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County Hall
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Usk
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Monday, 10 November 2025

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 18th November, 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.	**2025/26 Revenue Budget - Financial Update - To scrutinise the budgetary position for services falling within the committee's remit.**	1 - 50
5.	**Medium-term Financial Plan Update - To review the budgetary situation.**	51 - 90
6.	**Annual Health and Safety report - To scrutinise the report on how the Council's health and safety incidents and risks are managed.**	91 - 166
7.	**Social Services Complaints Process - To scrutinise the performance of the Council's complaints process, and issues raised by it.**	167 - 184
8.	**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: To note and refer any questions arising: Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy update - To scrutinise the steps the Council will take to implement the Socially Responsible Procurement.**	185 - 210
9.	**Council and Cabinet Work Plan.**	211 - 214
10.	**Performance and Overview Scrutiny Work Plan and Action List.**	215 - 222
11.	**To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.**	223 - 230
12.	**Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd December 2025 at 10.00am.**	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jill Bond, West End;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Rachel Buckler, Devauden;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor John Crook, Magor East with Undy;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Steven Garratt, Overmonnow;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Meirion Howells, Llanbadoc & Usk;, Independent
County Councillor Alistair Neill, Gobion Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Martin Newell, Town;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Paul Pavia, Mount Pleasant;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Peter Strong, Rogiet;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

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

Public Open Forum

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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

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

Objectives we are working towards

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

Our Values

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

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

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

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

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

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Question Guide

Role of the Pre-meeting	
1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues) 2. What is the Committee's role and what outcome do Members want to achieve? 3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this? - Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member	
Questions for the Meeting	
Scrutinising Performance 1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why? 2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why? 3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why? 4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic? 5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service? 6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings? 7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives? 8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?	*Scrutinising Policy* 1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least? 2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? What consultation has been undertaken? Did the consultation process comply with the Gunning Principles? Do stakeholders believe it will achieve the desired outcome? 3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the 'taxpayer' perspective? 4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say? 5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works? Does the policy relate to an area where there is a lack of published research or other evidence? 6. Does the policy relate to an area where there are known inequalities? 7. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan? Does it adhere to our Welsh Language Standards?

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

General Questions:

Empowering Communities

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

Service Demands

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

Financial Planning

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

Making savings and generating income

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

- How are we maximising income?
- Have we compared other council's policies to maximiseincome 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…

monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SUBJECT:	**2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET – FINANCIAL UPDATE**
MEETING:	**PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
DATE:	**18th November 2025**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the revenue budget forecast for the 2024/25 financial year;

ii. That the Committee as part of their role assesses whether effective budget monitoring is in place; the extent to which budgets are spent within the agreed budget and policy framework, including the reasonableness of the explanation for variances and; consider the achievement of progress in meeting budget savings targets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS (to Cabinet):

3.1 That Cabinet note a forecast revenue budget underspend of £29,000 at update 2.

3.2 This represents a £1.323 million improvement since the initial financial update, reversing a previously forecast overspend of £533,000 and restoring £761,000 of the Council's budget contingency.

3.3 The improvement is primarily driven by changes in Social Care where the ability to maximise the impact of grant funding to meet core expenditure has benefited the forecast.

3.4 That Cabinet note the budgetary risks that are inbuilt into this forecast, namely;

- Demand for high-cost services such as Social Care and Additional Learning Needs remains volatile.
- Inflation continues to be higher than anticipated.
- Only 90.4% of the £10.7m saving targets are expected to be met, down from the previously forecast 92.1%.
- Debt recovery rates are declining, especially in Council Tax and Social Care.
- The growing cumulative schools' reserves deficit that weakens the Council's financial resilience.

3.5 The Cabinet notes the projected increase in the deficit on cumulative schools' reserves, as detailed in ***Appendix 4*** of this report, amounting to £2,970,000, an increase of £135,000 compared to the previous forecast. School balances are expected to close the financial year at a deficit of £7,061,000, with eighteen out of thirty-five schools anticipated to have a deficit balance.

3.6 That Cabinet note that schools which are budgeting to end the 2025/26 financial year in a deficit balance are required to bring forward recovery plans by October half term to ensure that the proposed actions to address their budget shortfalls are instigated.

3.7 The Cabinet note the forecast Capital budget expenditure for the year of £59.79 million, alongside projected slippage of £8.14 million. No significant variances are anticipated at the current time with a minor underspend of £19k reported.

4 KEY ISSUES:

4.1 Context

4.2 The 2025/26 budget round reflected the sustained period of increased demand, complexity, and costs within School ALN provision, and Adults and Children's social care, which were addressed through significant base budget increases.

4.3 The budget set by Council in March also needed to consider other headwinds which continue to impact the Councils service operating environment:

- The wider socio-economic landscape and cost of living challenges that continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and impact upon income generating services.

- The wider public sector challenges which impact upon Council services, notably within Health where efforts to improve patient pathways impact upon the level and complexity of demand for Social care.
- Headline inflation rates remain above UK Government targets, with some discrete areas of Council services continuing to experience cost pressures on supplies and services.
- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained higher for longer and above previous UK Government forecasts.

4.4 The above results in a growing need for supportive Council services, pressure on income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a higher-cost operating environment.

4.5 **Revenue budget forecast**

4.6 Full Council approved a revenue expenditure budget of £236,778,000 for the 2025/26 financial year. At the first financial update in July a forecast overspend of £533,000 was reported against this budget.

4.7 This position has improved significantly at update 2 by £1.323 million, reversing the previously forecast overspend of £533,000 and also restoring £761,000 of the Council's budget contingency which had originally been used to mitigate overspends within the first forecast.

Table 1: Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Directorate	Budget £000's	Forecast £000's	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) £000's	% Variance to budget
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,982	78,131	**149**	0.2%
Learning, Skills & Economy	72,635	72,804	**169**	0.2%
Infrastructure	21,462	21,148	**(314)**	-1.5%
Place & Community Wellbeing	6,223	6,202	**(21)**	-0.3%
People, Performance & Partnerships	6,275	6,323	**48**	0.8%
Legal & Governance	3,089	3,158	**69**	2.2%
Resources	9,006	8,861	**(145)**	-1.6%

Corporate & Treasury management	40,106	41,326	1,221	3.0%
Expenditure to be financed	**236,778**	**237,954**	**1,176**	**0.5%**
Financing	(236,778)	(237,983)	(1,205)	-0.5%
Total	**0**	**(29)**	**(29)**	**0.0%**

4.8 Despite the improving position with Social care, there remain specific underlying cost pressures. In Adult services this is driven by the rising demand for high-cost care packages, particularly in residential placements. While reablement efforts are expanding, they are not yet sufficient to offset the overall need for care. Service and practice changes are beginning to mitigate costs, but further progress is needed. Annually allocated grants are helping to offset these pressures, but also bring expectations for faster hospital discharges, potentially increasing the need for expensive care packages.

4.9 In children's services the financial position has improved due to successful negotiations limiting annual uplifts for external placements, but significant pressures remain, notably linked to increased use of external counsel and barristers in family court cases, reflecting the necessity to ensure children's safety and welfare. Additionally, a reduction in Welsh Government grant funding has created a pressure on Family Support services, which, despite funding challenges, continue to play a vital role in preventing children from entering care and supporting safe family reunification. Maintaining these services is crucial to cost avoidance and promoting positive outcomes for children and families, as most children involved with children's services benefit from some level of family or community-based support, and any reduction could lead to increased care admissions.

4.10 Both Adults and Children's services are vulnerable to fluctuations in demand, especially as winter approaches. In housing and homelessness, the opening of Severn View offers some immediate cost mitigation, but pressures continue within private leasing through increased void and repair costs and rental debt arrears. Encouragingly, reliance on B&B accommodation is currently at a historic low.

4.11 An overspend of £169,000 within Learning, Skills & Economy is largely driven by increased costs in Early Years where grant income does not fully meet the cost of provision, and in Breakfast clubs where additional catering and staffing provision has been required.

4.12 Facilities and Fleet is forecasting a £385k overspend, driven by pressures in School transport against the catchment area savings planned for 2025/26. Changes in pupil numbers and route safety have limited the ability to fully realise expected savings. Internal operations are also under strain due to reduced income from contract changes and delays in adjusting vehicle and staffing costs. Within Fleet, increased hire charges and EV charger inspection and maintenance is adding to cost pressures.

4.13 Funding for the increased cost of Employers' National Insurance Contributions (NIC's) was not included within the final Welsh Government grant settlement. For the purposes of budget setting, it was assumed that the additional £3.32m pressure relating to the increase in employers' NIC's for directly employed staff would be fully funded. Confirmation was received in July that Monmouthshire will receive £2.56m of funding, a shortfall of £761k or 23%. Whilst it has been confirmed that the funding will transfer into the Welsh Government grant base for 2026/27, the recurrent cost pressure will need to be considered as part of the budget process for 2026/27.

4.14 The National Joint Council (NJC) pay award for 2025/26 was agreed in July at 3.2% which is marginally above the budgeted assumption of 3.1%. The resultant additional cost pressure of £0.1m will need to be met from within existing service budgets, with an increase in base budget pressure considered for 2026/27. Welsh Government are currently considering if further in-year grant support can be given to Councils to support pay pressures, and a further update will be given at update 3.

4.15 Welsh Government have confirmed a 4% pay award will be implemented for teaching staff from September 2025. Whilst this increase is above the Councils budget assumption of 3.1% increase, Welsh Government have confirmed they will continue with their recent commitment of providing additional grant funding in-year to meet the increased costs falling to local government and no budget cost pressure is reported.

4.16 Underspends within Waste and Decarbonisation, alongside ongoing staff vacancies across some services, and out-performance of Council tax income targets have all helped fully mitigate the overspends reported.

4.17 ***Appendix 1*** to this report outlines the summary reasons for the service budget variances, with a more detailed explanation outlined in ***Appendix 2***.

4.18 **Budgeted service savings**

4.19 As part of the approved revenue budget, services were required to bring forward and deliver savings totalling £10,701,000. The current forecast indicates a projected shortfall of £1,032,000 (9.6%) in meeting this target – a deterioration from the £847,000 (7.9%) reported at update 1.

