? Explain how you believe the proposals could be improved so as to have

positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making: <i>Consider what impact this policy decision will have on the Welsh Language. This includes opportunities for people to use the language, opportunities to promote the language and treating the language no less favourably than the English language. Include any data and evidence e.g. WESP, Census Data, Cymraeg 2050, Welsh Language Strategy.</i>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Operational: Recruitment & Training of workforce <i>Carefully consider whether vacant posts require Welsh language skills as a desirable or essential skill. This is especially pertinent with front line roles as more than 10 % of the population of Monmouthshire speak Welsh. Also, when assessing the need for Welsh language skills keep in mind the existing Welsh language skills within the workforce. In service areas where there is a current lack of Welsh language skills, posts should be advertised as Welsh language essential. Additionally, consider where further training may be needed to increase the number of staff who can speak Welsh and to enhance the skills of current Welsh speakers.</i>	Training opportunities centered around social care and wellbeing are already being offered in Welsh language as well as opportunities for the workforce to undertake courses in developing skills in Welsh Language itself.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Service Delivery: Use of Welsh language in service delivery <i>When advertising our services you must promote the fact that people can deal with the council in Welsh by</i>	The Living Well strategy is designed to support the well-being of all residents by meeting people where they're at and understanding what matters to them, this includes providing services	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

phone, email, twitter, Facebook, letters, forms, website transactions etc.	in Welsh including the use of Welsh Language across all of our comms channels and when publicising and promoting services or community-based resources.		
--	---	--	--



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!



<u>Well Being Goals</u>	Describe the positive impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	Describe the negative impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales <i>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises global limits and uses resources efficiently (including acting on climate change); a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides jobs.</i></p>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
<p>A resilient Wales <i>Maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</i></p>	<p>People are supported when they need help and are given the opportunity to build their resilience as individuals, families and communities</p> <p>Residents (especially those experiencing loneliness and isolation) build connections in their local communities, through</p>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point


<u>Well Being Goals</u>	Describe the positive impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	Describe the negative impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	which they can access support when needed		
A healthier Wales <i>People's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</i>	Residents (especially those most at risk of ill-health) increase their physical, mental and social activity, maintain a healthy diet and avoid harmful habits.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
<div>Page 4</div> A Wales of cohesive communities <i>Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</i>	<p>Citizens work with the Council and their own communities, helping them to take action and shape their futures</p> <p>Communities (especially in our more disadvantaged areas) have a diverse network of active and inclusive clubs, societies and associations that help reduce loneliness and isolation, and enable people to look out for and support each other</p>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
A globally responsible Wales <i>Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</i>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language <i>Promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language,</i>	The strategy seeks to support the development of volunteering opportunities and the sustainability of community based	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

<u>Well Being Goals</u>	Describe the positive impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	Describe the negative impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<i>and participation in the arts, and sports and recreation</i>	support which support health and wellbeing outcomes including sports, art and connecting with people and nature.		
A more equal Wales <i>People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. (This includes the protected characteristics listed in Section 1 above. You can add more detail there. Don't forget to think about the impacts on poverty)</i>	<i>Through this strategy we will develop:</i> <i>High quality social care and community-based support which enables and empowers people to live their lives on their terms</i> <i>Healthy and sustainable places and communities, where health inequalities that exist within and between communities have been reduced</i>	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

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

<p><u>Sustainable Development Principles</u></p>	<p>Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.</p>	<p>Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
<div data-bbox="98 263 293 464">  </div> <p data-bbox="129 475 264 507">Long Term</p> <p data-bbox="318 256 595 403">Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p> <p data-bbox="107 437 600 679"><i>We are required to look beyond the usual short term timescales for financial planning and political cycles and instead plan with the longer term in mind (guidance says at least 10 years, but preferably 25)</i></p>	<p data-bbox="636 256 963 284"><i>None identified at this point</i></p>	<p data-bbox="1355 256 1711 284">None identified at this point</p>
<div data-bbox="98 831 293 1032">  </div> <p data-bbox="112 1038 280 1070">Collaboration</p> <p data-bbox="318 826 602 935">Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p data-bbox="636 716 1323 903">Recognizing that we cannot achieve the outcomes of this strategy alone, we will build a partnership of statutory and third-sector organizations and businesses to promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in Monmouthshire.</p> <p data-bbox="636 938 1323 1046">This will be facilitated by developing clear messaging and branding to use internally and externally to build support for our goals and approach.</p> <p data-bbox="636 1082 1317 1150">Wherever possible, we will coproduce plans with our target communities.</p>	<p data-bbox="1355 748 1711 775">None identified at this point</p>

<p><u>Sustainable Development Principles</u></p>	<p>Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.</p>	<p>Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
<div data-bbox="107 268 280 448">  </div> <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p><i>Who are the stakeholders who will be affected by your proposal? Have they been involved? Do those people reflect the diversity of the area which is served?</i></p>	<p><i>We will involve individuals, families, and communities in telling their story and using their voices, feelings, and relationships to inform the development and evaluation of this strategy. This will require development in approaches to capturing lived experience.</i></p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>
<div data-bbox="107 762 280 943">  </div> <p>Prevention</p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>The strategy aims to increase preventative services within communities to minimize the escalation of critical need. Central to the strategy is the intention to work in partnership to co-produce the best outcomes possible, utilising the strengths and assets that people and places have to contribute.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>

<p><u>Sustainable Development Principles</u></p>	<p>Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.</p>	<p>Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
<div data-bbox="107 539 282 721">  </div> <p data-bbox="309 512 607 659">Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p> <p data-bbox="309 694 607 970"><i>Focus here on how you will better integrate the Wellbeing Goals impacts on people, economy and environment described above and balance any competing impacts. Think about impacts the proposal may have on other organisations</i></p>	<p data-bbox="636 256 1245 392">The strategy works to compliment and enhance the delivery of a number of Wellbeing goals listed in the Monmouthshire Community and Corporate Plan (examples listed below)</p> <p data-bbox="636 427 981 454">Community & Corporate plan</p> <ul data-bbox="685 491 1319 879" style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms • A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded • Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background • Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life • Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other <p data-bbox="636 948 1323 1224">The Living Well strategy will require focused collaboration with organisations that serve our residents including RSL's and other voluntary sector organisations like GAVO, Age Cymru and Mind Monmouthshire. While the proposals won't diminish or challenge any of the work delivered by these organisations, it will reinforce the necessity for partnership working including shared planning, implementation, and learning.</p>	<p data-bbox="1355 256 1711 284">None identified at this point</p>

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

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p><i>Safeguarding in this context applies to children (not yet reached 18th birthday) and adult at risk (identified as a person over the age of 18 and who (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, (b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.) Safeguarding is about ensuring that everything is in place to promote the well-being of children and adults at risk, preventing them from being harmed and protecting those who are at risk of abuse and neglect.</i></p>	<p>The safeguarding of all citizens of Monmouthshire particularly children and at-risk adults is central to the Living Well strategy ensuring that the wellbeing of all prioritised. Keeping children and adults who may have needs for care and support safe is everyone's responsibility. This means feeling safe and being safe with those with whom they live and who support and care for them, as well as being safe in environments outside the home where they may live, travel, play, learn, work or undertake sport, cultural, leisure and other activities.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>

<p><u>Corporate Parenting, Care Leavers and Care Experienced People</u></p> <p><i>This relates to those children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority either through voluntary arrangements with their parents or through a Court Order. The Council has a corporate duty to consider 'children who are looked after especially and to promote their welfare (in a way, as though those children were their own). It also relates to care experienced people (people who have spent time in care when they were under 18 years old). The Council must consider how to help overcome the disadvantages and discrimination they experience.</i></p>	<p>People with care experience can risk having poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. The strategy is aiming to better understand population needs and take steps to reduce inequalities that exist.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>
---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

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

It will include your baseline position, measures and studies that have informed your thinking and the recommendation you are making. It should allow you to identify whether any changes resulting from the implementation of the recommendation have had a positive or negative effect. Key strategies and documents that may help you include: Community and Corporate Plan, Asset Management Strategy, Digital and Data Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, People Strategy, Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy: [Enabling Strategies](#) See Guidance for more examples.

<p>Evidence and data has been obtained from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Community & Corporate Plan - Public Health Wales, Joint Strategic Assessment - Population Needs Assessment

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

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

The Living Well strategy seeks to reduce health inequalities and improve quality of life and wellbeing across communities in the County, ensuring that those who need it the most have access to community-based support. Working to support good wellbeing outcomes for people is central objective, particularly those with protected characteristics including age and disability.

The strategy is fundamentally aligned to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act through promoting a stronger long-term focus on prevention, early intervention, collaboration, and community involvement. The strategy actively seeks to ensure that people have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, no matter what their background or circumstance. The strategy seeks to ensure that the council establishes and reinforces collaborative ways of working that will promote people's physical and mental well-being, and over the long-term will help build communities that are resilient and well-connected.

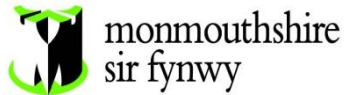
Page 51

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?
Seek endorsement of the strategy by Cabinet	Oct 2025	Jane Rodgers

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Integrated Impact Assessment 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 <i>e.g. budget mandate, DMT, SLT, Scrutiny, Cabinet etc</i>	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	<i>Scrutiny</i>	30th Sept 2025	



SUBJECT: Monmouthshire's Meals on Wheels Service

MEETING: People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 30th September 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

To present a first stage review of the Monmouthshire Meals Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For committee members to scrutinise the first stage review of the Monmouthshire Meals service and provide feedback and comment on its recommended outcome:

-To continue to deliver high quality meals to Monmouthshire residents and proceed with service development aimed at improving the experience of service users and increasing service sustainability and value for money.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 In June 2025 the service embarked on a first phase review of the Community Meals service to determine value for money and to explore whether there were opportunities to improve and modernise the service, increase its sustainability and reduce the net cost of the service to the Council.

3.2 The Community Meals Service has provided a subsidised service to vulnerable adults in Monmouthshire County Council over many years. The service provides good quality nutritional meals and daily contact with service users during weekdays and weekends for people aged 18+. Eligibility for the service is determined by a social care assessment under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

3.3 There is no legislative requirement to deliver a Community Meals Service. There has been a national decline in local authorities offering similar services with only 29% of UK authorities providing Meals on Wheels.

3.4 As of June 2025, there were 226 active service users receiving meals. The total number of hot meals and packed lunch meals delivered in 2024/25 was 62,444 and is projected to be 69,547 in 2025. The unit cost of a meal is £11.41 with a £6.50

charge to the service user. This means that the council is subsidising the cost of each meal by £4.91. This year, the subsidy is projected to create a budgetary pressure of £341,147.

3.5 At the time of the review, 101 people (44%) were receiving community meals alongside of domiciliary care; 57 people (25%) were receiving community meals as well as enabling equipment (such as grab rails / mobility aids) including careline; 71 (31%) of service users were receiving community meals only. 3 service users (1%) were receiving the meals service alongside of a Direct Payment. 85% of the people receiving meals were over the age of 65. In line with the aging demographic within the county, it is anticipated that demand will increase.

3.6 The first phase review identified that the service has wide benefits. The delivery service provides social contact for vulnerable and isolated service users, who often live alone. The meals give good nutrition for people who could potentially be at risk of having a poor and unbalanced diets. [Good diet and hydration is critical for people living with health conditions such as frailty]. The service reduces pressure on carers and ultimately supports people to retain their independence and remain in their own homes and communities.

3.7 The review examined the critical components of the current model such as food supply, methods of conveying the hot food, vehicles used and the workforce and considered potential opportunities to do things differently. The option of ceasing the service was looked at but discounted because of the wide benefits the service provides. An option of maintaining the service as is, but increasing the price was also discounted on the basis that the service would potentially become prohibitive for people and drive costs elsewhere, for example by increasing the need for domiciliary care.

3.8 The report concluded that the best option for the people would be for us to continue with the service and proceed with a second stage review to take forward opportunities for increased efficiencies and service improvements. Given the likelihood of increasing demand for the service, ensuring sustainability, value for money and a reduction of the subsidy will be a critical factor in the second stage. The focus of the review will be to improve efficiencies and reduce cost rather than increasing charges, but some adjustments in charging policy cannot be ruled out at this stage.

3.9 The report presents some immediate steps that can be taken as well as areas which will require a longer-term approach to achieving improvements and efficiencies. These include opportunities for increased digitalisation; commencing a procurement exercise; optimisation of routes; workforce planning and replacement of the vehicles. The full list is set out in section 15 of the main report. The second

phase of the review will be monitored through the Social Care directorate leadership. Any decisions in terms of resourcing or charging will be taken into Cabinet.

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

4.1 The Community Meals service provides a beneficial service to older people and people living with disability or ill-health. Many of the service users are isolated and are at risk of declining health or falls without the good nutrition and hydration that the service provides. The service reduces pressure on family members and carers and provides peace of mind that loved ones are eating and having some social contact during the day.

4.2 The review acknowledges that the council subsidises the service but highlights that any short-term saving would potentially drive costs elsewhere as well as reducing opportunities for people to remain within their own homes and communities. The review recommends that the service should seek to make improvements and efficiencies in order to reduce the subsidy rather than increase the charge or cease the service. This ensures that the service remains affordable to people living on lower incomes.

4.3 The review highlights a range of opportunities to improve the service, with the potential for additional positive impacts in relation to the environment, Welsh language and local economy.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option 1 – To continue with the service as it currently operates with the same subsidy levels (Status Quo). **Not recommended**

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need• Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength• Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks• Reducing demand on more intensive support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient funding and investment may hinder the ability to meet rising demand.• Rising demand will strain existing resources, vehicles and equipment, affecting service quality.• Increased demands on staff may impact their morale and well-being if adequate investment is not provided.

Option 2 – To continue with the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal from April 2026. **Not Recommended**

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks Reducing demand on more intensive support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibility some service users may be unable to afford increased charges, especially those accessing other Council services. Possible impact on service users health and wellbeing if they exit from the service. Risk to community meals workforce if service is reduced due to falling demand.

Option 3 RECOMMENDED – To implement the recommended changes identified in Section 14 below whilst carrying out further work to assess the current operating costs, potential funding opportunities to ensure value for money and sustainability for the service.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need. Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks Provides the project with sufficient time to implement necessary improvements without disrupting service delivery. Allows time to collaborate with internal and external partners to maximise technology integration and external funding opportunities and investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to implement the agreed recommendations could adversely affect service delivery and performance in the long term. Potential funding opportunities and investments may not be realised within designated timeframes.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

An implementation timetable will be developed for the second phase of the review with identified milestones. Implementation will be monitored through the Directorate leadership structure. The service will continue to monitor performance data on:

- Numbers of people receiving meals
- Numbers of meals provided
- Overall cost to the Council and budgetary pressure

- Feedback from the workforce and referrers
- Feedback from service users.

7. REASONS:

The council currently subsidises the Community Meals service creating a budgetary pressure. A review was undertaken to establish how to address this including whether the service should cease, or whether an increased charge should be levied. The review concluded that the Community Meals service is beneficial to vulnerable people and represents an important preventative measure in supporting people's health and wellbeing. The review identified a range of areas where service changes could be applied aimed at increasing efficiencies and improving the service user experience.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The total number of hot meals and packed lunch meals delivered in 2024/25 was 62,444 and is projected to be 69,547 in 2025 (across 226 service users). The unit cost of a meal is £11.41 with a £6.50 charge to the service user. The council is subsidising the cost of each meal by £4.91 and the overall budgetary pressure for this year is projected at £341,147.

8.2 On the other hand, at the time of the report, 71 people were receiving community meals only, with no other formal care and support. If the community meal was replaced by a 30-minute domiciliary care call this would cost £224K more than the subsidy currently provided for the meal. [This is a rough illustration only, as it is unlikely that all residents within this cohort would be immediately eligible for domiciliary care.]

8.3 The overall aim is to reduce the subsidy made by the council through service improvements and efficiencies.

8.4 The second stage of the review would be undertaken within existing resources.

9. CONSULTEES:

- Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services.
- Directorate Management Team (Social Care)
- Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

Jane Rodgers

janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Is my report exempt?

In some instances it may be necessary to submit a report to a committee but withhold the whole report, or part of that report, due to the sensitive nature of information contained within it.

There are specific circumstances in which a report may be considered exempt which are set in legislation. When writing your report bear in mind the following circumstances to consider whether your report should be exempt;

Local Government Act, Schedule 12A, Part 4;

12. Information relating to a particular individual
13. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
14. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
15. Information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
16. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
17. Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
 - a. To give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - b. To make an order or direction under any enactment
18. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

If you are unsure if the report should be exempt or not you should contact Democratic Services or the Monitoring Officer for further advice and guidance. The principal to bear in mind however is that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

If your report is to be exempt you should let Democratic Services know as soon as possible if you have not already done so when adding the item to the forward plan of the relevant committee.

When submitting your report to Democratic Services for publication with the agenda you must also include an exemption certificate which give details as to why the report is exempt and not for publication. This certificate will be publicly available with the agenda in place of the report so the reasoning for the exemption should be made clear on this form. The exemption certificate is available overleaf.

Further information on definitions and exemptions is available within the Local Government Act at the following link; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/schedule/12A>

SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS

Meeting and Date of Meeting: [Insert date and meeting](#)

Report: [Insert report title](#)

Author: [Insert author](#)

I have considered grounds for exemption of information contained in the background paper for the report referred to above and make the following recommendation to the Proper Officer:-

Exemptions applying to the report:

[\[Enter the section and reason of the exemption, as defined by the Local Government Act set out above e.g – This report will be exempt under paragraph 12 of Schedule 12A – Information relating to a particular individual\]](#)

Factors in favour of disclosure:

Openness & transparency in matters concerned with the public

Prejudice which would result if the information were disclosed:

[\[Give a brief indication of what information would be disclosed and the impact of its disclosure\]](#)

My view on the public interest test is as follows:

Factors in favour of disclosure are outweighed by those against.

Recommended decision on exemption from disclosure:

Maintain exemption from publication in relation to report

Date: [Insert date](#)

Signed: [Signed by report author](#)

Post: [Insert post](#)

I accept/I do not accept the recommendation made above

Signed: [\[Signed by Chief Officer / Head of Service / Chief Executive\]](#)

Date: [Insert Date](#)

Monmouthshire's Meals on Wheels Service

Report on the current service provision (Phase 1 Report- August 2025)



<u>Section</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1.	Introduction and purpose of the report
2.	Context and background
3.	Legislative and policy drivers
4.	Methodology
5.	Staffing structure
6.	Current service provision /SWOT analysis
7.	Demographics and usage
8.	Finance
9.	Current operating systems and processes
10.	Transport/Fleet of vehicles and equipment
11.	Staff feedback
12.	Service user questionnaire/ analysis
13.	Summary and conclusions
14.	Options for consideration – Phase 2
15.	Table of Recommendations

Section 1. Introductions and purpose of the report

In June 2025 the service embarked on a first phase review of the Community Meal service and an options appraisal to determine the future of the service (Phase 1). The options on the table were:– keep the service as is, look at alternative models, or reform the current model to make it more sustainable.

The service review consists of:

- a) Review current service delivery and methods (whole system approach)
- b) Determine the demand and the need for the service
- c) Engagement with service users and staff
- d) Value for money examining the potential growth and funding opportunities
- e) Ensuring a good quality and sustainable service model for the future

A Management Board was established to develop an action plan to identify and analyse the opportunities and any potential barriers to developing a delivery model on a financial viability and cost effectiveness.

Representatives of the Management Board include:

Naomi Lovesay, Adults Service Manager

Pauline Batty, Catering Manager

Gail Brain, Business Support Officer

Jonathan Dunham, Business and Performance Manager

Andrew Day, Independent Consultant.

Section 2. Context and Background

The Community Meals Service has provided a subsidised service to vulnerable adults in Monmouthshire County Council over many years, ensuring quality nutritional meals and daily contact with service users during weekdays and weekends for people aged 18+ with eligibility being determined by a social care assessment under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The service provides wider benefits including social contact and support for vulnerable and isolated service users, who often live alone and could potentially be at risk of having a poor and unbalanced diet. The service can often reduce pressure on families/carers who might not be able to provide meals or support family members/neighbours due to work or other caring commitments. This service has been particularly appreciated by vulnerable service users and families at times of need, including working alongside partners in adult social care and healthcare by supporting frailer adults to remain supported in their own home.

Section 3. Legislative and policy drivers

- There is no legislative requirement to deliver a Community Meals Service. However, the Council needs to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act and accompanying Part 4 Code of Practice sets out where a local authority has carried out an assessment, which has revealed that the person has care and support needs then the local authority must decide if those needs meet the eligibility criteria and, if they do, it must offer access to services that meet those needs.
- In addition, the report considers the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goal of : A healthier Wales and a society in which people physical and mental well-being is maximised.
- This report is also aligned to the Councils Community and Corporate plan (2022-2028) - “A safe place to Live” and “ A Connected Place Where People Care.”

Section 4. Methodology

As part of the review staff engagement meetings were held with the community meal drivers (14 attended in total across both shifts). Interviews were also held with the Catering Manager, Business support officer, Care Managers, Finance, Transport Manager, and Information Security and Technology Officer. In addition, a service user questionnaire was issued to all active clients to gain their views and share their experiences of the service. Of 236 users, 103 responded (45% response rate). The surveys were completed via telephone calls with the service users.

Section 5. Staffing structure

The current Community Meals Structure is detailed in Table 14 below:

Post title	No of staff budget hours	Comments	Grade/Band
Catering Manager	1 x 18.5 hours		SCP 35
Business Support Officer	1 x 30 hours		Band E
Senior driver	2 x 28 hours	1 vacant post	Band E
Drivers	2 x 28 hours	1 vacant post	Band D
Driver	15 x 16 hours		Band D

*Adults Service Manager and Business Manager are funded from the Adults Management budget.

The meals are currently distributed to service users in their own homes by 20 delivery staff using a fleet of 8 specially adapted vehicles. The existing contractual hours and shift pattern for the drivers is 4 on x 4 off, although there are occasions when additional hours are required to help cover annual leave and sickness. Additional hours and

accrued leave entitlement for all front line staff is currently subject to a wider piece of work being carried out by the Directorate.

Section 6. The Current Service

- The current service has been operating since 2004.
- Currently the Council's community meals service provides a choice of hot (regenerated) and a packed lunch (sandwich or savoury plus a dessert) to service users 7 days a week between 11am and 2.15pm, 365 days of the year across three integrated hubs (north, central and south areas).
- The charge for the hot meal is £6.50 and the method of payment is by cash or direct debit (predominantly payment is by cash).
- The criteria for eligibility for meals on wheels are that the service is intended for people who are unable to cook or provide or obtain a meal for themselves from alternative sources. Without a provision for a meal their health would deteriorate, limiting their ability to remain at home.
- The service allows for meals to be delivered directly to people's homes, where they can then be plated affording time for wellbeing checks and feedback to care managers or next of kin should any concerns be identified.
- Special dietary requirements are also catered for, including pureed meals, meals suitable for diabetic residents, vegetarian and plant-based options. There are allergen controls in place. Kosher / halal meals are all available.
- Referrals are received by email from social workers, hospital discharge team, reablement team and other health professionals.
- As at June 2025 the service has 226 active service users receiving meals.
- The meals are procured from an external supplier, Appetito, and a varied choice of meals are offered.
- In addition the service also offers a tea/sandwich option which is delivered at the same time as lunchtime meals for an additional cost of £5.00 per packed lunch. The sandwiches provided in the packed lunches are supplied by an external local supplier.
- The deliveries are split over 6/7 rounds across the authority on an area location basis with each vehicle travelling between 30 and 50 miles per day from the Raglan depot. The vehicles are currently charged on site with the meals regenerated and cooked initially whilst the vehicle is connected to the electric supply at the depot, the ovens are then switched to diesel regeneration once the drivers leave the depot and commence with their deliveries. The mode of regeneration means that all meals are delivered at the same time and are kept on warm hold for the duration (11am to 2.15pm at 68 degrees).
- Meals are produced to the NACC (National Association of Care Caterers) nutritional standards and food safety is paramount.

- The service is compliant with to Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles to ensure food safety throughout the process, from sourcing ingredients to delivery to the end service user.
- Contingency and risk management planning for adverse weather is in place.
- Environmental Health – Food hygiene rating, grade 5 (max) awarded October 2024.

Below is a SWOT analysis of the current service model which also includes feedback from interviews with care managers, drivers, Business support staff and research during collating information for this report.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining independence and service users ability to remain in their own home • Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength • The ability to cater to specific dietary requirements e.g. diabetic • Reducing demand on more intensive support • Reducing social isolation • Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks • A dedicated, skilled and caring workforce • A positive reputation and an established relationships within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited funding and lack of investment over the years • Outdated and inefficient handling equipment and storage facilities • Vehicles require changing to meet service delivery demands • High level of debt • Duplication and paperwork – invoicing process • Collection of cash from service users is high risk and costly to manage.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the service to new areas and accessibility • Increase in take up - free up capacity for domiciliary care • Standardisation • Collaboration with other authorities - economies of scale • Technology integration is maximised • For further engagement with services users are part of phase 2 • For reducing the subsidy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating food prices can strain the budget and may lead to adjustments and/or service reductions • Increasing food and operational costs of running the service • Changes in WG funding or policies can affect financial stability and future service delivery • Wider pressures on public spending leading to a reduction on non-statutory or preventative support • Not adhering to SSWBA or policy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative suppliers, including local firms and our own school meals service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints
---	--

Section 7. Demographics and service usage

Monmouthshire is a rural county and although it's population has risen to 95,200 (2020) it remains one of the least densely populated counties in Wales. Half of the population live in the main towns of Abergavenny, Usk, Monmouth, Chepstow and Caldicot. There are 19,863 people over 65 years old in Monmouthshire, approx. 22% of the population. This is projected to grow by 56.9% to 31,157 between 2012 and 2033. The proportion of residents aged 65+ is expected to increase to 33.6% by 2043, compared to 25.7% across Wales. People are living longer with increased life expectancy and life expectancy in Monmouthshire is the highest in Wales, 80.5 for males and 84.1 for females.