4.20 Full details of progress against individual savings targets can be found at ***Appendix 3*** to this report. The main variances are as follows:

Table 2: Progress against budgeted savings targets

Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Current Forecast	Variance	Percentage met	Comment
	£000	£000	£000	%	
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,548)	402	86.4	£232k Adult's services - Too early in the year to ascertain if the full £250k of savings will be delivered from practice change, given the complexity and level of demand for care presenting. £170k Homelessness – Delay in Severn view opening that impacts on 4 months of savings being generated.
Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,185)	494	91.3%	£334k Passenger Transport routes - Pupil figures have changed, and some routes are unsafe, requiring continued transport. £160k Waste funding – the final extended producer responsibility funding has been confirmed as slightly lower than anticipated.
Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(531)	75	87.6%	£75k Planning application fee increase – Fees will be increased from 1st December, meaning full £100k based on October start cannot be achieved.
People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	Savings anticipated from further structure changes are not deemed achievable following further review. Savings in subscriptions has not been achieved.
Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Totals	**(10,701)**	**(9,669)**	**1,032**	**90.4%**	

4.21 **Schools' budgets and reserves**

4.22 The overall level of school reserves are currently forecast to move further into deficit by £2,970,000 by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, to a collective deficit balance of £7,061,000. This is a deterioration of £135,000 since the first update, and £255,000 above the budgets schools have collectively set for the year.

School reserve balances at 31st March (Surplus) / Deficit	**2022 £000**	**2023 £000**	**2024 £000**	**2025 £000**	**2026 (Forecast) £000**
Comprehensive schools	(2,253)	(1,259)	976	1,366	1,806
Middle schools	0	0	329	1,386	2,033
Primary schools	(4,622)	(3,027)	(1,142)	(306)	616
Special schools	(79)	31	742	1,645	2,606
Total	**(6,955)**	**(4,255)**	**905**	**4,091**	**7,061**

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

4.24 All schools that forecast a deficit balance at the financial year-end are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. Close monitoring and support continues to be given to these schools, as well as those at risk of entering a deficit position over the medium term, to ensure that the proposed actions to address medium term budget challenges are instigated.

4.25 **Capital Programme**

4.26 Capital expenditure of £59.79 million is forecast for the year, with no significant variances anticipated at the current time. A marginal under spend of £19k is currently reported. The £1.3m capital contingency budget remains unallocated.

4.27 Capital schemes by nature are usually multi-year, and some slippage is to be expected as expenditure profiles change based on flex in project circumstances. A total of 16 capital schemes are indicating that slippage will be required into 2025/26 totalling £8.14 million, representing 12% of the total budget for the year. Recent experience suggests that the final amount of schemes requiring slippage will increase as the year progresses as scheme progress becomes clearer.

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

Table 5: Capital receipts balances

Capital receipt balances	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	6,083	1,810	1,330	375	428
Capital receipts used for financing	(606)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	0	0
Capital receipts Received	0	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,278	803	103	103
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	**1,810**	**1,330**	**375**	**428**	**481**

4.29 **Financial implications and future focus**

4.30 The budget planning framework for 2025/26 reaffirmed the need to progress the Council on a path towards financial sustainability including conserving an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience, of which the Council's reserves are a key component. As a consequence, the final revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 did not include any use of reserves to meet recurrent revenue expenditure.

4.31 The delivery of at least a balanced budget position for 2025/26, alongside substantial budget recovery action within schools will be fundamental in maintaining financial stability and limiting any further impact upon the Council’s reserves.

4.32 The continuing financial headwinds, increasing demand for services, funding uncertainty, and the need for £10.7m of service savings to be delivered still present tangible ongoing budget risks for the year.

4.33 The service commentaries provided indicate that there remain underlying cost pressures that will be recurrent into 2026/27 unless successfully reversed or mitigated. Conversely the mitigations that are offsetting those cost pressures during 2025/26 are less likely to be recurrent, such as annually allocated grants, one-off income, and staff vacancies that are gradually being filled.

4.34 When this is considered alongside the existing budget gap to be resolved for 2026/27, and a challenging and uncertain funding outlook over the medium term, the need for strong financial discipline remains paramount.

4.35 As we move towards the next formal monitoring period, work will continue to deliver on the structured approach to tackling the underlying cost pressures, with particular importance assigned to tackling costs which have the ability to be recurrent for 2026/27 and beyond.

4.36 In order to deliver this, a range of measures will continue to be implemented, including, but not limited to:

- Maximising all grant and income opportunities, including the transfer of core costs into grant where conditions allow
- Vacancy management with a strategic and thoughtful approach to the filling vacant posts that is in line with the needs of the service, and the longer term objectives of the Council through its Community & Corporate plan.
- Maximising the opportunity to meet the costs of organisational reform from capital receipts where regulations allow

4.37 **Remaining budgetary risks**

4.38 There remain specific budgetary risks that have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2025/26:

- **Further non-delivery of budget savings targets**, especially where these involve income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models or those involving community or other partners.
- The trend of **reducing debt recovery**, particularly within Council tax and Social Care where there has been a slowing down in collection rates, and where there are increasing numbers of discounts and exemptions being awarded.
- **The recruitment market** remains challenging, with some services encountering difficulty hiring and retaining suitably qualified and skilled staff. Whilst this will result in a reduction in immediate expenditure, it will impact the ability to deliver services in line with the Councils objectives.
- **Inflation** rose by 3.8% in the 12 months to September 2025 and remains well above government targets and above budgeted assumptions. Current projections suggest that inflation could rise further over the coming months before easing. This has the consequence of increasing costs and contracts agreed over the remainder of the financial year.
- **Schools reserve balances** – the further forecast draw on balances for 2025/26 of £2.97m would significantly increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit that is being carried on the Council's balance sheet. This consequently impacts upon the Council's overall financial resilience and increases it risk exposure by reducing available balance sheet resources.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

6.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress being made against the revenue budget of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality and future generations' implications directly arising from this report.

CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team
Cabinet

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Summary service variances
Appendix 2 – Detailed service variances and commentary, Schools reserves, Capital programme
Appendix 3 – Progress against budgeted savings
Appendix 4 – Individual school balance forecasts

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Appendix 1 – Summary of service variances forecast

Directorate	Update 2 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	**149**	0.2%	**Children's services** £83k – Primarily additional Counsel costs of £368k and reduction in WG grant £274k offset by ability to contain annual fees uplifts for external placements	**Adult services** £326k – ability to meet core costs from available grant funding
			Housing & Homelessness £366k – Delay in opening of Severn view, void and repair costs, rent arrears	
Children, Learning, Skills & Economy	**169**	0.2%	**Central budgets** £114k – Various smaller over spends relating to staff costs, income reductions and ICT costs	**ALN costs** £59k – primarily due to a reduction in independent placements
			Early years £73k – WG grant does not fully cover cost of provision	
			Breakfast clubs £41k – Additional staffing and catering costs	
Infrastructure	**(314)**	-1.5%	**Passenger transport** £315k – Shortfall in meeting pupil transport route savings £334k, reduced income on internal operations £75k offset by additional grant	**Grounds Maintenance** £76k - staff savings and increased fee income
			Fleet Maintenance £70k – hire charges and EV charging inspection and maintenance	**Decarbonisation** £157k – increased income from the Solar farm, staff vacancies, offset by inability to meet corporate mileage savings
				Schools catering £88k – increased grant and staff vacancies

Directorate	Update 2 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
				Waste £299k – one-off dividend from incineration partnership alongside savings in disposal and recycling contracts, and some staff savings
				Highways design, flooding & road safety £85k – savings in professional fees, supplies & services and some staff vacancies
Place & Community Wellbeing	**(21)**	-0.3%	**Car parking** £74k – under recovery of fixed penalty charges and higher than anticipated publication costs	**Performance, Finance and Resources** £80k – staff vacancies
People, Performance and Partnerships	**48**	0.8%	**Communications** £60k - Staffing structure changes and reduction in income.	**Payroll & System Support** - £73k – reduction in system and supplies & services spend and staff vacancy
			People Management - £44k – unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity	
Legal & Governance	**69**	2.2%	**Members -** £37k – overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges.	**Staff savings** - £15k
			Legal - £56k – inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings and an anticipated reduction in court fee income	
Resources	**(145)**	-1.6%	**Newport leisure park** £47k – the income surplus of £276k is £44k below budget due to unbudgeted utility costs associated with a vacant unit	**Building cleaning & Public conveniences** £125k – part-year staff vacancies as the service implements a restructure, as well as savings on maintenance and business rates in public conveniences.
			Castlegate £93k - increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage	**Landlord services** £215k - staff vacancies offset by a shortfall in other rental income

Directorate	Update 2 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
			County Farms £65k – Void Property Costs (£50k) from covering running costs of vacant farms and cottages. Professional Fees (£20k) for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management	
			Finance £24k – a mixture of smaller overspends relating to Benefits, Council tax and systems support	
Corporate & Treasury Management	**1,221**	3.0%	**Earmarked reserves** £576k – unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within Council tax	**Lower net borrowing costs** £35k - reflective of higher than anticipated cash balances, forward starting loans, and capital slippage.
			Employers' national insurance £761k – Funding shortfall from Welsh Government to cover increased costs incurred	
Financing	**(1,205)**	-0.5%		**Council tax reduction scheme** £420k - cases have tracked slightly lower than budgeted for the year
				Council tax £209k – changes in the domestic registration list of properties chargeable has resulted in an increase of income forecast
				Council tax premiums £576k – The collection rate is currently higher than anticipated when setting the budget
Total	**(29)**	0.0%		

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Appendix 1

Section 1 Revenue budget summary forecast
Section 2 Detailed service commentary
Section 3 School balances update
Section 4 Capital programme update

Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1	Variance from Update 1
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,916	66	77,982	78,131	**149**	1,074	(925)
Learning, Skills & Economy	73,030	(395)	72,635	72,804	**169**	40	129
Infrastructure	21,442	20	21,462	21,148	**(314)**	(61)	(253)
Place & Community Wellbeing	6,009	213	6,223	6,202	**(21)**	141	(162)
People, Performance & Partnerships	6,317	(41)	6,275	6,323	**48**	99	(50)
Legal & Governance	3,050	39	3,089	3,158	**69**	64	6
Resources	9,083	(77)	9,006	8,861	**(145)**	(95)	(50)
Corporate	29,147	350	29,497	30,176	**680**	(27)	706
Net Cost of Services	**225,994**	**175**	**226,169**	**226,804**	**635**	**1,234**	**(599)**
Appropriations	10,784	(175)	10,609	11,150	**541**	484	56
Expenditure to be Financed	**236,778**	**0**	**236,778**	**237,954**	**1,176**	**1,719**	**(542)**
Financing	(236,778)	0	(236,778)	(237,984)	**(1,205)**	(1,185)	(20)
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	**0**	**0**	**0**	**(29)**	**(29)**	**533**	**(562)**