It is projected that there will be a significant increase in demand for need assessments for this age group based upon the current statistics and projected population figures. In addition, the workforce are reporting complexities of caseloads are increasing. Complexity includes co-morbidity (people with a range of different conditions, people living with chronic ill health or disability, people living with frailty, people living with dementia and people being discharged from hospital after long stays or delays in hospital discharge.

The service users demographics are detailed in table 1 illustrates that the service, in the main, supports the older generation with 90% aged over 65 years old (male and female). A high proportion of these have some assessed care and support needs with service users experiencing mobility issues and frailty, displaying confusion and memory loss.

Table 1- number and age profile of service users who accessed the service each year

Age group	2023	2024	2025
18-35	0	0	0
36-64	33	39	37
65+	348	350	386

Other key findings from the source of data available presently:

- 101 people (44%) receiving community meals are also receiving community homecare (internal and external).
- 57 people (25%) receiving community meals are also receiving equipment, including careline and other OT-recommended items like wheelchairs and grab rails.
- 3 service users (1%) receiving the service are on direct payments.
- 71 (31%) of service users are receiving community meals only.

Table 2 below shows the number of service users who are receiving meals each week. Over 55% of service users are receiving a meal every day of the week and 177 (76%) have remained with the service for over 6 months. Few service users exit the service in the first three months, and most departures are due to better health or increased independence.

No of meals per week	No of service users	Percentage
Receiving 1 meal per week	1	0.50%
Receiving 2 meals per week	22	10%
Receiving 3 meals per week	31	24%
Receiving 4 meals per week	15	30%
Receiving 5 meals per week	16	38%
Receiving 6 meals per week	17	45%
Receiving 7 meals per week	124	55%
Total number of clients	226	100%

Table 3. Daily average of meals (hot and packed lunch) delivered Monday to a Friday across the authority

Type of meal	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26*
Hot	136	128	139
Packed lunch	4	3	7
Total	140	131	146

*projected annual usage for 2025/26 estimated based upon actual meals delivered from April to June 2025

Table 4 – Daily average of meals (hot and packed lunch) delivered Saturday to a Sunday across the authority

Type of meal	2023/24	2024/25	2025 /26*
Hot	40	42	47
Packed lunch	2	1	4
Total	42	43	51

*projected annual usage for 2025/2026 estimated based upon actual meals delivered from April to June 2025

Table 5. – Total number of meals (hot and packed lunch) delivered per annum Monday to a Sunday across the authority

Type of meal	2023/24	2024/25	2025 26 *
Hot	64,476	62,100	68,376
Packed lunch	516	344	1,171
Total	64,992	62,444	69,547

*projected annual usage for 2025/2026 estimated based upon actual meals delivered from April to June 2025

Table 6. Total number of hot and packed lunch meals delivered and the percentage of the overall business in each hub area per annum:

Area	2023/24		2024/25		2025/26	
Llanelly Hill (C)	13,068	20%	12,444	20%	11,772	17%
Raglan (C)	6,036	9%	6,228	10%	6,960	10%
Total for (C)	19,104	29%	18,672	30%	18,732	27%
Monmouth (N)	5,544	9%	7,140	11%	8,256	12%
Grosmont (N)	16,812	26%	12,144	20%	10,872	16%
Total for (N)	22,356	35%	20,508	31%	19,128	28%
Caldicot (S)	14,448	22%	15,332	24.50%	19,615	27%
Chepstow (S)	9,084	14%	9,156	14.50%	12,072	18%
Total for (S)	23,532	36%	24,488	39%	31,687	45%
Grand total for all areas	64,992		62,444		69,547	

Findings

The overall demand for meal on wheels has been fairly static over the last three years with a large number of service users (76%) remaining with the service for over 6 months. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of meals being

provided (hot and cold) over the weekends with a significant uptake in the south hub (Chepstow and Caldicot areas).

Overall the number of meals delivered in each hub has changed significantly:

- Central 33% (reduction of 2%)
- North 22% (reduction of 7%)
- South 45% (increase of 9%)

The current figures shows that the highest demand for meals is in the south hub area (45%) which is also aligned to the demands and pressures in the domiciliary care market. This could be a result of the new strategy for Commissioned Domiciliary Care in Monmouthshire (2024 – 2034) together with an increased number of service users accessing reablement services which is freeing up time for in house and external carers to provide more specialist services.

Due to operational and logistical factors, community meals use different geographical boundaries from other services—for example, Monmouth town is classified in the Central hub for domiciliary care but in the North hub for community meals. This discrepancy skews data analysis for the whole of adult services activity and further investigation is needed to determine the rationale for this decision moving forward.

Section 8. Finance (Information provided by Adult Service Accountant)

A summary of the budget 2025/2026 is set out below in table 7 and the net cost of the service is £341,147

Table 7 <u>Community meal budget 2025/2026</u>	
<u>Expenditure type</u>	<u>£'000</u>
Employees /payroll	497,872
Premises	1,485
Ovens in vehicles	2,495
Equipment	10,118
Supplies	124,127
Services [including vehicle costs]	<u>163,782</u>
Total cost	800,023
<u>Income</u>	458,876
<u>Net cost of service</u>	<u>341,147</u>

The service is highly subsidised by the Council, **Table 8** below shows the subsidisation of Community Meals Service (Gross unit cost).

Table 8	2022/2023 Actual £	2023/2024 Actual £	2024/2025 Actual £	2025/2026 Budget £
Gross cost of service	615,620.23	776,904.92	815,812.72	800,023.00
No. of paid meals	68775	66730	70128	70128
Direct cost of meal	8.95	11.64	11.63	11.41
Charge to service user	4.64	5.10	5.60	6.50
Subsidy per meal	4.31	6.54	6.03	4.91

Table 9. shows the direct budget (cost without central charges) for the subsidisation of Meals on wheels service (for reference only).

	2022/2023 Actual £	2023/2024 Actual £	2024/2025 Actual £	2025/2026 Budget £
Gross cost of service	501,188.35	634,595.31	667,867.16	636,241.00
No. of paid meals	68775	66730	70128	70128
Direct cost of meal	7.29	9.51	9.52	9.07
Charge to service user	4.64	5.10	5.60	6.50
Subsidy per meal	2.64	4.41	3.52	2.57

Table 10 - Other Local Authorities costs for Meal Service 2025/2026

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Number of meals delivered per annum</u>	<u>Subsidy /cost to Authority</u>	<u>Charge per meal</u>
MCC.	69,547	£4.91	£6.50
Torfaen CBC	69,160	£1.41 (23/24 rate)	£6.50
Caerphilly CBC	Not known	Unavailable	£6.50
Blaenau CBC	Not known	Unavailable	£5.80

Cardiff CC	102,200	Unavailable	£6.75
------------	---------	-------------	-------

Findings

The service is highly subsidised by the Council, however, this is a similar position across all Councils and although we do not have access to the financial costs to undertake a full comparison with other local councils, national research indicates that Councils in England and Wales subsidy ranges from 30 to 40%. Although the subsidy (cost to the authority) has reduced over the last few years the current subsidy level remains high and represents 43% including corporate central charges.

The current daily charge to service users for a delivered meal is £6.50 and the Council is currently providing a subsidy of £4.91 per meal for the 2025/2026 financial year, compared to a budgeted subsidy, set at the start of the 2023/24 financial year, of £6.54 per meal.

Although the charge to service users increased from £5.60 to £6.50 by approx 14% in this financial year, there has only been a small number of service users leaving the service because of the increase in the cost of the meal. See table below for cost comparisons.

Table 11 below presents a comparison between the unit cost of community meals and those of a domiciliary care agency. The figures are based on 30% of service users (71 service users in total) who receive only meal provision and no additional services from social care.

Service	Unit cost per meal	Total cost per annum for a meal provided 365 days	Total cost per annum based on 71 service users.
Option A - Domiciliary care (30 minute call to cook a frozen meal purchased by the service user from a local supermarket at £5 approx).	£20.00 estimated	£7,300	£518K
Option B – Community meals	£11.41	£4,164.65	£294K
Cost difference between Option A & B	£8.59	£3,126.76	<u>£224K</u>

Table 12 - Debt Management

Period	Outstanding amount	Over 3 months	Between 6 & 12 months	Over 12 months
--------	--------------------	---------------	-----------------------	----------------

31/03/2023	£38,638.80	£1,729.80	£5,068.55	£14,476.70
31/03/2024	£27,239.80	£4,468.10	£9,767.30	£9,767.30
31/07/2025	£23,479.42	£3,227.85	£5,609.55	£10,580.80

Findings

The corporate Finance (Creditors) team oversees debt recovery, including reminders and write-offs, with approvals from the Chief Finance Officer charged to the social service budget. While Table 11 shows debt has decreased over three years, a significant portion (£10,580.00 or 45% as of 31.07.2025) remains tied up in ongoing legal cases and disputes.

As of July 2025, 142 service users are on direct debit, however, 226 monthly invoices must still be issued individually. Processing payments remains time-consuming since many users pay by cheque or cash. In 2024/2025, over 250 payment reminder letters were sent, and officers made 148 separate follow-ups to recover outstanding payments.

Section 9. Operating systems and processes

Systems and Digital

In June 2023, the service acquired a software package from Smartt to optimise the logistics and operational management of menu planning, scheduling, and meal delivery to service users. This system streamlines multiple service elements by enabling the recording and uploading of live information, including vehicle checks, route mapping, service alterations, concerns regarding non-delivery, meal temperatures, and proof of delivery.

Drivers have reported intermittent connectivity issues while on delivery rounds, resulting in reliance on printed hard copies of service user menu choices. This practice poses significant challenges, notably when menu information cannot be accessed via tablets, and introduces GDPR risks related to data protection during deliveries. While office staff provide support by downloading necessary information, this process may lead to delays—particularly at weekends when administrative support is unavailable. Drivers have expressed interest in dedicated classroom training on tablet usage to bolster their confidence and competence in information recording. The matter is under ongoing review with the IT manager, with meetings scheduled with Smartt to address these challenges.

Stock control remains managed through manual record-keeping, which, though effective, is time-intensive for both business support personnel and senior drivers. Constraints related to storage capacity, equipment for meal preparation, cooking, and transport render the daily shift process demanding. Nevertheless, all staff continue to

demonstrate exceptional dedication to ensuring system functionality. Some drivers have noted limited awareness of written procedures and predominantly depend on feedback from colleagues.

Findings

The current software is not being used to its full capabilities or capacity in regard to stock control and forward order planning, including management performance tools on various aspects of the service including delivery statistics, financial summaries, and client information.

Order/storage - Utilise technology for meal orders, delivery tracking and service user communication can improve efficiency and engagement.

Food Supply

The current supplier of the frozen plated meals, Apetito, is currently purchased on a spot purchase basis at the same rates based upon a previous formal agreement. Other Gwent authorities, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, and Torfaen, have a formal contractual agreement with Apetito until 2027. We have begun to work with procurement in developing a tender specification that would meet our needs and what options might be available to establish a preferred supplier in keeping with the ambitions of local strategy.

The service has recognised the necessity to undertake a comprehensive review of menu choices. It has been suggested that menu completion could occur during delivery rounds; however, current working hours do not allow sufficient time for this task unless the quantity of meals per round is reduced—a change that would greatly affect overall service costs.

Findings

In April 2025 all local authority customers were informed 2025 that they were changing their packaging from foil trays to a new, fully recyclable Evolve CPET tray from June 2025 following a trail with customers in the England. Disappointing no Welsh local authorities were invited to take part in these trails and were aware that such trails were taking place or the new business model of the Company. The CPET Trays are a third in size larger, although the portion sizes will very much remain the same compared with the existing foil trays. This will present an impact on the current storage and storage facilities at the Raglan depot moving forward.

Although the Company, Apertito, have stated there will be no imminent price increases to their product range, other local authorities in England are already

anticipating increases in the later part of 2025. Discussions with the procurement lead for MCC are underway and to source potential new suppliers and explore any collaboration opportunities with other Gwent local authorities for the service moving forward.

A procurement process is required.

Menu re-vamped – standardisation of stock and meal choice.

Section 10. Existing Fleet of Vehicles / Workforce

Currently, meals are delivered to service users at their homes by 20 staff utilising a fleet of eight specially adapted vehicles (including four electric vehicles equipped with diesel ovens, two vehicles fitted with both diesel and electric ovens, and two former school catering vans). In October 2024, Environmental Health conducted an inspection and issued a compliance notice under Confidence in Management: "Management to ensure a sufficient number of vehicles to facilitate deliveries." While the report confirmed that operations were safe through the use of hot boxes, this solution was deemed temporary and unsustainable for long-term needs. The Transport Manager has further observed that the vehicles are no longer suitable due to age, and ongoing oven repairs are resulting in significant costs.

The procurement or leasing of replacement vehicles is expected to generate additional financial commitments; consequently, a business case for funding must be submitted. Senior management has currently deferred decisions regarding replacement vehicles pending the outcome of a comprehensive service review and cost analysis aligned with service demand.