Table 2: ***2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by service***

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1	Variance from Update 1
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	47,536	284	47,821	47,495	(326)	201	(527)
Children Services	24,105	202	24,306	24,389	83	598	(515)
Housing & Homelessness	2,512	(21)	2,491	2,856	366	238	128
Public Protection	1,886	45	1,931	1,931	0	(5)	5
SCH Support	1,877	(444)	1,433	1,459	26	42	(16)
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	**77,916**	**66**	**77,982**	**78,131**	**149**	**1,074**	**(925)**
Economy, Employment & Skills	853	(48)	805	817	12	0	12
Emergency Planning	178	0	178	195	16	0	16
Individual Schools Budget	58,790	0	58,790	58,796	6	6	0
Resources	1,217	(50)	1,167	1,226	59	31	28
Standards	11,992	(297)	11,695	11,772	77	3	73
Learning, Skills & Economy	**73,030**	**(395)**	**72,635**	**72,804**	**169**	**40**	**129**
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	559	(213)	345	351	5	2	3
Facilities, Fleet & Decarbonisation	11,739	84	11,823	12,208	385	563	(178)
Neighbourhood Services	8,668	(34)	8,634	8,174	(460)	(381)	(79)
Operations	476	183	659	415	(244)	(245)	1
Infrastructure	**21,442**	**20**	**21,462**	**21,148**	**(314)**	**(61)**	**(253)**
Culture and Community Learning	943	(82)	861	879	18	38	(20)
Countryside, Destination and Environment	1,149	(75)	1,074	1,038	(36)	(14)	(21)
Leisure and Wellbeing	1,764	(121)	1,643	1,641	(2)	0	(2)
Performance, Finance and Resources	1,639	316	1,954	1,874	(80)	(5)	(75)
Placemaking, Highways & Flooding	515	175	691	769	78	123	(44)
Place & Community Wellbeing	**6,009**	**213**	**6,223**	**6,202**	**(21)**	**141**	**(162)**
Chief Executives Office	2,917	(30)	2,888	2,935	48	117	(69)
People	1,934	(10)	1,924	1,910	(14)	(14)	0
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,466	(2)	1,464	1,478	14	(4)	19

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1	Variance from Update 1
People, Performance & Partnerships	**6,317**	**(41)**	**6,275**	**6,323**	**48**	**99**	**(50)**
Democratic Services	1,957	39	1,996	2,023	**27**	39	(12)
Legal and Land Charges	1,093	0	1,093	1,135	**42**	25	17
Legal & Governance	**3,050**	**39**	**3,089**	**3,158**	**69**	**64**	**6**
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	2,133	(58)	2,075	1,924	**(151)**	(27)	(124)
Corporate Health & Safety	163	0	163	163	**0**	0	0
Finance	3,791	(19)	3,772	3,796	**24**	(58)	82
Information Communication Technology	2,996	0	2,996	2,978	**(18)**	(10)	(8)
Resources	**9,083**	**(77)**	**9,006**	**8,861**	**(145)**	**(95)**	**(50)**
Precepts & Levies	28,699	0	28,699	28,666	**(33)**	(33)	0
Coroner's	278	0	278	296	**18**	19	(1)
Archives	228	0	228	228	**0**	0	0
Corporate Management	452	0	452	385	**(67)**	(13)	(54)
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	387	0	387	387	**0**	0	0
Strategic Initiatives	(2,820)	350	(2,470)	(1,709)	**761**	0	761
Insurance	1,923	0	1,923	1,923	**0**	0	0
Corporate Costs & Levies	**29,147**	**350**	**29,497**	**30,176**	**680**	**(27)**	**706**
Net Cost of Services	**225,994**	**175**	**226,169**	**226,804**	**635**	**1,234**	**(599)**
Interest & Investment Income	(788)	0	(788)	(1,045)	**(257)**	(257)	0
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	7,624	0	7,624	8,053	**429**	423	6
Charges Required under Regulation	6,158	0	6,158	5,943	**(215)**	(215)	0
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(1)	**(1)**	(1)	0
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,918)	0	(3,918)	(3,910)	**8**	0	8
Contributions to Reserves	2,483	0	2,483	3,059	**576**	535	42
Contributions from reserves	(775)	(175)	(950)	(950)	**0**	0	0
Contribution from Council Fund	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0
Appropriations	**10,784**	**(175)**	**10,609**	**11,150**	**541**	**484**	**56**

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1	Variance from Update 1
Expenditure to be Financed	**236,778**	**0**	**236,778**	**237,954**	**1,176**	1,719	**(542)**
General Government Grants	(100,637)	0	(100,637)	(100,637)	**0**	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	(34,612)	0	(34,612)	(34,612)	**0**	0	0
Council tax	(110,596)	0	(110,596)	(111,381)	**(785)**	(785)	0
Council Tax Benefit Support	9,066	0	9,066	8,646	**(420)**	(400)	(20)
Financing	**(236,778)**	**0**	**(236,778)**	**(237,983)**	**(1,205)**	**(1,185)**	**(20)**
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	**0**	**0**	**0**	**(29)**	**(29)**	533	**(562)**

Section 2 - Directorate – Service Variance Comments

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	1,074	149	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The overall position at halfway into the financial year for the directorate is a predicted forecast overspend of £149K, a considerable improvement by £925K since update 1.

This improvement is attributable to the confirmation of a £900K grant related to Pathways of Care Transformation (hospital discharge) which has helped support the costs of care and service provision within adult services, along with the continuation of the £1.1M Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant. The directorate is also benefitting for Regional Integration funding which helps to support core costs. There remain significant underlying pressures within adult social care particularly given that we are approaching the winter months. Of particular concern is the on-going increased demand for residential placements.

In itself, the new grant allocation, whilst positive, will bring with it increased expectation of speeding up hospital discharge processes which can result in the need for costly packages of care. Whilst progress is being made in increasing the numbers of people benefitting from reablement, this is not able to fully mitigate the need for longer term residential care or care at home. The service and practice changes that have been put in place are starting to take effect in terms of mitigated costs, such as the care at home contracts in the south, but there is still more to do.

The improved position has also been supported by managing to contain the cost of annual uplifts within external placements within Children's Services. However, pressure continues to arise through more children requiring care, the cost of legal proceedings and through the need to maintain family support despite the loss of some WG grants. Family support is essential to avoid the need for placements as well as securing better outcomes for children.

Both adults and children services are predicated on demand rates holding steady – which is not easy to predict, particularly heading into the winter period [for adult social care].

Housing and homelessness services show a deteriorated position by £128k. The opening of Severn View should help mitigate pressure moving forward. However, the service is seeing rising operating costs, voids, and rent and debt arrears across emergency and temporary housing provision - this needs to be explored further for potential mitigation. On a positive note, the usage of B&B accommodation is at its lowest for many years.

On the backdrop of the positive improvements during update 2, debt due to unpaid Adult social care charges remains a challenge and we are looking at an action plan moving forward.

Adult Services				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	201	(326)	0	0

The position at update 2 highlights a projected underspend at year end of £326k, which is a considerably improved position of just over £500K since update 1.

It is a somewhat complicated picture across the service with a number of over and underspends against different service areas, reflecting both changing patterns of demand and the on-going impact of service re-organisation.

The improved position has largely been achieved through an allocation of £900k via the Pathways of Care Transformation Grant, and through ensuring full spend against the Regional Integration Fund revenue grant. We also benefit from the continuation of the £1.1M Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant. Savings are also being made against the internal care at home staffing salary with increasing amounts of care being commissioned through external providers.

The main pressure includes the full year effect of care provision and adult placements made at the end of the previous financial year and the ongoing rise in residential placements. There have been an additional 8 residential placements since update 1. Across the County there are a total of 360 residential placements demonstrating the increase in demand even over the summer months. This is in keeping with the aging demographic of the county together with the complexity of needs experienced by our older residents. Residential placements for people living with later stage dementia are generating a particular budgetary pressure. The demand for care at home is also showing an increase since update 1.

This picture of on-going increased demand reflects the underlying budgetary pressure within adult social care, with the improved position largely being attributable to additional grant money. Furthermore, the current position is predicated on maintaining stable demand; however, winter is a notoriously unpredictable and challenging time for the service. During the next period, it is likely that additional pressure will arise from both community and hospital settings with a particular emphasis on hospital discharge.

The savings target of £250k is not yet fully evidenced; however, our review activity has significantly increased. For the first time we met our 70% target of the number of care and support plans reviewed at the end of 2024/25 increasing to 74% at the end of the first quarter of 2025/26. Savings achieved by reducing packages of care via the review process are already captured in this forecast and we are still validating the data to demonstrate actual impact. Work is underway to ensure that this data is available at update 3.

We are still experiencing difficulties in progressing CHC cases for younger people with mental health and learning disabilities that is impacting on our ability to move eligible adults into health service budgets. This is an issue for all Welsh Local Authorities. The regional team are in the process of appointing a CHC lead to act on behalf of the Gwent region to address our concerns and gather information with a view to progressing a legal challenge.

Our service transformation plan to expand reablement is moving forward with the number of people receiving reablement increasing. This represents cost avoidance for the Local Authority as we continue to reduce the number of people who do not need care and support at the end of a period of reablement.

Despite the unpredictability of the coming months, the service continues to take every opportunity to adopt cost avoidance approaches to care. Our information advice and assistance service (IAA) will be implemented during the latter part of this year with 6 new IAA workers now recruited. This allows us to

develop our preventative offer and will feed our new intake model where reablement is the first consideration to mitigate or prevent care. The new domiciliary care contracts have been implemented in the South, and we are now looking to ensure that we gain maximum value out of these contracts in order to stabilise cost and improve capacity in the area of most demand.

Debt due to unpaid Adult social care charges remains a challenge and we are looking at an action plan moving forward, which will sit aside our current discussions and actions that are already established and in place.

Children's Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**598**	**83**	**0**	**0**

At the end of update 1 there were 190 children looked after including 15 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. At the end of October this has increased to 199 with 16 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This is the first significant increase for some time, although the underlying trend remains relatively stable at the moment.