Responsibility and budgetary oversight for the Meals on Wheels fleet and maintenance rest with the Corporate Transport Team. Due to issues such as limited range, declining battery performance, and vehicle defects, the Transport Department has temporarily loaned two former school catering vehicles to the Meals on Wheels service.

Over the past ten months, research has been conducted, consulting with the transport manager on procurement and leasing options, as well as exploring innovative cooking solutions such as hydrogen vans with microwave ovens capable of heating food during delivery.

Additionally, following an observational visit to Torfaen CBC to evaluate their operational model (electric vans with plug-in hot boxes), Senior Management approved the conversion of one school catering van for a two week trial to assess its viability and sustainability.

A project initiated in April 2025 aims to optimise delivery routes, explore potential collaboration with other departments (such as Highways and Waste), and examine telematics and route optimisation tools. The current system lacks automated route

optimisation functionality, necessitating manual adjustments by business support or senior drivers, which is inefficient and time-consuming. As the database is managed externally, updates or issue resolution require outside intervention, adding complexity to service operations. Mapping and testing of the social services database are underway with corporate colleagues, with results expected in September.

Section 11. Staff Feedback

Staff bring diverse skills and vast experience to their roles and demonstrate high levels of dedication and motivation in delivering this valuable service. Staff retention remains strong, turnover is low, and absenteeism aligns with other frontline services. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented as necessary to support Occupational Health recommendations, and ongoing monitoring reports are provided by the HR department.

While many staff members find their work fulfilling and value direct interactions with service users, concerns remain regarding inadequate investment in equipment and vehicles, impacting their ability to perform duties safely. Some drivers have reported feelings of pressure and anxiety associated with using unreliable vehicles, as previously noted. Joint visits conducted by business support staff with drivers did not corroborate these findings, but continuous monitoring is in place.

Senior drivers indicated their ability and capacity to manage operational responsibilities, including route planning and stock ordering, viewing these tasks as integral to their positions despite some functional overlap with Business Support. They also expressed concerns about their exclusion from the recent driver recruitment process; although they were informed of the appointment, they believe their direct supervisory responsibility should justify their involvement in such decisions. Additionally, it was observed that Business Support continues to perform effectively, with operational information regularly disseminated between the Manager and Senior drivers.

Regular team meetings are held, with documented records of discussions. However, staff expressed concerns about having their feedback overlooked regarding operational challenges, which resulted in a collective grievance. Senior management has since implemented a resolution and action plan dated 4th April 2025 to address these issues going forward.

Care Managers noted positive aspects of the service and suggested that drivers could assume a support role for service users in addition to their current responsibilities. However, implementing this change would require a comprehensive workforce redesign, and there is currently no definitive evidence regarding potential cost savings or overall benefits.

Section 12. Feedback from service user questionnaires

The Management Board prioritised collecting service user feedback for a thorough evaluation of current and future service planning. Of 236 users, 103 responded by 29th August— a 45% response rate yielding a substantial and rich level of information. Business support staff will continue engaging with users for ongoing planning.

A summary of the key findings from the questionnaires are below (A full PDF report is attached as an Appendix A for reference):

Findings

- 94% confirmed that the meals are nutritious, well balanced and met their dietary requirements
- An average rating of 4.14 out of 5 for meal choice and variety
- The service aided independence, physical and wellbeing (8.77 average out of 10)
- 80% of service users were satisfied with portion sizes with only small percentage stating they were too small.
- 97% of service users stated their meals arrived on time and hot.
- 88% rated their meal as providing value for money
- Staff were consistently described as friendly and punctual
- 74% of service users preferred a hot main meal and only 11% indicated an interest for a tea/sandwich call.
- Overall satisfaction with the service was very high
- Lunchtime calls and hot meals were preferred by the vast majority of service users (92%) with limited desire for evening meals, although there was some interest in a salad or ploughman's lunch (30%).
- All respondents felt heard and respected by the team.

Some of the comments on the questionnaire were:

"All drivers have a natter as well as bringing the meals"

"friendliness and a hot meal"

"Independence and saves me cooking"

"Time for a conversation"

No formal complaints have been received during the last year. Informal issues raised were promptly resolved by staff, preventing escalation. Two written compliments were received, reflecting positive experiences with the delivery team and meal quality.

Section 13. Summary and Conclusion

This report evaluates current service provision and identifies key areas for improvement to guide Phase 2 and support the strategic development of the service.

Despite a national decline in local authorities offering similar services (with only 29% of UK authorities providing Meals on Wheels), evidence demonstrates significant benefits—from improving nutritional intake and supporting recovery, to addressing food insecurity and mitigating the effects of the cost of living crisis. Research highlights its impact on well-being, public health outcomes, and cost savings.

The community meals service consistently delivers approximately 175 hot and cold meals daily, primarily serving older adults, 85% of whom are over the age of 65. Demand for weekend meal deliveries has notably increased, particularly in the southern area of the authority.

Staff interviews reveal that most service users rely on the service due to age-related needs, though some access it because of disability, mental health conditions, injury recovery, or extended hospital stays. Feedback from stakeholders strongly indicates the service is essential for maintaining independence, and without it would have a massive impact on their wellbeing and health. Service user feedback indicates strong appreciation for the service, with 94% rating the meals as nutritious and balanced, 88% noting good value and 76% remaining with the service over 6 months.

The Council heavily subsidises the service, making it more affordable and supporting its viability while easing pressure on social care budgets. Notably, this helps avoid higher costs for domiciliary care, which would be £8.59 more per unit, as shown in table 11, page 12 of the report.

The current model effectively addresses present requirements; however, anticipated population growth and increasing life expectancy underscore the need for ongoing investment. Pursuing grant opportunities and implementing scheduled enhancements identified in the table of recommendations (Section-15) will be vital to maintaining the quality and sustainability of the service.

Section 14. Options for consideration (Phase 2)

Option 1 – To continue with the service as it currently operates with the same subsidy levels (Status Quo). Not recommended.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need• Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient funding and investment may hinder the ability to meet rising demand.• Rising demand will strain existing resources, vehicles and equipment, affecting service quality.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks • Reducing demand on more intensive support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demands on staff may impact their morale and well-being if adequate investment is not provided.
---	---

Option 2 – To continue with the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal from April 2026. (Not Recommended)

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need • Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength • Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks • Reducing demand on more intensive support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility some service users may be unable to afford increased charges, especially those accessing other Council services. • Possible impact on service users health and wellbeing if they exit from the service. • Risk to community meals workforce if service is reduced due to falling demand.

Option 3 (Preferred) – To implement the recommended changes identified in Section 14 below whilst carrying out further work to assess the current operating costs, potential funding opportunities to ensure value for money and sustainability for the service.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of service will provide an easy accessible service for adults with an assessed care need. • Providing healthy and balanced meals is a core strength • Providing support beyond the meal itself such as welfare and well-being checks • Provides the project with sufficient time to implement necessary improvements without disrupting service delivery. • Allows time to collaborate with internal and external partners to maximise technology integration and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to implement the agreed recommendations could adversely affect service delivery and performance in the long term. • Potential funding opportunities and investments may not be realised within designated timeframes.

external funding opportunities and investment.	
--	--

Section 15. TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS (Phase 1)

<u>No</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
1	Leadership and management – improve communication and strengthen relationships with staff building on the agreed action plan April 2025.
2	Continue developing a performance framework that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, building on new metrics and measures to better understand present and future service needs.
3	Upon finalising a preferred supplier, update the menu selections, ensuring consideration is given to storage, equipment handling, and site capacity, as well as clear communication with service users.
4	Ensure all training and HR record management files are updated and completed onto the appropriate digital platforms and systematically reviewed quarterly.
5	Ensure all standing operating procedures are circulated and the required training is delivered to staff.
6	Liaise with the Commissioning team to align with the domiciliary strategy and assess how the implementation plan may free up agency capacity and contribute to the growth of the meals on wheels service.
7	Re-establish regular meetings with care management teams to better understand the demands and pressures on the service.
8	Continue to work with the existing software provider Smartt to develop and enhance the functionality of the current technology and to evaluate the findings from the optimisation tools for delivery routing planning.

9	To work with the existing software provider to develop a digital IT solution to manage stock control and inventory, utilising real time data to forecast demand from menu choices, manage stock levels and making informed decisions about ordering and replenishment to minimise excess stock.
10	Review roles and responsibilities between Business Support and Senior drivers to define clear lines of accountability. Further examine staffing rotas, aiming for senior drivers to provide office coverage on weekends and respond to service calls from drivers.
11	Continue to explore grant opportunities to support investment in the service.
12	Finance: Transition all new referrals to direct debit payments from 1st November 2025 and actively pursue outstanding debt with creditors section.
13	Establish regular quarterly meetings with Finance to monitor income, and facilitate proactive budget management and forecasting
14	Finance: Conduct a comprehensive review of fixed and operating costs in comparison with other local authorities, particularly Torfaen CBC, due to similarities in staffing structures, food supplier and volume of meals (200 per day) to establish value for money.
15	Analyse the feedback from the pilot trial of using hot boxes as an alternative method of delivery and compare results with existing system.
16	Continue to progress with the route planning optimisation work, feasibility study on site locations and evaluate findings to support any future investment
17	A feasibility study could be considered in Phase 2 to identify any cost benefits and outcomes of operating the service out from two locations across the authority.
18	Upon completion of the pilot trial evaluation of hot boxes, proceed with the procurement of vehicles that meet current operational needs and are fit for purpose. This will ensure the timely replacement of the existing aging fleet prior to the winter of 2025/2026.
19	Work with Gwent authorities to identify additional opportunities for closer cooperation aimed at enhancing and standardising service provision.
20	To provide quarterly reports to the Senior Management Team on service improvements and progress on the recommendations noted above.

This page is intentionally left blank



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Integrated Impact Assessment document (incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer: Naomi Lovesay Phone no: 07970894427 E-mail: NaomiLovesay@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal To consider the findings and outcomes of the first phase review of the Community Means Service. To assess the impact of any service development on the delivery of Monmouthshire Meals on Wheels Service to people in Monmouthshire
Name of Service area Monmouthshire Meals on Wheels, Direct care Services	Date 19 th September 2025

Page 83

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	Developing the Meals on Wheels (MOW) service will ensure the service is sustainable both in terms of the service delivery model and financially. This sustainability will ensure elderly people in our communities will continue to have a hot meal delivered daily. Having nutritious hot meal daily will support people's physical and psychological wellbeing and prevent further health complications as a result malnutrition and dehydration.	To develop the service, a change in meal supplier will need to be considered. A potential change in supplier may mean an altered menu choice which some people may dislike.	Engagement with service users to ensure a menu is offered is to their liking and continues to offer options that cater for allergies, dietary choices (e.g. vegan) medical conditions (e.g. Diabetes) and cultural beliefs (e.g. Halal)

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	Developing the Meals on Wheels (MOW) service will ensure the service is sustainable both in terms of the service delivery model and financially. This sustainability will ensure people with a disability in our communities will continue to have a hot meal delivered daily. Having nutritious hot meal daily will support people's physical and psychological wellbeing and prevent further health complications as a result malnutrition and dehydration.	During the change project, a change in meal supplier will need to be considered. A potential change in supplier may mean an altered menu choice which some people may dislike.	Engagement with service users to ensure a menu is offered is to their liking and continues to offer options that cater for allergies, dietary choices (e.g. vegan) medical conditions (e.g. Diabetes) and cultural beliefs (e.g. Halal)
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy or maternity	N/A	N/A	N/A
Race	N/A	N/A	N/A

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Religion or Belief	.As part of the proposed service change, a tender process will be undertaken for the meal supplier. This re-tendering of the meal supplier will continue to ensure that religious and cultural beliefs in relation to peoples diet will have greater consideration.	Nil	N/A
Sex	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sexual Orientation	.N/A	N/A	N/A

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

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

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

Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	<p>Although the MOW service is based on assessed need, it is a chargeable service. This charge may mean that some people are unable to afford the cost of MOW resulting in reduced access to the service. As part of the proposed change, financial review will take place to consider if the service can be delivered in a more cost effective way which will allow MCC to reduce the cost of the meal daily to people in our communities. If a reduction in cost can be achieved as an outcome of this project, then this will provide an opportunity for greater access to the MOW service for vulnerable people living in Monmouthshire.</p>	<p>MOW will remain a chargeable service to some extent so may continue to prevent some people accessing the service</p>	<p>A desired outcome will be to reduce the cost to people in our communities which will help to mitigate a proportion of the accessibility based on a person's socio-economic circumstances.</p>
---	--	---	--

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.