The service activity of assessment, family support and risk management remains intense. During this first 6 months of the year 28 children became looked after and 23 children left care.

The service is currently showing an improved position at Update 2 because through successful negotiation, we have been able to contain the costs related to annual uplifts of external placements.

There remains a significant pressure related to the use of external counsel / barrister costs for children who are in a public law process in the family courts. This represents a pressure of £368K based on current activity which is a deterioration of £75K. As at update 1 there were 22 children (16 families) within the family courts. The service only refers children to the family court if it is the only way to secure a child's safety and long-term stability / welfare. The costs associated with a court process are high, and the use of barristers is often unavoidable. In terms of corrective action, the service will continue to liaise with the legal team to explore any potential to reduce the costs associated with court.

The other element of the reported overspend relates to pressure that has arisen through a reduction in the Welsh Government grant that supports our Family Support services. This is a pressure of £274k. Family support is critical to supporting children to remain safely at home wherever possible and helps both to safely reduce the numbers of children who need to come into care and safely return children to their families and communities at the earliest opportunity. Although it represents a cost pressure, the service has maintained family support despite the significant reduction in the WG grant. Family support is fundamental to cost avoidance (particularly given the cost of placements) and helps us to secure best outcomes for children and families. The majority of children open to children's services (normally around 550 at any one time) will be receiving family support of some description, with many others receiving services through early help and community-based support. If these services were disrupted or reduced more children would need to come into care.

At update 2 the service is on track to achieve 100% of its £1.9M savings related to practice change in care planning for children and placement development.

The current position is predicated on there being no new high-cost demand into the service, something which is not always predictable.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**238**	**366**	**0**	**0**

Housing services is showing an overspend of £366k a deterioration of £128K since update 1.

The main reasons are:
- the delay in the opening of Severn View giving rise to additional costs within B & B provision
- a number of voids within existing provision
- costs associated with the maintenance and repair of existing provision
- making-good following hand-back of B & B provision
- costs within private leasing arrangements driven by increased repair, maintenance, and cleaning costs.
- reduced income due to rent arrears and bad debt
- staffing costs.

These issues are indicative of providing emergency and temporary housing for people who have high support needs. The bottom-line position within housing has benefitted from £242K due to the Housing benefit clawback reduction; however, this has not been sufficient to off-set the current costs.

The service is looking at potential mitigating actions including reducing voids where possible. As the new temporary accommodation service in Severn View beds-in, this should help alleviate future budgetary pressure, dependant on demand patterns. On a positive note, the usage of B&B accommodation is at its lowest for many years.

Public Protection				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**(5)**	**0**	**0**	**0**

At update 2 the division is forecast to spend its allocated budget.

SCH Support				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**42**	**26**	**0**	**0**

There is a £26k budget pressure currently forecast in SCH support due to changes in payroll costings following the Chief officer pay review, changes to employer national insurance contribution rates, and from pay awards.

Learning, Skills & Economy DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**40**	**169**	**0**	**0**

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Directorate's current position is a forecasted overspend of £169,000. This would be higher, but has been mitigated by releasing part of the ALN Independents Budget, due to several pupils leaving independent placements.

Economy, Employment & Skills				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**0**	**12**	**0**	**0**

Economy, Employment & Skills are currently reporting an overspend of £12k due to not being able to meet employee related savings. However, this can be offset by releasing part of the ALN Independents Budget (which is shown in the Standards section below)

Emergency Planning				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**0**	**16**	**0**	**0**

Emergency Planning are currently reporting an overspend of £16k due to not being able to meet employee related savings. However, this can be offset by the releasing part of the ALN Independents Budget (which is shown in the Standards section below)

Individual Schools Budget				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**6**	**6**	**0**	**0**

There is currently a small forecasted overspend due to several small, unexpected costs relating to schools

Resources				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**31**	**59**	**0**	**0**

The current forecasted overspend of £59k is due to the following:

- £25k increase in management staff costs, due to the restructure, and not being able to meet employee related savings
- £14k increase in School & Student Access staff costs, due to a secondment continuing for the remainder of the financial year, and not being able to meet employee related savings
- £9k reduction in income, as we no longer receive income for the administration of the EIG, now that it is part of the LA Education Grant
- £6k SIMS costs not budgeted
- £5k unable to meet employee related savings in the Financial Management Services Team

£28k of the overspend can be offset by releasing part of the ALN Independents Budget (which is shown in the Standards section below)

Standards				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**3**	**77**	**0**	**0**

The current forecasted overspend of £77k, is due to the following

- £89k increased costs across Early Years, as WG are not fully covering the costs of the provision
- £41k increased catering and staff costs regarding Breakfast Clubs
- £6k Agency costs covering an absence
- £10k increase in ALN Equipment Budget
- £22k increase in MoST staff costs, due to absence, and loss of SLA income for Autumn & Spring Terms
- £27k less ALN Recoupment Income due to a pupil moving from a neighbouring LA to Monmouthshire
- £193k overspend on the LA IDP and Contingency Pot 2 Budgets
- -£311k saving on the ALN Independents Budget, due to several pupils leaving Independent Placements

INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(61)**	**(315)**	**0**	**0**

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY
The Directorate's forecast underspend has increased to £315k. This can be attributed to one off income from our waste partnership, increased income from our solar farm, staff vacancies and a reduction in the forecast overspend in fleet and passenger transport. The service has been unable to achieve the forecast home to school budget saving from the catchment review but continues to seek contract efficiencies where possible.

Enterprise				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**2**	**5**	**0**	**0**

Small overspend due to the inability to fully meet staff vacancy savings.

Facilities & Fleet				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**563**	**385**	**0**	**0**

Facilities and Fleet is forecasting a projecting a £385k overspend, due to:

- **Fleet Maintenance** - £70k overspend – due to in-year pressures including an increase in hire charges, EVCI maintenance expenses and software costs. Increased fuel charges that were projected at update 1 have not materialised and this has helped reduce the overspend and is the main reason for the swing since we last reported.

- **Passenger Transport** – net £315k overspend – we are currently projecting a £423k overspend on external operator costs, this is mainly due to a £334k shortfall against the £447k catchment area saving built into the 2025/26 budget. As reported at update 1 pupil figures have changed since original projections were prepared and some routes have been deemed unsafe meaning transport still has to be provided. In addition to this we have had to provide additional PRS contracts (increasing costs by £52k since update 1) and have had to pay £18k for external safer walking route assessments.

  Internal operations is projecting a £75k overspend due to contract reductions impacting income, although the unit has been awarded 3 ALN contracts since we last reported which has helped reduce the overspend (and is the reason for the positive swing since update 1).

  These overspends have been offset by transport admin grant income of £115k and a staff saving in our regional transport section (£51k) through passporting core staff costs to capital.

Neighbourhood Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(381)**	**(460)**	**0**	**0**

Neighbourhood services is forecasting to return a £460k underspend, broken down as follows:

- **Waste Services** - £299k underspend – as reported at update 1 this is primarily driven by a one-off gain share receipt from Cardiff CC in relation to our waste incineration partnership alongside an improvement in green and trade waste income, savings on disposal & recycling contracts and staff savings due to part-year vacant posts. Recyclate prices are volatile so there is potential for contract costs to change before now and year end, in addition we are awaiting notice from WG on our Sustainable Waste Grant award, a lower than budgeted allocation could reduce the underspend. The service will continue to monitor these variables and update forecasts accordingly.
- **Grounds Maintenance** - £76k underspend – mainly due to staff savings from part-year vacant posts and a projected increase in grant and fee income.
- **Highways Operations & External Clients** – On Budget
- **StreetLighting** – On Budget
- **Highways Design, Flooding & Road Safety** – £85k net underspend – The service is projecting a net underspend of £85k, primarily due to savings on professional fees, software costs, supplies & services and staff vacancies across the department. These savings are partially offset by additional costs incurred in response to flooding events, including tide watches and sandbagging provision.

Operations

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4

Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(245)**	**(245)**	**0**	**0**

Operations is forecasting to underspend by £245k, due to:

- **Schools Catering** - £88k underspend – primarily due to part-year staff vacancy savings.
- **Decarbonisation** - £157k underspend – due to improved income from our solar farm and renewables portfolio due to improved ROC rates, favourable weather and improved invertor performance and a staff saving in the decarbonisation team due to a part year vacant post (will be filled in Nov). This has been offset by an overspend in a prior year corporate mileage saving of £102k, the proposal has been delayed by procurement issues, and no saving will be achievable this financial year.

PLACE & COMMUNITY WELLBEING	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**142**	**(21)**	**0**	**0**

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate is presently forecasting an underspend £21k. This favourable variance is principally attributable to increased income generation within Leisure and Wellbeing, as well as the delayed recruitment to vacant posts, which has helped to offset pressures arising from the under-recovery of parking penalty charges and building control fees.

The directorate continues to closely monitor areas exposed to income volatility and has proactively implemented mitigation strategies wherever feasible to strengthen the financial position since update 1. The improvement observed is largely a result of higher than anticipated leisure income, improvements to car parking income and deferred filling of vacant positions, all of which have contributed to the overall positive outturn.

Culture and Community Learning				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	**38**	**18**	**0**	**0**

The Culture and Community Learning division is projected to experience an overspend of £18k. This is primarily due to higher than budgeted staffing costs, inflationary pressures and increased expenses relating to supplies and services contracts. Improvement from update 1 to update 2 relates predominately due to higher income.

Countryside, Destination and Environment				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(14)**	**(36)**	**0**	**0**

The Countryside, Destination and Environment division is forecast to underspend by £36k due to higher than budgeted income relating to increased grants.

Leisure and Wellbeing				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**

Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**0**	**(2)**	**0**	**0**

The Leisure and Wellbeing division expects a marginal underspend, as higher income from leisure facilities has offset the £89k loss of income due to Abergavenny LC's closure and reduced service agreement income.

Performance, Finance and Resources				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(5)**	**(80)**	**0**	**0**

The Performance, Finance and Resources division is forecasting to underspend by £80k due to staff vacancies. The variance from update 1 to update 2 relates to the delayed implementation of the support services restructure.