How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	The proposal does not in any way reduce the use of Welsh language. MOW encourages communication and engagement in both Welsh and English which will continue as part of all service change. As we look to consider how we can digitalise some of the processes there maybe an opportunity to actually increase the Welsh offer across the MOW service.	Nil	N/A
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Welsh language training is, and will continue to be, available to all existing and new staff within the MOW service.	Welsh language training may impact on staff capacity which will need to be balanced with delivering the MOW service so operationally the service is not impacted.	Planning training in advance to ensure workforce is sufficient daily to manage the demands of the MOW service.
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	The service change project allows us the opportunity to review and update all service communication and engagement is delivered bilingually promoting the use of Welsh language.	Nil	N/A



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

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	The re-tender of frozen plated food will consider what options there are to buy-local to support Monmouthshire economy through creating demand that provides jobs for people in our communities.	To work collaboratively with procurement to ensure the tender supports the principles of a prosperous Wales
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	N/A	N/A
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Nutrition and hydration are well documented to support people mental and physical wellbeing and prevent secondary health complications.	
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected		
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	The proposed changes to the service model will provide more economic and environmentally responsible outcomes through the desired procurement of locally produced frozen plated meals and the move to fully EV vehicles with electric hot boxes – no diesel ovens will continue to be utilised. Both these desired outcomes will reduce carbon emissions.	<p>A limiting factor maybe the lack of a local company to provide and a locally produced frozen plated meal however we will work collaboratively with procurement, sustainability and community services within MCC to optimise this opportunity.</p> <p>Sourcing EV vehicles maybe a challenge however close collaboration with MCC transport manager we envisage will mitigate this risk.</p>
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	None identified at this point	None identified at this point

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The MOW service is accessible for all people with an assessed need in our communities. Recruitment is completed in line with MCC fair recruitment process ensuring equal opportunities to all.	A desired outcome of the service change would be to be able to reduce the cost to service users to make the service more inclusive based on financial viability.

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>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	The service change proposal is based upon ensuring a resilient and sustainable business and service model which can meet the predicted needs of people currently and in the long term. The model being proposed will have flexibility to expand as the aging population demographics are predicted to grow in Monmouthshire and the demand for MOW is likely to increase.	The proposal is to establish a sustainable, cost effective and efficient service model that can be upscaled as and when required.
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	The proposal will work collaborative with procurement and sustainability in local community teams to maximise opportunities for this service change project.	Full communication with partners from the start to ensure optimal engagement and outcome delivery.
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	Engagement with service users and other services within adult social care has, and will continue to take place.	A variety of communication tools will be utilised to ensure engagement is inclusive to facilitate the shape and to monitor impact of service change.

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>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Funding MOW is preventing significantly increased demand on domiciliary care. Currently the service is preventing 72 people requiring domiciliary care at a cost avoidance of over £200k. Ensuring people are hydrated and well nourished will reduce the risk of secondary health complications.</p>	<p>There maybe an opportunity to consider how the MOW service can support the short term assessment and reablement strategy to optimise peoples well being and independence and reduce reliance on social care and health services. This could also be extended to work in collaboration with commissioned care provider services and NHS to integrate and offer MOW at an earlier point in time to prevent potential health and social care challenges.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>.Providing an opportunity for people to remain independent, living in their own home whilst still being able to obtain a hot meal will increase peoples wellbeing both physically and mentally (as evidenced in the service user engagement in phase 1 of this project). Ensuring people are hydrated and well nourished will reduce the risk of secondary health complications.</p>	<p>There maybe an opportunity to consider how the MOW service can support the short term assessment and reablement strategy to optimise peoples well being and independence and reduce reliance on social care and health services. This could also be extended to work in collaboration with commissioned care provider services and NHS to integrate and offer MOW at an earlier point in time to prevent potential health and social care challenges.</p>

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

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	MOW ensures people are at less risk of self neglect and supports vulnerable people to obtain a hot meal daily to prevent secondary health and social complications as a result of self neglect. Staff in MOW are trained to safeguard individuals and how to report any potential concerns.	.N/A	N/A
Corporate Parenting	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

☒ Monmouthshire population data
☒ Service user engagement / feedback
☒ Service user demographic data
☒ Bench mark service model to other LA's
☐ Route data to consider how the routes can be optimised to create efficiencies and reduce carbon footprint
☐ Financial data

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 Community Meals service provides a beneficial service to older people and people living with disability or ill-health. Many of the service users are isolated and are at risk of declining health or falls without the good nutrition and hydration that the service provides. The service reduces pressure on family members and carers (predominantly female) and provides peace of mind that loved ones are eating and having some social contact during the day.

The review acknowledges that the council subsidizes the service, but highlights that any short-term saving would potentially drive costs elsewhere as well as reducing opportunities for people to remain within their own homes and communities. The review recommends that the service should seek improvements and efficiencies in order to reduce the subsidy rather than increase the charge or cease the service. This ensures that the service remains affordable to people living on lower incomes.

The review highlights a range of opportunities to improve the service, with the potential for additional positive impacts in relation to the environment, Welsh language and local economy.

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
To establish a programme board to complete phase 2 of the MM review and change programme	Oct 25	Naomi Lovesay
To develop detailed action plan based on the 20 recommendations from phase 1 detailing timelines and accountability for each action	Oct 25	Naomi Lovesay

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

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
	<i>e.g. budget mandate, DMT, SLT, Scrutiny, Cabinetetc</i>		

--	--	--	--

This page is intentionally left blank

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
30 th September 2025	Whole Authority Approach to Wellbeing and Prevention	Scrutiny of a strategy to take forward a whole authority approach to wellbeing and prevention.	Jane Rodgers Councillor Ian Chandler	Policy Development
	Community Meals	Scrutiny of an approach to ensure a good quality and sustainable service model for Community Meals.	Jane Rodgers Councillor Ian Chandler	Policy Development
Special Meeting October / November	Monmouthshire Public Library Strategy 2025-30	To scrutinise the Monmouthshire Public Library Strategy 2025-30 following public consultation.	Richard Drinkwater	Policy Development
25 th November 2025	Disability Confident Pledge (Move up)	Report outlining actions for the next three years.	Pennie Walker	Policy Development
	Elective Home Education	Discussion on the policy.	Sharon Randall Smith Will McLean Cllr Wright	Policy Development
	Attendance and Children Missing Education Policy	To scrutinise the policy ahead of adoption.	Sharon Randall Smith Councillor Wright	Pre-decision Scrutiny
21 st January 2026				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
24 th February 2026				
31 st March 2026				
TBC	WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan) – Invite P&O Members	To scrutinise performance against the plans.	Sharon Randall Smith Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring
New Year – to be confirmed	Homelessness Update	To scrutinise a progress update.	Ian Bakewell Rebecca Cresswell	Policy Development
To be confirmed	Planning and Provision of School Places	<i>To scrutinise data and projections for pupil places and the impact of future housing development.</i>	<i>Will Mclean Matthew Jones</i>	<i>Policy Development</i>
Corporate and Community Plan Items for the Committee's consideration for inclusion into the People Scrutiny Forward Plan:				
Participatory Budgeting Programme				
Race equality action plan for Wales				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	LGBTQ+ action plan			
	Disability Action Plan			
	Gender Equality Action Plan			
	Homes for Social Rent and work to bring empty properties back into use			
	Review and update shared housing allocations policy			
	Rapid Rehousing approach/rapid rehousing action plan delivery			
	Care without profit – increase in-county placement options			
	Support effective discharge from hospital –			

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
integration between health and social care				
Provide a high-quality residential care facility for people with dementia				
Chief Officer for Social Care and Health Annual Report				
Safeguarding Performance Report				
Develop a broader 14-19 education offer through collaboration with partners				

Action List for People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting:	16th July 2025	
People Scrutiny Committee		
Minute:	Action	Officer / Member
3	Committee to receive a progress report on the Rapid Rehousing Plan in January 2026 to ensure that everything is on track and to address any potential issues early. The committee supports the recommendations in the report.	Ian Bakewell Councillor Burch

This page is intentionally left blank

Action List for People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting:	22nd July 2025	
People Scrutiny Committee		
Minute:	Action	Officer / Member
4	Petitions received on Home to School Transport Policy The Committee agreed the route for the petitions would be option d), to refer them to the relevant officer, Deb Hill-Howells, for inclusion into the ongoing piece of work.	Deb Hill Howells
5	County of Sanctuary They offered to pull together key information about funding sources and cost implications and circulate it to committee members. (Action: Sharran Lloyd) .	Sharran Lloyd
6	Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2025 Annual Monitoring Report Pennie advised that due to the specific nature of the questions asked that relate to responsibilities of various service areas, she would need to seek answers to provide to the committee by email This would be circulated to Members as soon as possible following the meeting. (Action: Pennie Walker) .	Pennie Walker

This page is intentionally left blank

Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	Cabinet member	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner
Cabinet	Deferred	Pavement Café Policy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences	Carl Touhig	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	2025/26 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	2026/27 WCF/Mon Farm treasury strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	2026/27 Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	Cultural Strategy	Sara Burch	To approve the Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy which lays out clear ambitions and actions to ensure that Monmouthshire is a desired cultural	Tracey Thomas	20-May-25
Cabinet	10-Dec-25	2025/26 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 2	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Destination Management Plan	Sara Burch & Paul Griffiths		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25
Council	23-Oct-25	Annual Safeguarding Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Diane Corrister	18-Jul-25
Council	23-Oct-25	Director's Annual Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	18-Jul-25
Council	23-Oct-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Rachel Lewis	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Proposed amendments to the provision of Early years education at Durand Primary School	Laura Wright - Education	The Council is considering replacing the Local Authority maintained Nursery class at Durand Primary School with a private non maintained setting. We would like to seek the views of the local community and are therefore seeking permission from Cabinet to enter into the necessary statutory consultation processes	Matthew Jones	11-Sep-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	2025/26 Revenue Monitoring Update 1	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12/76/25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Panel Performance Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide an update on the proposed approach for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment which is a requirement under the Local	Matt Gatehouse	28-Aug-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Connect to Work and Future Focus programmes	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones / Rory Clifford	21-Jul-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Ensuring a good quality and sustainable service model for Community Meals	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	19-Jun-25

Cabinet	15-Oct-25	A strategy to take forward a whole authority approach to wellbeing and prevention	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	19-Jun-25
ICMD	08-Oct-25		Ben Callard - Resources	For the purpose of this report to inform recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications for the Welsh Church Fund Working Group Meeting 2 held on Thursday 18th September 2025.	Dave Jarrett	
ICMD	24-Sep-25	WELSH CHURCH FUND WORKING GROUP Health & Safety Annual Report	ben Callard - Resources		Kate Thompson	5-Aug-25
Council	18-Sep-25	Self-assessment 2024/25		To seek Council approval of the self-assessment report 2024/25 in line with requirements outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales)	richard Jones	10-Jun-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Proposed endorsement of the Monmouthshire Local Area Energy Plan	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Welsh Government commissioned the production of Local Area Energy Plans for Local Authority areas which will be used to develop a regional and national Energy Plan. The Local Area Energy Plan for Monmouthshire provides data on the	Deb Hill Howells	28-Jul-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Real Living Wage Employer Accreditation	ben Callard - Resources	Further to Cabinet's decision on Wednesday 6th November 2024, and an evaluation of the authority's supply chain, to bring forward a further	Philippa Green	13-Jun-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	County of Sanctuary Strategy	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve a county of sanctuary strategy which establishes clear principles which will run through all council services and which promotes inclusion	Sharran Lloyd and Jane Harvey	27-May-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Review of Housing Support Grant Programme.	Sara Burch		Ian Bakewell	23-May-25
ICMD	20-Aug-25	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 17	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Gareth Freeman	4-Aug-25
ICMD	23-Jul-25	Lloyds tour of Britain Stage 5 Pontypool to Tumble	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Nick John	2-Jul-25
ICMD	23-Jul-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	2-Jul-25
Council	17-Jul-25	Chepstow Integrated Transport LUF project			Deb Hill Howells	24-Jun-25
Council	17-Jul-25	Strategic Director's Report, Children, Learning, Skills and the Economy'	Laura Wright - Education		Will Mclean	18-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	2024/25 Revenue & Capital monitoring Outturn (incl early update on 2025/26)	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	2026/27 Revenue & Capital MTFP update and process	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	ADD AS FIRST ITEM Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023: Monmouthshire County Council's Annual Report	Ben Callard - Resources	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	Philippa Green	6-Jun-25

Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Play Sufficiency Update	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Play sufficiency assessment update.	Nick John	28-Mar-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Shire Hall Delivery Stage - Financial Approval	Ben Callard - Resources		Tracey Thomas	25-Mar-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Strategic OfficerLeadership and Organisation Structure changes	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Paul Matthews	5-Jun-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Separation of Licensing Functions	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Linda O Gorman	28-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Appointments to Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	23-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Licensing Act Policy 2025	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Policy has to be approved by Full Council and it needs to be in place by 1 st July 2025	Linda O Gorman	10-Jan-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Strategic Risk Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	richard Jones	10-Jun-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Nature Recovery Action Plan & Green Infrastructure Strategy	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Placemaking Grant 25/26 & 26/27	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Craig O Connor	29-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies / Cath Fallon	1-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Active Gwent Sports Partnership	Angela Sandles - Engagement	For Monmouthshire County Council to formally enter into the Active Gwent sport partnership.	Nick John	28-Mar-25