Placemaking, Highways & Flooding				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**123**	**78**	**0**	**0**

The Placemaking, Highways and Flooding division is forecasting to overspend by £78k due to:

- **Development Management and Building Control** – The section is forecasting an overspend of £4k, relating to under-recovery of building control fees and increased software costs.
- **Planning Policy –** This section is currently on budget. Spending levels will be closely monitored and aligned with the approval of the RDLP.
- **Highways Development and Car Parks –** The section is forecast to overspend by £74k. This is mainly due to the under recovery of fixed penalty charges and higher than anticipated publication costs associated with the implementation of the new fees and charges.
- **Strategic Projects** – This area is currently on budget

The variance from update 1 to update 2 relates predominately to delayed implementation of vacant posts withing the carparks and enforcement service area and a slight improvement in car parking fees.

PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE & PARTNERSHIPS	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**99**	**48**	**0**	**0**

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

People, Performance & Partnerships and the Chief Executives Office are forecasting a combined overspend by £48k. There remains a degree of risk associated with the implementation of changes to the Welsh language translation service, which are scheduled for completion in the second half of the

financial year. Staffing savings achieved within HR during 2024-25 have proven difficult to sustain, resulting in an overspend in 2025-26 as additional capacity has been bolstered.

Within the CEO's Office, the overall forecast reflects a mixed financial position. Overspends are primarily driven by staffing pressures and reduction in income. Whilst some overspends are offset by other service area underspends, pressures persist and officers will continue to seek mitigation strategies as the year progresses.

Chief Executives Office

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**117**	**48**	**0**	**0**

The Chief Executives Office is currently forecasting an overspend of £48k. The principal factors contributing to this position are as follows:

- **Communications** - **£60k overspend** – The overspend is primarily attributable to a budget pressure of £56k arising from the creation of the Head of Communications and Active Travel post, coupled with a reduction in active travel income of £25k. These pressures have been partially offset by a contribution from Welsh Government relating to the secondment of the Head of Communications.
- **Contact Centre** - **£21k underspend** – An underspend has been achieved due to system and licence spend coming in below budgeted levels.
- **Strategic Change & Programme Assurance** - **£20k underspend** – The underspend is due to the capitalisation of the change management program.
- **Libraries, Hubs, and Community Learning** – This area is forecast to balance, with no significant variances expected.
- **Procurement - £27k overspend** – The overspend is due to higher than anticipated contract costs.

People

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(14)**	**(14)**	**0**	**0**

The People sections is forecasting an underspend of £14k for the financial year. The principal factors contributing to this position area as follows: -

- **Organisational Development** - £15k overspend – The overspend is attributable to staff costs exceeding budget, primarily due to the inability to achieve vacancy factor savings.
- **Payroll & System Support** - £73k underspend – An underspend has been achieved as a result of a reduction in system and supplies & services expenditure of £39k alongside net staff saving of £27k arising from changes in hours and a payroll technician post being held vacant.
- **People Management** - £44k overspend – Additional costs have been incurred due to unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity.

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(4)**	**14**	**0**	**0**

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Services is forecasting to overspend by £14k, broken down as follows:

- **Corporate** - £27k overspend – mainly due to the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings, SLT Pay award and an increase in subscription costs.
- **Scrutiny** - £4k overspend – unable to achieve staff vacancy savings.
- **GIS** - £21k underspend – saving in system and supplies & services spend.
- **Levies & Subscriptions** - £32k overspend – corporate subscription costs (WLGA, LGA) have exceeded available budget, in addition the authority has made the decision to renew the membership of New Local causing a further pressure as this budget was removed as part of 25/26 budget savings.
- **Performance & Data** - £12k underspend – due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.
- **Equalities & Welsh Language** - £3k underspend – the authority is due to enter into a new translation SLA with Torfaen Council in October, with current projections indicating that this will generate a 3k saving.
- **Community Safety** – Net £13k underspend – due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.

LAW & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**64**	**69**	**0**	**0**

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

Law & Governance is forecasting a £69k overspend, consistent with Update 1. The variance is mainly due to staffing pressures and income shortfalls across service areas. Officers are exploring measures to reduce the deficit and will report further at Update 3.

Democratic Services				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**39**	**27**	**0**	**0**

Democratic services is forecasting to overspend by £27k, this is due to:

- **Members** - £37k overspend – primarily due to staffing costs where there is an overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges.
- **Committee & Election services** - £10k underspend – due to part year staff vacancy savings in Elections partially offset by increased licence costs within the committee section.

Legal and Land Charges				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	**25**	**42**	**0**	**0**

Legal & Land Charges is forecasting to overspend by £42k, due to:

- **Legal** - £56k overspend – This is due to a projected reduction in fee income and the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings.
- **Land Charges** - £15k underspend – due to savings from a vacant part-time post.

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(95)	(145)	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

At update 2, the Resources Directorate is forecasting a £145k underspend, increasing from the £95k underspend reported at update 1.

Within this forecast Commercial, Corporate & Landlord Services projects a £151k underspend, primarily due to staff vacancies, though this is offset by overspends in Investment Properties (£140k) and County Farms (£65k). Ongoing tenant and market engagement continues with the aim of reducing the level of vacant units. A detailed update on commercial and investment property performance will be provided to the Performance and Overview Scrutiny committee at the end of the financial year.

Finance forecasts a £24k overspend, mainly from increased bad debt provisions in Benefits (£23k) and Council Tax (£32k), partially offset by grant income and staff savings. ICT is forecasting a £18k underspend, driven by vacancy savings and managed costs.

Whilst the forecast overall is a positive one assurance is provided that all areas of overspend are subject to active and ongoing management. The directorate remains committed to robust financial stewardship and outperforming against budget by year-end such as to contribute to authority wide budget recovery efforts.

Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(27)	(151)	0	0

Commercial, Corporate and Landlord services is forecasting to underspend by £151k, due to:

- **Investment Properties** - £140k overspend, due to:
  - **Newport Leisure Park** - £47k overspend – NLP is projecting a surplus of £276k in 25/26, however this is £47k below budget due to unbudgeted costs (such as electricity and rates) associated with a vacant unit. There is potential for this position to improve if a tenant can be found for the unit during the year.
  - **Castlegate Business Park** - £93k overspend – primarily due to increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage, including higher-than-expected rates, electricity charges, and one-off fees. As above there is potential for this position to improve if tenants can be found during the year.

- **Landlord Services** – £215k underspend – The underspend is primarily driven by staff savings from in-year vacancies, partially offset by a shortfall in rental income. The increase in underspend compared to update 1 is due to further staffing savings as our original forecast assumed two manager posts would be filled in October; however, these appointments have been delayed until January. In addition, three other vacant posts are now not expected to be filled this financial year, resulting in an additional £121k improvement in the underspend.
- **County Farms -** £65k overspend - Mainly due to void property costs of £50k from covering the running costs of vacant farms and cottages, which aren't included in the base budget (this issue is expected to resolve next year as a farm has been re-let and cottage disposals are being considered), and an increase in professional fees of £20k due to increased demand for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management. These have partially been offset by improved income of £5k.
- **Cemeteries** – £17k under spend primarily due to savings on supplies and services. There is potential that this could change if any unforeseen repairs or emergency tree works are required later in the year.
- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences** - £125k underspend – due to full and part-year staff vacancies as the service implements a restructure, as well as savings on maintenance and business rates in public conveniences.
- **Property Services** – On Budget – maintenance and rates overspend within office accommodation and a shortfall in external fees have been offset by employee underspends due to managed staff vacancies.

Corporate Health & Safety				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Corporate Health & Safety – Break Even – No change from update 1 - all costs incurred in response to directorate H&S matters will be accommodated from within services and reported as part of their outturn position.

Finance				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	**(58)**	**24**	**0**	**0**

The Finance division is forecasting to over spend by £24k, this is mainly due to:

- **Revenues, Systems & Exchequer** - £34k net overspend:
  - **Benefits** - £23k overspend - Housing Benefit subsidy is currently forecast to overspend by £64k, which represents an adverse movement of £73k compared to the position reported at update 1. This variance is primarily due to movements in the bad debt provision which reflects the current level of write offs and aged debt profile. This

overspend is partially offset by a reduction in non-pay costs and additional grant income totalling £41k, which has increased by £10k since update 1.

- **Council Tax** - £32k overspend – due to £16k of additional estimated service running costs, a £14k estimated top up of the bad debt provision for unpaid court cost, an £11k overspend relating to a residual budget pressure from the Finance restructure left against this cost centre and £3k unmet vacancy factor savings. These pressures are offset by one off Welsh Government grant income of £12k for the administration of this year's Retail Rate Relief scheme. The £20k increase since update 1 is largely attributable to the inclusion of the bad debt provision top up.
- **Charity Relief** - £3k underspend – projections indicate that 25/26 awards will be lower than budget.
- **Debtors** - £4k overspend - Unmet vacancy factor savings and additional National Insurance costs.
- **Cashiers** - £6k underspend – over spend on card payment fees of £26k have been offset by savings through reduced security carrier costs, holding off system developments and holding open, for a time, a cashier vacancy to generate an overall saving against this cost centre.
- **Revenues System Administration** - £18k overspend - no change from update 1, primarily due to increased annual contract costs for the Northgate system.
- **Financial Systems Support & Vat** - £35k underspend – mainly due to a £20k saving from vacant posts plus a £5k saving against the non-pay budget and £10k additional recharge income.

- **Finance** - £9k under spent - due to part year staff vacancies.

Information, Communication & Technology				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(10)**	**(18)**	**0**	**0**

The ICT division is forecasting to underspend by £18k, this is due to:

- **SRS** – On Budget – a projected overspend on our SRS contribution of £15k due to increased O365 licence costs and PSBA line rental costs has been offset by a managed underspend on supplies & equipment.
- **Digital, Design & Innovation** – On budget – No Change from Update 1 - As of August 2025, the team moved under the Shared Resource Service (SRS) via the Cabinet-approved Digital, Data and Technology agreement. This caused a forecasted £33,000 overspend due to higher collaboration costs, exceeding the current budget. In line with Cabinet's decision, this shortfall will be covered by the IT reserve, so there is no negative effect on the Directorate's overall financial position.
- **Cyber Security Partnership -** £12k underspend - the Cyber Security Partnership has now transferred to SRS (from 1st September 2025), early projections indicate an in-year underspend of £12,000 due to vacancy savings.

- **Telephony -** £6k underspend – no change from update 1 – saving due to a reduction in call charges.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(27)	680	0	0
Coroners				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	18	18	0	0

Final levy is expected to be higher than budgeted due to additional requirements of the services following Chief Coroner review.

Precepts & Levies				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(33)	(33)	0	0

Forecast saving due to the South Wales Fire Service precept being lower than originally anticipated for the financial year.