Cabinet	21-May-25	Digital, Data and Technology Collaboration	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To develop proposals to build on existing collaborative arrangements in place for the provision of technology services through the Shared Resource Service. Expanding on these to include digital and data services will generate	Peter Davies & Matt Gatehouse & Sian Hayward	14-Mar-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Y Prentis Update	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	26-Feb-25
Council	15-May-25	SAC Membership Report	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To inform Council of SAC recommendations to appoint members of SAC	Sharon Randall-Smith	16-Apr-25
Council	10-Apr-25	Constitution Review	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	25-Mar-25
Council	10-Apr-25	Senior Pay Review	Ben Callard - Resources		Julie Anthony	3-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	PSPO Lane Closure to prevent fly tipping & off roading	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Mark Cleaver	13-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4	Ben Callard - Resources			
Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies - Lead (Cath Fallon)	3-Mar-25
Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Reponse to Boundary Commission Electoral Review Consultation	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	12-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Mar-25	Proposal to increase the fee payments to Monmouthshire Foster Carers	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Charlotte Drury	4-Feb-25

ICMD	12-Mar-25	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 16	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment			
Council	06-Mar-25	Appointment of Chief Officer - Head of Transport - Exempt info	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Deb Hill Howells	21-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	Publication of the Councils Pay Policy	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.	Matt Gatehouse / Pip Green	17-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	Contract Procedure Rules	Ben Callard - Resources		Scott James	9-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Budget sign off including CT resolution	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	Approval of a Discretionary Policy for Council Tax Premiums	Ben Callard - Resources		Ruth Donovan	27-Jan-25
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 WCF/Mon Farm Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	26-Feb-25	County of Sanctuary: Homes for Ukraine	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To confirm future support arrangements for Ukranian's living in Monmouthshire as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme following changes to the national arrangement for both funding & visas	Richard Drinkwater/Matt Gatehouse	7-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Feb-25	Housing Allocations Policy				

Cabinet	19-Feb-25	UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025 – financial implications and impact	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	10-Jul-24
Cabinet	19-Feb-25	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	29-Jan-25	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts final	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	17-Dec-24
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Diary 2025/26	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	
Council	23-Jan-25	GWENT REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD (RPB) AREA PLAN AND RPB ANNUAL REPORT 23/24	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Natasha Harris (Torfaen)	
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Business case for the purchase of a property in Abergavenny to develop supported accommodation for care experienced young people	Ben Callard - Resources		Jane Rogers	7-Jan-25
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Education Middle Tier	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Will McLean	20-Nov-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Decision to transfer Dixton Archive from Monmouth Museum to Herefordshire Record Office			Rachael Rogers	9-Dec-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	13-Jun-24

ICMD	18-Dec-24	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts draft	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24

This page is intentionally left blank

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Wednesday, 16th July, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jackie Strong (Chair)
County Councillor (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Jan Butler,
Christopher Edwards, Simon Howarth,
Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Emma Bryn,
Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Sara Burch, John Crook,
Su McConnel, Alistair Neill, Peter Strong and
Ann Webb

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Ian Bakewell, Housing & Communities Manager
Cath Fallon, Head of Economy and Enterprise
Trudy Griffin, Housing Support Commissioning
Operational Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillors Penny Jones and Martyn Groucutt

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Martyn Groucutt, who was being substituted by Councillor Jill Bond and Councillor Penny Jones, who was being substituted by Councillor Ann Webb.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Review of the Housing Social Grant Programme

Cabinet Member Sara Burch introduced the report and Ian Bakewell delivered a presentation, following which, they answered the members' questions.

Introduction by Cabinet Member Sara Burch:

- Councillor Burch discussed the diverse range of services commissioned using the housing support grant from the Welsh Government, emphasizing their importance in meeting housing needs.
- She highlighted the Council's long-standing relationships with third sector providers, which offer support to people with specific needs or in difficult situations, helping them avoid homelessness or transition to independent living.
- Councillor Burch noted that most current services and funding arrangements predate the pandemic and are funded by the annual housing support grant allocation.

- She stressed the excellence of current services and the productive partnerships developed over many years.
- The recommissioning process aims to be transparent and objective, focusing on the citizens receiving support and ensuring the best outcomes for public money spent.
- Councillor Burch expressed the importance of not treating this as a routine procurement exercise and appreciated the opportunity for scrutiny before proceeding.
- She mentioned the approval of the rapid rehousing transition plan in 2023 and the ongoing engagement with service providers to adapt services as needs evolve.
- The Council's legal duties around homelessness have changed since the pandemic, with further changes expected as new legislation is enacted.
- Councillor Burch emphasised the need for fair funding, robust monitoring, and avoiding duplication of services, aiming for three to five-year funding arrangements with service providers.
- She concluded by acknowledging the hard work of everyone involved in these services and the housing options team.

Key Points made by Ian Bakewell:

- Ian emphasised the importance of housing support services in preventing homelessness and supporting individuals in maintaining their homes.
- The Welsh Government's vision for homelessness is to make it rare, brief, and unrepeated, with housing support playing a key role.
- Monmouthshire receives nearly £3.5 million from the Welsh Government for housing support, but this is insufficient to meet the identified needs.
- The types of support provided include assistance with accessing suitable accommodation, financial help, daily living skills, and bridging to wider support services.
- Monmouthshire faces high demand for homelessness and housing support services, with around 2,000 referrals per year and significant needs related to mental health, domestic abuse, and substance misuse.
- There are currently 900+ people receiving support, but there is still unmet need, including waiting lists for supported housing and housing first services.
- The Council aims to align services with its priorities, increase value for money, support worker salaries, and reduce the number of small, less resilient projects.
- The review and tendering process will help ensure compliance with legal requirements and improve contract management.
- Despite the review, gaps in services will remain due to budget constraints, including the need for dedicated mental health supported accommodation and more comprehensive domestic abuse services.
- The upcoming Welsh Government legislation may increase demand for housing support and place additional duties on the Council.

Key Questions and points made by Councillors

- Councillor Powell - asked if the increase in Council tax on empty houses would lead to more of these houses being released for rent.

Ian responded that the premium on empty homes has positively impacted the number of long-term empty homes. However, these homes have not significantly been made available for Council use, as they are often brought back for personal use or sold/rented outside of Council channels.

Ian offered an example whereby a resident attended a Council 'cost of living event' needing benefits and tenancy advice due to a relationship issue making their property unaffordable. A housing support officer helped the resident by providing rent top-ups and assisting with a homeless application. The landlord served an invalid notice, which the Council identified, allowing the resident to stay for an additional six months. The resident received assistance with accessing benefits and health services for their child. Due to ongoing issues with the landlord, the Council offered temporary accommodation, which the resident declined, preferring to stay in the property. The resident was supported in obtaining an emergency housing allocation and moved to a new property within a week. The Council provided additional security measures for the new property to ensure the resident's safety.

- Councillor Howarth - How have the new criteria for landlords and the changes in the law affected the quality, quantity, and service provided by landlords? Has the relationship with Melin Homes changed since they moved to Newport City Council, and has it affected the consortium with other partners in the Gwent area?
- What is the impact of Severn View on homelessness, considering its location and the need for similar facilities across the county?
- Does the current capacity and reliance on Welsh Government grants affect the ability to deliver services, and should the Council fill vacant posts to save money in the long run?

Ian Bakewell explained that the new Rent Smart Wales changes and the Renting Homes Act have not significantly deteriorated the situation with landlords. The requirement for landlords to give six months' notice has provided more breathing space.

The relationship with Melin Homes, now Hedyn, remains strong and supportive, with no negative impact from their move to Newport City Council.

Severn View is a valuable resource, but there is a need for similar facilities across the county. The allocation of temporary accommodation is based on availability and suitability, and efforts are made to place people as close to their home area as possible.

Ian acknowledged the Council's support in increasing staffing and budget. While additional resources are always beneficial, the focus should be on making improvements within the current budget and addressing the shortfall in housing support grants.

- Councillor Riley - How does the need for services compare to the exact location of people, especially with services provided in Newport for those at risk of taking their own lives?
- Are properties being acquired all around the county rather than concentrated in Chepstow?
- Does living in a property where the landlord doesn't want you anymore increase stress on mental health?
- Would hiring people in-house be better than duplicating services that are not proving to be good value for money?

Councillor Burch acknowledged the importance of considering need and location, emphasizing the need to ensure support is available, whether through housing support or health and social care responsibilities.

She confirmed that properties are being acquired around the county, with recent purchases in Abergavenny and efforts to address the lack of temporary housing in Monmouth.

Ian explained that the case study illustrated the complexities and support provided in such situations.

Councillor Burch mentioned that while some specialist expertise might be better provided by external organisations, the Council evaluates whether services are better provided in-house or by third parties.

- Councillor Jackie Strong - Can housing support be spot purchased for specific needs, through specialist organisations?

Ian explained that spot purchasing is not the practice. Instead, the Council collaborates with providers and social services to create bespoke support packages for individuals with specific needs.

- Councillor Edwards - How does the Council see itself as an educator of landlords, especially in cases where landlords may not know or are ignoring the rules?
- Can you provide more details about the alarming increase in domestic abuse referrals, including how many of these referrals concern children?
- How are we doing this current year in the general number of referrals across the board, and is there an increase compared to this time last year?
- What additional indicators are being established to improve the understanding of housing support needs, service delivery, and quality of outcomes?
- How much of an issue is staff retention in relation to the number of referrals waiting for support?

Ian explained that landlord support is an important part of the mix, with environmental health and landlord forums playing roles in educating landlords. The Council has also been involved in regional projects like BOOST to support landlords.

Ian acknowledged the increase in domestic abuse referrals and mentioned that it could be due to a combination of increased awareness and proactive engagement with agencies. He did not have specific figures on how many referrals concern children but promised to provide more detailed information.

Ian stated that the number of referrals is fairly consistent, with around 2000 referrals per year. The current year is on track to have similar numbers.

Ian mentioned the need to better understand the quality of support and how individuals progress through their support journey. The Council is working on establishing additional indicators to measure this progress.

Ian noted that staff retention is slightly improving but remains a challenge. The issue is not the main reason for the waiting list, which is more due to the overall capacity of projects.

- Councillor Jan Butler - Can you clarify the use of money for 24-hour security rather than 24-hour support at Severn View?
- Is there anywhere in the Council's estate currently being looked at for a similar facility in the North of the county?
- Do we have any cross-border agreements, especially for areas close to the boundaries with other counties or countries?

Ian explained that the ideal scenario would be to provide 24-hour supported accommodation, but due to funding limitations, they use 24-hour security to manage the front door and protect the building. This security is funded through rental income.

He confirmed that the team meets weekly to discuss opportunities and has looked at buildings in Monmouth, but they have not found suitable projects for conversion into accommodation. They continue to work on acquisitions that are suitable and will not cause long-term problems.

Ian mentioned that there are no formal cross-border agreements, but there are informal arrangements with neighbouring authorities like Newport and occasional cooperation with the police for safety reason.

- Councillor Louise Brown - Can resources be set aside to deal with the gap between when someone says they are homeless and when they are determined as homeless, and the weekend gap due to the Gwent-wide basis?

Is there any potential expansion of accommodation in Abergavenny and Monmouth? Is the Council responding to the Welsh Parliament about the Wales bill and its resource implications?

- How does Abergavenny's status as a town of sanctuary impact housing need for homelessness, and which area of the Council deals with this?

Ian explained that the out-of-hours arrangements are minimal but ensure that no one is left vulnerable. Any issues arising over the weekend or at night are picked up the next working day.

Ian and Councillor Burch confirmed that there is an ongoing quest for additional accommodation across the county, including Abergavenny and Monmouth. They are working with Registered Social Landlord partners to focus on town centres and have identified provisional opportunities.

Ian mentioned that there is significant engagement with Welsh Government regarding the bill, with local authorities lobbying about resource implications. The Council has responded to consultation exercises and anticipates grant funding to help implement new legislation.

Councillor Burch clarified that the town of sanctuary status does not influence the number of refugees or asylum seekers but helps them integrate into the community. Ian added that the Council is preparing for a more direct role in accommodating asylum seekers and refugees, ensuring no impact on existing housing needs.

- Councillor Bond - Is there enough resource to handle the change process given the plan timeline, and how can risks to employees of service providers be mitigated during the contract transition?
- Is there an opportunity to involve local members in representing vulnerable people during the process, and what role will the Council play in the decision-making process?

Ian explained that significant preparatory work has already been done, and the team, supported by Cardiff City through Ardal, is confident in managing the tender process. The staggered approach will help manage the workload. Regarding risks to employees, Ian mentioned that TUPE obligations would apply, allowing staff to transfer between organisations if necessary. Market engagement events have been held to ensure providers understand the process and can provide feedback.

Ian acknowledged the importance of including the voice of service users and mentioned that the team is considering how best to involve them in the process. The Council's team will be part of the panel for the tender process, and there is consideration for including service users in the decision-making process. Ian also welcomed feedback from local members based on their experiences with residents.

- Councillor Riley - asked about the cost of temporary accommodation for working individuals, noting that it places them in the "working poor" category. She enquired if there is anything that can be done to address the high costs for those who work.

Ian acknowledged that the rents for temporary accommodation are on the higher side and that the current model aims to provide a financially sustainable service. He recognised the issue of disincentives to work and mentioned that the goal is to replace shared accommodation with self-contained units to improve the situation.

Councillor Burch added that the ultimate solution is to have more affordable accommodation to move people out of temporary housing quickly. The development of new affordable housing is ongoing, and the approval of the replacement local development plan will help address the under-provision of affordable housing in the county.