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

No variance forecast

Corporate Management				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(13)	(67)	0	0

Unbudgeted income that cannot be attributed to services

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

No variance forecast

Strategic Initiatives				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	0	761	0	0

Funding shortfall in relation to increased employer's national insurance contributions. The final funding allocation received from Welsh Government was considerably short of the increased costs incurred.

Insurance

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

No variance forecast

TREASURY & RESERVES	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	486	541	0	0

Interest & Investment Income

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(257)	(257)	0	0

Cash balances have remainder high for a longer period than anticipated increasing investment balances and increasing underspend to £257k.

Interest Payable & Similar Charges

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	423	429	0	0

The rate payable on new borrowing has remainder at a higher rate than anticipated. Some additional longer term borrowing has also been taken slightly increasing overspend to £429k.

Charges Required Under Regulation

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(215)	(215)	0	0

Capital slippage funded from borrowing was higher than anticipated at the end of the previous year which has resulted in lower than anticipated charges.

Other Investment Income

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

Minor income received.

Borrowing Cost Recoupment

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	0	8	0	0

Minor unbudgeted variance that is offset by charges required under regulation

Contributions to / from Reserves				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	**535**	**576**	**0**	**0**

An unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast and has increased since update 1. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within Council tax.

FINANCING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(1,185)**	**(1,205)**	**0**	**0**
Council Tax Reduction Scheme				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(400)**	**(420)**	**0**	**0**

Anticipated underspend as in year caseloads are lower than the budget set.

Council Tax				
Outturn Forecast	**Update 1**	**Update 2**	**Update 3**	**Update 4**
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	**(785)**	**(785)**	**0**	**0**

The Council Tax Premium collection rate is currently higher than anticipated when setting the budget which results in forecast additional income of £576,000. Alongside this, the changes in the domestic registration list of properties chargeable has resulted in an increase of income forecast of £209,000.

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

No Variance forecast

2. School Balances

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

School Reserves	(A) Opening Balances (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2025/26	(B) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 1	(C) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 2	(A+B) Forecast 2025/26 Balances
	£000's	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cluster				
Abergavenny	**1,351**	635	**817**	**2,168**
Caldicot	**(37)**	641	**826**	**789**
Chepstow	**989**	26	**(27)**	**961**
Monmouth	**144**	407	**392**	**537**
Special	**1,645**	1,126	**961**	**2,606**

Total	**4,092**	**2,835**	**2,970**	**7,061**

2.2. Collective School balances at the beginning of the Financial Year amounted to a deficit of £4,091,578. The anticipated further draw on reserves at Update 1 was £2,834,735, against a budgeted draw on reserves of £2,714,668, which resulted in a forecast deficit balance of £6,926,313 by year end. At Update 2, the draw on reserves has increased to £2,969,737, resulting in a forecast deficit balance of £7,061,052 by year end.

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

Start of year	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Total: 15	**Total: 18**	**Total: 18**	**Total:**	**Total: 0**
KHS VIII 3-19	KHS VIII 3-19	KHS VIII 3-19		
Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern		
Our Lady & St Michael's	Our Lady & St Michael's	Our Lady & St Michael's		
Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni		
Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School		
Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet		
Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin		

Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow		
The Dell	The Dell	The Dell		
Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell		
Kymin View		Kymin View		
Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston		
Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow		
Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy		
PRS	PRS	PRS		
	Castle Park	Castle Park		
	Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive		
	Cross Ash	Cross Ash		
	Llandogo			

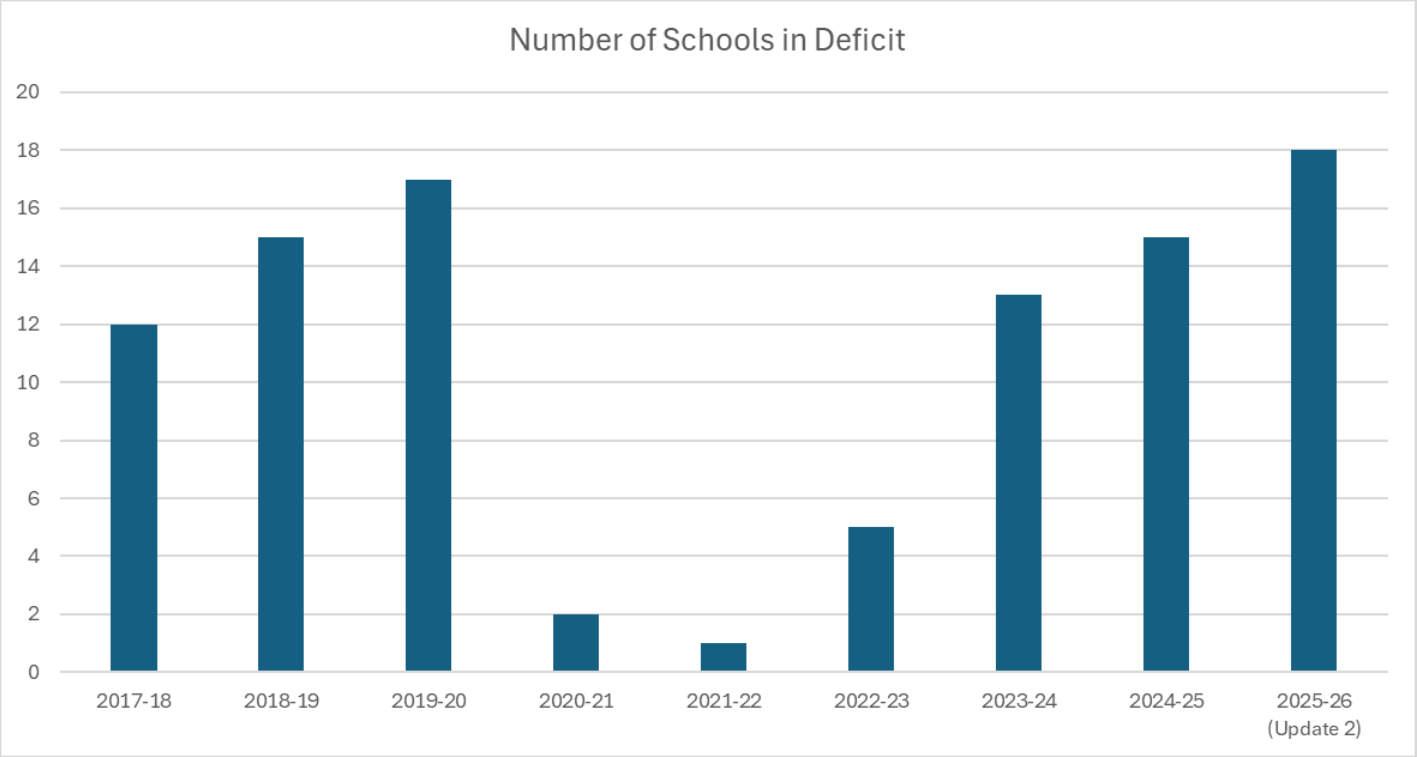
2.4. The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision.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

2.5. All schools that are budgeting to register a deficit balance at the end of the 2025/26 financial year are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. These recovery plans will be confirmed with both the Local Education Authority, each School's Governing Body and, in some cases, the plans will need to be agreed by the relevant Cabinet Member. All recovery plans are expected to be received by October Half Term.

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

2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23	(4,257)
2023-24	904
2024-25	4,092
2025-26 (forecast)	7,061

2.6. The decrease in school balances has resulted in an increase in the number of schools in deficit, as illustrated in the following table:



3. Forecast Capital Budget Outturn

3.1 The summary Capital forecast outturn position at Update 2 is as follows:

Category	Slippage B/F	Original Budget	Budget Adjust-ments	Slippage to 2025/26	Revised Budget 2025/26	Forecast Outturn	Over / (Under) spend

	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Expenditure							
Capitalisation Directive	63	3,708	0	0	3,770	3,770	0
Development Schemes Over £250k	9,083	730	1,354	(4,073)	7,093	7,093	0
Development Schemes Under £250k	2,004	340	0	(1,163)	1,181	1,181	0
School modernisation programme	33	12,282	277	0	12,592	12,592	0
Infrastructure	3,958	6,076	829	(2,560)	8,303	8,303	0
ICT Schemes	272	463	(24)	0	710	715	6
Property Maintenance	1,967	2,409	579	0	4,955	4,955	0
Renovation Grants	192	900	341	0	1,432	1,432	0
LCHO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Section 106	1,454	288	0	(347)	1,394	1,394	0
Regeneration - Specific Grant Funded	6,009	500	10,369	0	16,878	16,853	(25)
Vehicles	0	1,500	0	0	1,500	1,500	0
Other	0	0	0		0		0
Total Expenditure	**25,033**	**29,195**	**13,724**	**(8,143)**	**59,808**	**59,789**	**(19)**
Financing							
Supported Borrowing	0	(2,432)	0	0	(2,432)	(2,432)	0
General Capital Grant	0	(3,046)	0	0	(3,046)	(3,046)	0
Grants and Contributions	(8,860)	0	(13,899)	0	(22,759)	(22,759)	0
S106 Contributions	(1,621)	(288)	0	347	(1,562)	(1,562)	0
Unsupported Borrowing	(13,661)	(18,069)	150	7,646	(23,933)	(23,914)	19
Earmarked Reserve & Revenue Funding	(272)	(103)	24	150	(201)	(201)	0
Capital Receipts	(619)	(3,758)	0	0	(4,376)	(4,376)	0
Leasing	0	(1,500)	0	0	(1,500)	(1,500)	0
Total Financing	**(25,033)**	**(29,195)**	**(13,724)**	**8,143**	**(59,808)**	**(59,789)**	**19**

3.2 The capital expenditure forecasted at outturn demonstrates a net underspend £19,000 this is primarily due to the following schemes:

Scheme	Budget £000's	Over / (Under) spend £000's	
IT Schemes	710	6	Businessworld upgrade over spend
Grant Schemes	16,878	(25)	An auxiliary power scheme for EV Meals on Wheels vehicles not required due to the specification of vehicles purchased

3.3 **Capital Slippage**

3.4 Capital slippage forecast for the year is £8.141 million. The principal schemes reporting slippage are:

Scheme Category	Scheme Name	Slippage £000's	Comment
Infrastructure	Wye Bridge Monmouth works	2,133	Design / Survey stage progressing, main construction works 2026/27.
Development schemes	Capital City Region	1,948	Confirmation awaited from SEWCJC of future capital funding profile.
Development schemes	Asset Investment Fund	1,781	Budget remains available to support any requirement for further capital investment at existing commercial investment sites.
Development schemes	Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	779	Further housing purchases are unlikely to complete in 2025/26.
Infrastructure	Reconstruction of Bridges & Retaining Walls	359	Chainbridge Refurbishment - construction works for diversion routes need to be undertaken before the bridge is closed for refurbishment.
Development schemes	RE:FIT Programme	246	Delay to planned equipment replacement relating to de-carbonisation works.
Development schemes	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	234	Multi-year project due for completion in 2026/27.
Development schemes	Solar Farm Development Cost	150	Initial feasibility works have yet to be progressed.
Development schemes	Decarbonisation Investment	98	Delay to planned de-carbonisation works in energy management systems.
Infrastructure	Structural Repairs - PROW	68	Public Rights of Way bridge repair delays due to contractor procurement and internal resource availability.
Section 106 Schemes	Various S106 Schemes	347	Various community recreational improvement schemes are delayed.
Total		**8,143**	

3.5 **Useable Capital Receipts Available**

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

Capital receipt balances	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	6,083	1,810	1,330	375	428

Capital receipts used for financing	(606)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	0	0
Capital receipts Received	0	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,278	803	103	103
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	**1,810**	**1,330**	**375**	**428**	**481**

Appendix 3 - Budget savings progress

	Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Update 2 Forecast	Variance	% Met	
		£000	£000	£000		
	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,548)	402	86.4%	
	Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100.0%	
	Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,185)	494	91.3%	
	Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(531)	75	87.6%	
	People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	
	Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100.0%	
	Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100.0%	
	Totals	**(10,701)**	**(9,669)**	**1,032**	**90.4%**	

Ref	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	Budgeted Saving	Update 2 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
SCH S2	Community Meals - cost neutral or cease	(15)	(15)	0		
SCH S3	Adults Practice Change	(250)	(18)	232		To date only identifiable savings, however more work is ongoing to fully identify savings made as we progress into update 3
SCH S4	Fees and Charges	(336)	(336)	0		
SCH S5	Public protection Workforce reduction	(100)	(100)	0		
SCH S6	Wedding fees (registrars)	(30)	(30)	0		
SCH S7	Childens Practice Change	(1,887)	(1,887)	0		
SCH S10	Adults workforce review	(125)	(125)	0		

C&P S20	Savings driven from the reduction of B&B usage and full year effect of Severn View	(207)	(37)	170		Saving assumed Severn View would be open from 1st April, but due to building delays tenants did not move in fully until early August - this meant we had to incur 4 months of additional of B&B costs that were not budgeted. This has been mitigated in part by the overall use of B&B reducing over and above the target set.
Total	**Social Care, Health & Safeguarding**	**(2,950)**	**(2,548)**	**402**		

Ref	**Learning, Skills and Economy**	**Budgeted Saving**	**Update 2 Forecast**	**Variance**		**Comment**
		£000	**£000**	**£000**		
CYP S1	Reduce 0.6 FTE Most (Monmouthshire Specialist Teachers) team	(40)	(40)	0		
CYP S3	Grant funding increase to meet costs of EWS post	(51)	(51)	0		EWS has not been reduced by 1 FTE, a grant funding increase was able to meet the costs of
CYP S4	Bring ALN MCC pupils from OOC back to MCC	(100)	(100)	0		
CYP S5	KH8 Maintenance costs	(40)	(40)	0		
C&P S21	Youth Service - Passport more core service costs to grant funding.	(45)	(45)	0		
C&P S14	Reduction in utility costs for education estate	(429)	(429)	0		
ML S4	Reduction in Youth Service Provision (delete 1 FTE post)	(40)	(40)	0		
Total	**Learning, Skills and Economy**	**(745)**	**(745)**	**0**		

Ref	Infrastructure	Budgeted Saving	Update 2 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
C&P S4	Passenger Transport Commissioning - We revert to the statutory distances of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary - Subject to political approval - will commence from 01/09/2025	(447)	(113)	334		Numbers have changed since original projections were prepared and some routes have been deemed unsafe meaning transport still has to be provided to pupils impacting on the amount of saving achievable.
C&P S7	Savings in C&P senior Mgt costs as a result of SLT restructure	(170)	(170)	0		Achieved - restructure completed - posts deleted.
C&P S8	Grass routes - Introduce an annual £10 membership charge for users	(3)	(3)	0		Achieved
C&P S9	Reduce gritter fleet by extending the working hours of each vehicle	(20)	(20)	0		Fleet reduced - achieved
C&P S10	Reduction in utility prices for the corporate estate	(136)	(136)	0		Early year projections are indicating that this saving will be achieved.
C&P S11	Undertake energy audit of invoices to identify discrepancies and potential savings	(20)	(20)	0		Currently in process of appointing firm to undertake audit - assume achievable for now but potential for to drift into next year but will update
C&P S22	PTU Increase the cost of concessionary season tickets by 10%	(6)	(6)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S23	Increase in Highways fee income to external clients to reflect recovery of pay award and inflation.	(52)	(52)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S24	Indicative EPR funding	(4,825)	(4,665)	160		Final award was confirmed to be £160k under original figure - this has been managed by other
Total	**Infrastructure**	**(5,679)**	**(5,185)**	**494**		

Ref	Place & Community Wellbeing	Budgeted Saving	Update 2 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
ML S1	Borough Theatre - Reduced production days (3 days a week)	(50)	(50)	0		
ML S5	Increase Income across the four Leisure Centres	(150)	(150)	0		
ML S7	Lease Old Station Tintern	(30)	(30)	0		
ML S9	Externalise Markets Waste Collection	(20)	(20)	0		
ML S13	S106 - Increase office time recharge	(24)	(24)	0		
ML S14	Rights of way - Charge officer time to capital	(20)	(20)	0		
C&P S2	Request to WG to increase statutory planning application fees by 25% - Consultation Autumn - potential uplift for 1st April or 1st October	(100)	(25)	75		Fees will be uplifited from 1st December 2025
C&P S3	Increase car park fees by 10%	(180)	(180)	0		Carparking fees have been increased and delivering the saving the income pressure
C&P S15	Increase Building Control Fees	(32)	(32)	0		Fees have been uplifted.
Total	**Place & Community Wellbeing**	**(606)**	**(531)**	**75**		

Ref	People, Performance and Partnerships	Budgeted Saving	Update 2 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
CEO S2	Welsh Language translation	(82)	(82)	0		Entered SLA with Torfaen in October - current forecasts project that this saving will be
CEO S4	New staffing model in Systems and Payroll	(22)	(22)	0		Achieved

CEO S5	Implement Apprentice First approach	(8)	0	8		Currently no progress on this initiative - further update to be provided at Update 3
CEO S8	End membership of New Local from June 2025	(15)	0	15		Not achieved - decision made by senior leadership to continue with membership.
ML S12	Phase 2 - Restructure	(38)	0	38		Not Achievable
Total	**People, Performance and Partnerships**	**(165)**	**(104)**	**61**		

Ref	**Legal & Governance**	**Budgeted Saving**	**Update 2 Forecast**	**Variance**		**Comment**
		£000	**£000**	**£000**		
LG S1	Cancellation of LLG Training	(1)	(1)	0		Achieved
Total	**Legal & Governance**	**(1)**	**(1)**	**0**		

Ref	**Resources**	**Budgeted Saving**	**Update 2 Forecast**	**Variance**		**Comment**
		£000	**£000**	**£000**		
RES S1	Cease our Cyber Security Insurance provision	(98)	(98)	0		Achieved - insurance cover has ceased.
C&P S13	Building Cleaning - Release of recurrent service saving	(20)	(20)	0		Achieved
RES S3	Freeze/Remove Head of Digital, Design & Innovation Post (Net of cover/honoraria arrangements)	(64)	(64)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
RES S5	Finance - HB penalty will reduce as Severn view comes online and temporary accommodation reduces	(250)	(250)	0		Reduction in B&B usage down to 5 has had a beneficial impact on reducing the HB subsidy

RES S6	Finance - HB penalty reduction as a result of a further reduction in the remaining B&B portfolio.	(100)	(100)	0		penalty - forecasts project that this saving will be made in full.
RES S7	Reduction in Chief officer admin Support (0.6 FTE)	(23)	(23)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
Total	**Resources**	**(555)**	**(555)**	**0**		

Appendix 4 - Forecast movement in school balances

	Opening Reserves 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit Update 2	Projected carry forward at year end 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	Risk Category
Abergavenny cluster				
King Henry V111 3-19 School	1,386,169	647,053	2,033,222	
Cantref Primary School	(101,495)	(9,315)	(110,810)	
Gilwern Primary School	15,717	80,518	96,235	
Goytre Fawr Primary School	(43,645)	31,414	(12,231)	
Llanfoist Fawr Primary School	(87,620)	64,677	(22,943)	
Llantillio Pertholey CiW Primary School (VC)	(74,764)	49,306	(25,458)	
Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School	(83,609)	29,683	(53,926)	
Our Lady and St Michael´s RC Primary School (VA)	53,889	(6,883)	47,006	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	286,080	(69,377)	216,703	
Caldicot cluster				
Caldicot School	267,256	335,695	602,951	
Archbishop Rowan Williams CiW Primary School (VA)	(82,144)	52,834	(29,310)	
Castle Park Primary School	(18,741)	61,053	42,312	
Dewstow Primary School	(6,305)	(31,051)	(37,356)	
Durand Primary School	(93,396)	55,898	(37,498)	
Magor CiW Primary School (VA)	(206,124)	32,111	(174,013)	
Rogiet Primary School	169,213	60,972	230,185	
Undy Primary School	(142,211)	128,276	(13,935)	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	75,216	130,537	205,753	
Chepstow cluster				
Chepstow School	1,130,990	(124,930)	1,006,060	
Pembroke Primary School	(268,044)	47,534	(220,510)	
Shirenewton Primary School	(130,917)	41,038	(89,879)	
St Mary´s Chepstow RC Primary School (VA)	(70,363)	69,448	(915)	
The Dell Primary School	158,181	(26,920)	131,261	
Thornwell Primary School	168,782	(33,025)	135,757	

	Opening Reserves 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit Update 2	Projected carry forward at year end 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	Risk Category
Monmouth cluster				
Monmouth Comprehensive	(31,922)	229,360	197,438	
Cross Ash Primary School	(14,677)	41,252	26,575	
Kymin View Primary School	63,486	(1,136)	62,350	
Llandogo Primary School	(7,412)	(2,820)	(10,232)	
Osbaston CiW Primary School (VC)	63,807	(7,680)	56,127	
Overmonnow Primary School	255,229	17,976	273,205	
Raglan CiW Primary School (VC)	(161,289)	58,137	(103,152)	
Trellech Primary School	(92,530)	8,233	(84,297)	
Usk CiW Primary School (VC)	(19,112)	(9,173)	(28,285)	
Ysgol y Trefynwy	88,855	58,262	147,117	
Special School				
Pupil Referral unit	1,645,026	960,780	2,605,806	
Total	**4,091,578**	**2,969,737**	**7,061,315**	

REPORT

SUBJECT:	**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2025**
MEETING:	**PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
DATE:	**18th November 2025**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	**WHOLE AUTHORITY**

1. PURPOSE:

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

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS (to Cabinet):

2.1. Note the updated projected revenue budget shortfall of **£11.5 million** for 2026/27 and a cumulative shortfall of **£37.4 million** over the medium term period to 2029/30.