- Councillor Webb - How many times can a person refuse an offered accommodation before they lose their chance?
- How is mental health screening conducted, and is it done through another authority?

Ian stated that homeless applicants are allowed one refusal of offered accommodation. This policy was changed from two refusals to expedite the process of moving people through temporary accommodation.

Ian explained that the ideal scenario would involve having a mental health professional within the team to provide specialist advice and bridge the gap between housing officers and mental health workers. Currently, there is no dedicated mental health screening service within the team, and previous attempts to recruit a mental health social worker were unsuccessful. The team is keen to revisit this idea to improve service quality for individuals with mental health issues.

- Councillor Bond - emphasised the importance of representing residents' voices and clarified that her suggestion was not about political involvement in the tendering process but about ensuring that residents' voices are heard. She also mentioned that she had provided some possible measures in the chat for further discussion.

Councillor Burch acknowledged the importance of representing residents' voices and stated that she is familiar with the core forms mentioned by Jill. She encouraged all councillors to share any experiences or issues they encounter with the services, as this feedback is valuable for identifying gaps and improving services.

- Councillor Butler asked about the current hoarding support being provided, mentioning that it is listed in the forward planning post the change in the act. She wanted to know more about the current support available.

Ian explained that the Council is working with an agency called Holistic Hoarding. This is a relatively new project, less than a year old, which has experienced considerable demand. The service is associated with mental health and is not a quick fix, but it has been a good and very positive new project.

Chair's Conclusion:

We have conducted thorough scrutiny of this report. There have been some suggestions from the Committee that we should monitor the progress of the procurement process, particularly given the timeline for issuing and awarding the tender. Councillor Howarth has emphasised the importance of ensuring that the process is transparent and that any issues are identified early.

Ian has agreed that it would be beneficial for the committee to receive updates on the procurement process and has advised that the decision to start the procurement process would be for the cabinet to decide and that the committee would receive progress reports.

Councillor Burch has suggested incorporating updates on the procurement process within the regular reports on the rapid rehousing plan to ensure that the committee is kept informed about the progress and any potential issues.

The committee has agreed to receive a progress report in January 2026 to ensure that everything is on track and to address any potential issues early. The committee supports the recommendations in the report.

The meeting ended at **12.25 pm.**

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 22nd July, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jackie Strong (Chair)

County Councillors: Jan Butler, Christopher Edwards, Simon Howarth, Penny Jones, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Louise Brown, Ian Chandler, Angela Sandles and Peter Strong

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Deb Hill-Howells, Chief Officer Infrastructure

External Attendees: Friederike Madler, Lynne, Sheridan, Community Councillor Matt Sidwell (Mathern Community Council)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Maria Stevens and Ann Webb

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were also received from Councillor Stevens, who was being substituted by Councillor Peter Strong. Apologies were received from Councillor Webb for the petitions agenda item, and Penny Jones confirmed she would present the petition on Councillor Webb's behalf.

2. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

3. Public Open Forum

Several people attended the public open forum to speak on different matters.

Lynne Sheridan ~ Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2025

- Lynne emphasised the importance of councils ensuring their policies and practices comply with the Equality Act 2010, especially following a recent Supreme Court judgment clarifying that "sex" refers to biological sex only.
- She noted difficulty in accessing council policies as a member of the public and highlighted the need for greater transparency.
- Lynne stressed that councils, as duty bearers, cannot use ignorance of the law or wait for government guidance as a defence for non-compliance. She suggested

that even compliant policies can be undermined in practice, referencing evidence from tribunals and judicial reviews.

- She referenced a recent tribunal case where an officer was unaware of workplace regulations requiring sex-based facilities, illustrating gaps in staff knowledge.
- Lynne also described a scenario in leisure centres where staff may face challenges if users report concerns about facility use based on sex, questioning whether staff are adequately trained to handle such situations. She urged the council to review and update policies and training as necessary to ensure compliance and effective frontline response.

Freddie Madler ~ Home to School Transport Policy

- Freddie raised concerns about the removal of home-to-school transport for children aged 4 to 11 in Saint Arvans, highlighting significant emotional, physical, and financial impacts on families.
- She stated that the new walking route exceeds 55 minutes each way, is unlit, overgrown, frequently flooded, and includes an unsafe crossing, making it unsuitable and unsafe for young children, especially in winter.
- Freddie also stated that the route exceeds the 45-minute maximum recommended for primary children and has not been independently assessed as required by statutory guidance.
- She argued that the policy shifts the burden onto families, disproportionately affects working households, and creates postcode-based inequality, as some children are excluded despite the bus passing their previous stop.
- Freddie spoke of how long, demanding journeys negatively affect children's readiness to learn, causing tiredness, cold, and anxiety, which undermines educational and well-being goals.
- Freddie suggested the decision contradicts the council's climate and active travel objectives by increasing car use and emissions and urged the council to review and reinstate transport to ensure equity, safety, and policy coherence.

Community Councillor Matt Sidwell ~ Home to School Transport Policy

- Councillor Sidwell mentioned that an appeal (Stage 1) has been lodged regarding the removal of free home-to-school transport for Mathern and Pwlmeyric, and they are awaiting a response.
- He highlighted that while the council may not have a legal obligation under the Climate Change Act, it must demonstrate consideration of climate impacts, questioning how the council will address increased car journeys and associated CO2 emissions compared to bus transport.

- He referenced a previous ruling in 2023 that deemed the route unsafe, particularly at the A48 and Pwllmeyric Hill area, and noted that no changes have been made since, questioning the justification for removing the bus service.

Peter Farley, Chair of St. Arvans Community Council ~ Home to School Transport Policy

- The Chair of Saint Arvan's Community Council expressed that the Community Council shares the concerns of the parents and residents in all respects and has considered the matter in the context of our community as a whole. He conveyed unanimous support for the petition to reinstate home-to-school transport, following meetings with affected parents and a delegation from residents.
- He emphasised concerns about inequity and potential divisiveness resulting from the policy change and noted that it could make the village less attractive to families with young children.
- He requested the committee to consider the community council's views and support the petition during their discussions.

4. Receipt of Petitions on Home to School Transport Policy

St Arvan's Petition

Councillor Penny Jones presented the petition from St Arvans ward on the Home to School Transport Policy, on behalf of Councillor Ann Webb. In reading the wording of the petition, Councillor Jones explained that the petition called for the Council to:

"Reinstate the fully funded home-school-transport for all the primary aged children who attend The Dell School in St Arvan's. The speed and volume of traffic which the children will be exposed to is a risk, the road crossing is not safe, and the footpath is hazardous.

Children attending The Dell School from the age of 4 are expected to walk up to 2 miles each way. The emotional and physical stress of this walk, in all weathers, will negatively impact their mental health, physical health and ability to effectively engage with their learning when in school.

There are major safety concerns from the children and parents around the safety of the road crossing and footpath, they are expected to walk. The crossing is not suitably lit and wide enough. The path is unlit, uneven and extremely narrow in parts with the close proximity to a high number of cars. In the case of an emergency there is a section of the footpath, which is obscured from view, from the road with no easy way to access it, if needed. The children and parents have safety concerns with regards to walking past the racecourse on race day and the days following".

Mathern Petition

Councillor Lousie Brown presented the petition from Mathern ward on the Home to School Transport Policy. In reading the wording of the petition, Councillor Brown explained that the petition called for the Council to:

“Retain free home to school transport to the Dell Primary School and to the Chepstow Comprehensive School for the pupils from the Mathern Community Council Area (Mathern, Mounton, Pwllmeyric Hill & Haysgate), as the route to school is unsafe and hazardous, as evidenced by the double white lines from Parkwall roundabout to Highbeech Roundabout. There is no safe crossing point for pupils to cross the main A48. The volume and speed of traffic on the A48 are a risk. There is insufficient width to the footpaths to walk safely from Mathern to both schools.

Expecting children from as young as 4 years old to walk up to 2 miles each way daily to The Dell Primary School and for children of 11 years old to walk up to 3 miles each way daily to the Chepstow Comprehensive School in all weathers, carrying school equipment and study material, not allowed to wear outer clothing and storing it to dry during the day at school is not safe, it is emotionally stressful, effects their mental and physical health due to effects of weather and walking in close proximity to a major traffic route, and is a major concern for the parents of said children to ensure they are safe at all times”.

Councillor Brown also highlighted that the petition had received 222 signatures (plus 7 more), which was a significant proportion of the local electorate.

Key points made by Members:

- Councillor Howarth referenced a recent council motion regarding the adoption of statutory distances for home-to-school transport, highlighting that the motion acknowledged the financial hardship and logistical difficulties this would cause for many families. The motion had instructed the cabinet to directly contact all families whose eligibility had changed, inform them of their rights to appeal, commit to assessing whether a safe walking route exists, and expedite all appeals and compliance processes due to the short notice before the school year. It also committed the council to work with schools, parents, and community groups to explore safe, affordable transport alternatives for those affected. He suggested that the committee should align its actions with the agreed motion.
- Councillor Peter Strong suggested there were two matters for consideration, one being the general home-to-school transport policy (statutory distances) and the other being the issue of route safety raised by the petitions. He stated that the policy aligns with what most councils in Wales do and was introduced due to financial constraints and contractor challenges and emphasized that the petitions are about the safety of specific routes, not the general policy, and that the council had previously stated free transport would continue if routes were unsafe. He suggested the most timely and effective route for the petitions would be to have a relevant senior officer review the safety of the routes.

- The Chair (Councillor Jackie Strong), thanked the public speakers for raising important concerns and emphasised the need for timely resolution, so as not to delay decisions for affected families. She expressed her support for the option to refer the matter to a relevant senior officer for inclusion in ongoing work, highlighting the importance of a prompt and practical response.
- Councillor Edwards also thanked petitioners for constructively engaging with the Council and highlighted the importance of addressing perceived injustices in Council decision-making. He apologised that he had been unable to attend a recent walk of the route to school by St Arvan's residents. He expressed concern that options C and D for handling the petitions might delay resolution and emphasised the need for clarity on the process and outcomes if the matter is referred to full Council.
- Councillor Riley stated her concerns on the home to school transport policy and requested clarification on the committee's options, particularly after the topic had already been debated at full Council, in particular, what a relevant working group or joint committee would look like, who would be on it, and what its terms of reference would be. She highlighted Freddie Madler's point about the distance children must walk and expressed her view that the policy breaches the Equality Act and does not support children's best start in life.

Deb Hill-Howells, the responsible Chief Officer provided the following points of explanation to assist the Committee:

- Deb explained that appeals regarding home to school transport, especially in the Pwllmeyric and Saint Arvan's areas, are being expedited, with specific attention to safety concerns such as road crossings. She confirmed that a qualified officer is reviewing route safety assessments, particularly in response to recent motions and parent concerns. She stated that if a route is not considered safe and available, free transport will be provided.
- Deb mentioned collaboration with schools and active travel officers to explore solutions like walking buses but emphasised that these would only be considered if routes are deemed safe.
- She noted that carbon emissions were considered during previous policy changes, and efforts are being made to encourage walking, cycling, or scooting to school where possible, aligning with active travel objectives.
- Deb stated that the Council is committed to ongoing work with families and groups to address concerns and reassess routes as needed, reiterating that policy changes are not being considered, only specific interventions where necessary.
- Deb confirmed that she would hope to conclude the review as soon as possible, hopefully within a month, to provide clarity to parents, recognising the urgency before the new school year.

The Committee agreed the route for the petitions would be option d), to refer them to the relevant officer, Deb Hill-Howells, for inclusion into the ongoing piece of work.

5. County of Sanctuary Strategy

Councillor Sandles introduced the report, highlighting that Monmouthshire is committed to welcoming refugees and becoming an accredited council of sanctuary, while also engaging with local sanctuary organizations and supporting inclusive communities. Sharran Lloyd delivered a presentation before taking Member's questions.

Key Questions from Members:

- How do we prevent the County of Sanctuary award from becoming a gimmick, and what will the Council's role be after receiving the award? Will there be designated staff or budget, and how will performance be measured? Will other groups like charities, businesses, and sports clubs be involved?

Officers responded that the aim is to embed the principles in Council practice and culture, with staff training and awareness. Performance monitoring is not fully developed yet but is under consideration. Other agencies, including schools and voluntary groups, can apply for sanctuary status, and the Council is working with schools and education colleagues on this.

- Does the Council have anyone supporting women who need antenatal and postnatal services but are afraid to come forward due to their immigration status (no recourse to public funds)?

Officers confirmed that the Council is developing a pathway for those with no recourse to public funds, ensuring a human response so no one is left destitute, and staff know how to support such cases.

- What is the Council's actual role in becoming a county of sanctuary, and does it involve much new work given existing legislation and community efforts?

In response, another Member suggested the Council's role is to ensure people seeking sanctuary are treated with dignity and respect, helping them integrate, rather than change government migration policy. This response was supported by officers.

- A member emphasised the importance of promoting good relations between groups to ensure vibrant and cohesive communities, especially given the potential for political tension and negative media attention around refugee housing. They stressed the need for urgent community engagement in Portskewett to address concerns and achieve positive outcomes, considering local housing pressures and the broader context of seeking county of sanctuary status.

Officers responded by acknowledging the concerns about housing suitability for refugees, stating that any property considered for nomination will be actively reviewed, taking into account factors like rurality, transport, and access to services, regardless of

background. They assured that all relevant factors will be considered in the decision-making process for housing allocation.

- Please could "conflict" be added to the list of reasons for improved outcomes for groups who have fled persecution, specifically referencing the importance of including conflict alongside sexual orientation and religious beliefs.
- How many Ukrainian families are still in Monmouthshire?

Officers answered that there are about 50 families living with hosts, and a total of 350 Ukrainians have come to Monmouthshire under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with some having found work and housing locally. Monmouthshire has more Ukrainian arrivals than any other part of Wales relative to its size, and that the long-term future for these families depends on the situation in Ukraine, but for now, they are contributing to the local community.

They emphasised the importance of engaging with local sanctuary organizations, raising awareness, integrating refugee awareness into staff training, amplifying lived experiences, promoting sanctuary work, supporting inclusive communities, and collaborating with national policy for County of Sanctuary accreditation.

- Is the £600 per month payment for hosting Ukrainian families is still available and have any difficulties been experienced in paying full rent? The report claims no costs are involved, but I have concerns about council accommodation use and the financial basis for the County of Sanctuary.

*Officers responded that the thank you payment for hosting Ukrainian families is still available, paid via the council but funded by the UK government, with no direct cost to Monmouthshire County Council budgets. They clarified that the only direct cost for the County of Sanctuary accreditation is a small administrative fee to the City of Sanctuary group, and that most work is funded through community cohesion budgets, with dedicated support funded by Welsh Government. The partnership and funding for community cohesion and resettlement work are determined by Welsh Government, with joint arrangements in place with Newport City Council. Also, there is often direct funding from the Home Office for this agenda, coordinated through the same structure as the joint Newport and Monmouthshire working arrangement. When the council undertakes this work, UK and Wales governments make funding directly available, and if the council did not do the work, the funds would not flow into Monmouthshire. They offered to pull together key information about funding sources and cost implications and circulate it to committee members. (**Action: Sharran Lloyd**).*

Chairs summary

Members have expressed some financial concerns and have highlighted the need to engage communities through events, which officers have committed to do, however there is also a role for representative councillors and possibly a members seminar would help to provide a fuller understanding of what it involves.

6. Strategic Equality Plan 24/25 AMR

Cabinet Member Councillor Angela Sandles introduced the report, explaining that the Equality Act 2010 requires the council to produce a strategic equality plan and annual progress reports. She advised that the current plan covered 2024–2028 and aligned with the council's corporate and community goals. Together with Pennie Walker, she answered Members' questions.

Key Questions and points raised by Members:

- How is the council is giving every child the best start in life when the home to school transport policy adds barriers to school attendance, especially for pre-school meal children who already have lower attendance rates? I'm concerned that the council is waiting to see the impact on children receiving free school meals, rather than proactively addressing potential barriers.
- How the council can further include young people just above the free school meal eligibility line, who are disadvantaged by the £2 daily charge for breakfast at King Henry School and may not be able to afford it?
- Is the council is liaising with the Women's Institute in Gwent regarding their "knot in my name" campaign against violence towards women and girls?
- Are there are plans to review drop kerbs at bus stops across the county, noting that while improvements have been made in some areas, issues remain elsewhere?
- Are we planning to extend digital literacy training beyond hubs to secondary settlements and the wider community, to reach those with ongoing digital needs?

*Pennie advised that due to the specific nature of the questions asked that relate to responsibilities of various service areas, she would need to seek answers to provide to the committee by email (**Action: Pennie Walker**).*

- The protected characteristics under the Equality Act need updating. The plan should use "sex" (biological sex) instead of "gender" in line with the Supreme Court judgement, especially when referencing the Equality Act.
- The Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ action plan referenced in the report is also not in keeping with legislation, following the Supreme Court judgement. Policies should ensure compliance, especially regarding the legal status of trans and non-binary identities. Policies should ensure compliance, especially regarding the legal status of trans and non-binary identities.

Pennie advised that the our Strategic Equality Plan reflects the position for 2024-2025 which was prior to the Supreme Court Judgement, so the plan was drafted correctly for the time period it reflects.

- Inclusive language" should mean avoiding inappropriate gendered terms (e.g., using "chair" instead of "chairman").

*Penny acknowledged this and agreed to review and update the language in the plan (**Action: Pennie Walker**).*

- Sex as a characteristic should be included in "give every child the best start in life," particularly in relation to LGBTQ+ education, as the Equality Act is about sex and gender reassignment, not gender ideology. I have concerns about puberty blockers and safeguarding children.
- Why is sex not listed as a relevant characteristic in Objective 1, highlighting its importance for inclusion, menstruation, and health issues?
- Please can we remove the tick for gender reassignment, as it is not applicable to children.

Penny agreed this was an oversight and would add sex and remove gender reassignment for the next report.

- In terms of what a "plus child" is in the context of LGBTQ+ inclusive education, I have concerns about teaching children they need to change their bodies if they don't fit gender stereotypes.
- Period poverty should reference "young women and girls" as menstruation only affects females, and de-sexing the language is unhelpful.
- Sex is not listed as a relevant characteristic in Objective 5, emphasizing the need for sex-segregated spaces for safety and accessibility, especially for women and minority faith groups.
- I have concerns that inclusive language in training materials can erase women from issues that affect them, impacting understanding and health outcomes, especially for those with learning disabilities or for whom English is a second language.
- What steps are being taken to ensure that external resources used for LGBTQ+ education and relationships/sexuality education in schools are safe and Lawful?

*Penny said she would need to consult with the head of inclusion and provide details following the meeting (**Action: Pennie Walker**).*

- How is the council monitoring that equalities training for leaders and managers is lawful and uses correct terminology, noting misuse of "gender" instead of "sex."

Penny responded that they are waiting for EHRC guidance and will review policies and the Strategic Equality Plan accordingly.

- The language in the plan is confusing, so please could "sex" be used rather than "gender" throughout, including in references to the pay gap.

Penny explained that Welsh Government require Councils to report on the gender pay gap, so this is not something we are able to change.

- The plan should mention Christianity in relation to collective worship in schools, as required by law.
- It is important to protect women's spaces (e.g., toilets, changing rooms) and referenced previous council discussions about single-sex toilets in new schools.
- Could the plan address conflicts between protected characteristics, such as marriage or stable relationships?
- Is data on bullying, harassment and discrimination collected by schools broken down by sex, specifically to understand peer-on-peer assaults and the context of violence against women and girls?

*Penny agreed to assess what data is collected and to provide a response (**Action: Pennie Walker**).*

- It's positive to hear that the council has achieved age-friendly employer status. What has been done to encourage the workforce to stay in work longer, including reasonable adjustments for older staff? Please can we have some further detail on this? (**Action: Pennie Walker**).
- Please can the plan reference the Council's ambition to have at least one "changing space" (changing places facility) in every town, and that this be fully considered in relevant Council decisions.

Penny acknowledged this point.

- Will the plan be updated earlier than scheduled, stressing the importance for children's education and safeguarding?

Penny and Councillor Sandles acknowledged the feedback provided by the Committee and reminded Members that the report refers to the current period, and indicated they are awaiting EHRC guidance and will review and update the plan as needed.

7. Adult Services Inspection Report

Jenny Jenkins presented the adult services inspection report, noting it followed up on 2022 findings around people, prevention, well-being, and partnership. Of 23 areas for improvement, 20 have been completed; work continues on risk management, contingency planning, and carers' co-production. Ongoing efforts include quality assurance, training, and revising carers' assessments. Inspectors gave positive feedback on transformation plans, service expansion, technology use, and safeguarding. The service is satisfied with progress but remains committed to further improvement and ongoing engagement with Care Inspectorate Wales.

Together with Cabinet Member Councillor Ian Chandler and Jane Rodgers, Jenny answered Members' questions.

Key Questions from Members:

- Are statutory reviews that are not 'being undertaken in a timely manner', due to staff shortages or other reasons?

Jenny Jenkins advised that the main reason is the volume of work, which impacts the ability to conduct reviews on time. She added that improvements are being made through better recording and additional resources, resulting in above-average performance in review completion. The Welsh average for completed reviews is 60%, while Monmouthshire achieved 70% at the end of the year, indicating substantial improvement.

- The 64% staff recommendation rate for working at Monmouthshire seems a low figure which is concerning.

Jane explained that 64% is not as high as desired, reflecting the challenging environment in adult social care, especially post-COVID and during ongoing changes. She stated that efforts are being made to improve staff engagement and communication.

- In terms of the progress of the domiciliary care change, there are concerns about the transfers from providers and new carers and whether the planned changeover date is still achievable.

Jane advised that in terms of the timescale, the three lot areas are in different positions, with one ready to go and two requiring more attention, but overall, the plan is broadly on track and the main priority is ensuring continuity of care. She encouraged anyone with concerns to contact the council directly.

- Section 2.8 of the report refers to people who are paying privately not being offered assessments, and from my own experience, I know that lacking access to assessment reports when holding power of attorney can make people feel vulnerable. It's important to address this concern as it has also been highlighted by Care Inspectorate Wales.

Jane explained that while many people arrange care without council involvement, if someone comes to the council with care and support needs, they will be offered an assessment and support. Jenny added that the process includes discussing how care is to be provided, but acknowledged the process can be complex.

- Are there many elderly people living alone who "fall through the net", who do not receive help, because no one realizes they need it or they are unsure who to ask?

Jane advised that this is always a concern and efforts to strengthen early help approaches in communities are very important, relying on partnerships with third sector organizations, community groups, and health partners to identify those in need. She emphasized the importance of community networks, neighbours and friends in alerting the council to people in need and mentioned plans to strengthen the council's response at the "front door" with additional posts and training.

- The report states that demand is outstripping supply in domiciliary care and that some people require care to remain independent, but it is not always available, leading to increased burden on carers and frustration for staff. It also mentions delays in processing direct payment requests. How does the assessment process work? How does the council ensure timely progression for those needing direct payments and how does the process link for those already arranging their own care? What is the sequence and timing of assessments for direct payments?

Jane clarified that the situation with domiciliary care has improved, with waiting numbers and hours now significantly reduced compared to previous years, though some areas remain harder to provide for. The brokerage process has been shifted to the commissioning team to reduce frustration for social workers.

In terms of direct payments, social care assessment is required first to determine eligible needs, followed by a technical assessment by the direct payments team to ensure suitability. The process is prioritized based on urgency, and the direct payments team has streamlined their process to minimize delays. Once someone is assessed as eligible and expresses interest in a direct payment, the follow-up assessment and setup are handled quickly, though exact timescales depend on prioritization and demand.

Jane and Jenny both acknowledged that delays and complexity in the system can add stress for carers, especially those supporting people with dementia or Alzheimer's, and emphasized ongoing efforts to improve responsiveness.

- Are issues with data collection and statutory reviews due to outdated systems, and are there plans for investment in more robust data systems?

Some issues are due to how reviews are recorded, and improvements are being made through staff training and better recording practices. Jane explained that a new cloud-based social care case management system is being implemented in partnership with Gwent authorities, which will significantly improve system capability and address data issues over the longer term. She noted the implementation is a long process due to data migration but will support future needs. Whilst a lot of data is collected and used for planning and reporting, there is room for improvement in data capture and recording accuracy, and efforts are ongoing to ensure staff have the right information and support. Sometimes data is not recorded accurately, leading to underreporting of completed work.

- Is the new system (Mosaic) is compatible with health staff systems? How are personal stories captured in the new system?

The health sector is procuring its own systems, but interoperability is a key requirement for all, aiming for integration between services. More clarity on compatibility will be available once health completes procurement. The inspection has highlighted the importance of capturing biographies of people and that Monmouthshire does this well as part of the assessment process. There will be ongoing work to standardize data capture processes across the region, including how assessment documentation is formulated, to

ensure personal stories continue to be included, as this is an intrinsic part of the assessment process.

- The chair advised the Committee that she would suggest a visit to Chepstow Hospital to see the assistive technology rooms, highlighting the value of technology in supporting independent living.

Jane agreed that the development of assistive technology had had a transformational impact and suggested Members may like to visit either or both of the two sites (Chepstow and Monmouth) to see the close partnership between social care and housing.

- Can you advise us on the progress us on growing the number of micro carers in the area?

Jane advised that the number of micro carers has grown to at least 50, the approach being part of a preventative offer, in conjunction with other local authorities and Welsh Government.

- The chair noted that the gaps in carer assessments are being addressed and emphasized the importance of capturing carer needs in assessments.

Jenny explained that there is ongoing work to better integrate carer assessments with those for the cared-for person, aiming to avoid missing carers and to clarify co-produced outcomes, with improvements planned for assessment pathways.

Chair's Conclusion:

The chair thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for attending and providing an interesting and reassuring report, noting that it had clarified some of members' concerns.

8. People Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and Action List

Noted.

9. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Noted, Councillor Howarth highlighting the need for the planner to be updated to avoid potential calling-in of decisions.

10. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.

This was deferred to the next meeting.

Planners noted, raise with SLT about embargoes ICMD.

11. Date of Next Meeting

30th September 2025.

The meeting ended at **1.51 pm.**