2.2. Note the outline budget setting timetable as outlined in Appendix 1.

2.3. Note the progress against the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) delivery plan, as detailed in Section 13 of Appendix 1.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

3.1. The Council reviews its budgetary position annually and produces a rolling 4-year plan, known as the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This plan considers the financial context at both the local and national level together with forecast available resources and budgetary pressures in arriving at a forward financial projection.

3.2. This report presents the six-monthly update of the Council's MTFP and outlines the context and framework for the budget for the financial year 2026/27, together with a high-level indication of the financial outlook over the medium term.

3.3. The latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) estimates a budget gap of £11.5 million for 2026/27, increasing to a cumulative total of £37.4 million by 2029/30. These figures represent a positive change from the previously reported £13.6 million and £38.0 million, respectively.

3.4. This update reflects updated assumptions around pay inflation, non-pay inflation, superannuation rates, and service pressures.

3.5. The prevailing economic climate continues to pose significant challenges for the Council, as persistent inflation, increased service demand and supply chain pressures result in ongoing upward pressure on the cost of delivering council services. Despite a moderation in some cost drivers, issues such as the cost of living crisis and evolving demands within health and social care continue to impact both the community and the Council's financial planning. These factors remain central to shaping the Council's approach to developing a balanced budget for 2026/27 and over the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) window.

3.6. Despite these pressures, the Council has demonstrated robust financial management, successfully navigating previous periods of austerity, recession and the pandemic. The 2025/26 budget addressed over £17 million in additional service pressures, and recent financial updates show an improved in-year position compared to prior years, with a projected balanced budget, and with contingency budgets intact. Should this positive trend continue through to year-end, the Council will be well-placed to stabilise its reserves and lay a solid foundation for next year's budget planning.

Forward Outlook

3.7. The financial outlook for 2026/27 remains highly uncertain, with significant national and local developments expected to shape the Council's operating environment. Key influences include shifting economic conditions, political uncertainty, policy changes, the prospect of new responsibilities, and evolving demographic factors. It is not yet clear how any changes from the forthcoming UK Government Autumn budget, due on 26th November, will impact public service expenditure or Welsh Government settlements up to 2028/29. This uncertainty highlights the necessity of regularly reviewing the assumptions, modelling, and risk assessments that underpin the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

3.8. Given this challenging context characterised by increased service demands and the ongoing impact of previous efficiency measures, the Council must adopt a strategic and evidence-based approach to budget-setting for 2026/27. Decisions should be guided by robust data analysis, targeted towards areas presenting the greatest need or opportunity, and support broader reforms to ensure the longer-term sustainability of Council services.

External context

3.9. The financial year to date has been characterised by significant global economic uncertainty, largely driven by US trade tariffs, which has led to heightened volatility across equity and bond markets. The UK has grappled with speculation over the autumn Budget and concerns about its fiscal stance, resulting in increases in the cost of government borrowing. Inflationary pressures have persisted above the Bank of England's target, while economic growth remained modest.

3.10. In response to ongoing economic challenges, central banks adjusted their policies, with the Bank of England reducing its Bank Rate, the US Federal Reserve cutting rates in September, and the European Central Bank lowering its refinancing rate. Forecasts indicate that inflation should gradually return to target levels, although near-term growth is expected to remain subdued. Financial markets have stabilised following earlier volatility, with credit conditions remaining broadly consistent.

3.11. These factors all influence the Council's medium term financial planning with impacts upon the costs of good and services, staff pay, utilities prices, interest rates, and levels of funding available to the government to support public sector spending.

Funding context

3.12. The Welsh Government's draft budget indicates an average funding growth of 2.5% for Local Government, with assurances that no Local Authority will receive less than a 2.3% increase in allocations, supported by an £8.9 million funding floor. Additionally, several key funding commitments made in the previous year's budget, including allocations for teachers' pay, National Insurance contributions, social care, and childcare, will be made recurrent, providing greater stability for financial planning.

3.13. Specific grants, which make up around £58 million of Council income for 2025/26, remain predominantly annual and present ongoing challenges for recruitment and long-term budgeting, particularly in the face of inflation. The Welsh Government has acknowledged these challenges and remain committed to reducing administrative burdens, including a review to consider whether some specific grants should be transferred into Aggregate External Funding (AEF). Such changes may influence future headline funding figures, but for planning purposes, the level of specific grants is assumed unchanged unless there is clear evidence to the contrary.

3.14. No major new spending commitments will be introduced in the 2026/27 budget, allowing councils to focus on consolidating and effectively utilising existing funding streams. The provisional Local Government settlement, due for publication on 24th November 2025, is expected to provide further detail and clarity regarding the distribution and impact of these changes for the 2026/27 financial year.

3.15. Fees and charges account for a substantial portion of the Council's budget, with £24.8 million budgeted for 2025/26. Any major adjustments to these fees are considered and approved through the Council's budget-setting process. The standard approach is to increase fees and charges annually in line with the inflation rate recorded in the previous September month.

Reserves and School balances

3.16. The Council's usable revenue reserves have been significantly reduced following their use to support budget proposals and recovery measures in 2022/23 and 2023/24, with partial restoration during the COVID-19 pandemic from Welsh Government funding. Careful decisions to draw on reserves were made to avoid severe impacts on service delivery amid inflationary pressures and increased demand caused by the cost-of-living and public health crises.

3.17. Although there was a modest replenishment of the Council Fund and earmarked reserves in 2024/25, this was offset by a notable increase in the school's reserve deficit, which now

stands at £4.1 million. The ongoing trend of reserve depletion weakens the Council's financial resilience and increases risk exposure.

3.18. Current and projected reserve levels indicate stability in the short to medium term, with the Council Fund maintained at 5% of the net revenue budget. However, Monmouthshire holds the lowest reserve cover in Wales, which prompted a revised policy to prioritise the protection of reserves and strengthen budget management. Most reserves are earmarked, limiting their flexibility for strategic use.

3.19. The most recent financial data shows a worsening deficit situation for schools, with over half predicted to be in deficit by March 2026. There is wide variation in financial health across schools, as some are running down reserves while others maintain surpluses. Pandemic grants provided temporary relief, but underlying structural deficits remain a concern.

3.20. The aftermath of the pandemic continues to present challenges in areas such as attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, and additional learning needs, which has necessitated increased staffing and support. Rising costs due to inflation and higher staff pay awards have added further financial pressure, and not all of these costs have been met through funding. Schools were also being asked to help offset the Council's wider budget shortfalls in a period of sustained financial difficulty.

3.21. Looking ahead, schools must continue to implement significant education reforms initiated by the Welsh Government, alongside efforts to close attainment gaps and reduce absenteeism.

3.22. Given the variability in school finances and the overarching budgetary pressures, decisions about future investment in education will be pivotal. The Council will need to adopt a balanced, evidence-based approach to ensure the development of a sustainable budget for the sector. Alongside this, the successful delivery of school budget recovery plans will be a key aspect of school budgets being put on a sustainable footing.

Budget assumptions and updated budget modelling

3.23. The update of the budget planning assumptions for 2026/27 reflect changes in several key areas, including superannuation rates, service pressures, and income projections. Notable changes include a reduction in superannuation rates, an increase in school service pressures, and adjustments to funding assumptions.

3.24. Incorporating these updated assumptions into the budget model has reduced the projected budget gap for 2026/27 from £13.6 million to £11.5 million. However, this figure represents an early assessment, as individual service areas are still refining their budget models, which will further influence final cost pressures and savings requirements. The budget planning process remains dynamic, with ongoing updates to assumptions expected as new information becomes available.

3.25. The medium term outlook remains uncertain. It is not anticipated that Welsh Government will provide any form of multi-year indicative funding settlements as part of their final budget proposals. The updated medium term budget shortfall of £37.4 million is based on the premise that inflation will remain under control, and that public spending by UK Government and the consequential impact on local government in Wales are in line with independent

analysis. The Council will need to remain aware that there are downside risks that could adversely impact further the budget shortfalls modelled over the medium term.

Bridging the gap between expenditure and available resources

3.26. The Council is preparing for the 2026/27 budget amid ongoing financial challenges, requiring Cabinet to carefully assess viable options for further cost savings and identify new funding streams or income opportunities. In response to sustained austerity since 2010, the Council has already achieved significant efficiencies, with most services now operating at statutory minimum levels. Given the persistent budget shortfall, a strategic and evidence-led approach is needed to maintain service provision within a sustainable financial framework.

3.27. Ongoing cost pressures, funding settlements failing to keep pace with inflation and rising demand, and underfunded additional responsibilities have resulted in increased reliance on savings, efficiencies, and reserves. With reserve levels now low and limited scope for further efficiencies, the Council must pursue longer-term reform, strengthen financial resilience, and transform how services are delivered. Notably, 77% of the £227 million service delivery budget is concentrated in Social Care & Health, Learning, Skills & Economy, and Infrastructure, meaning substantial targeted change in these areas will be essential for achieving financial sustainability.

3.28. It is important that the strategic budget principles approved as part of the MTFS guide the budget approach, and that Community & Corporate plan objectives remain central. The strategy needs to have regard to the whole budget and not just areas that aid in closing the budget gap.

3.29. Over the medium-term this will be guided by the Council's ongoing programme of change which provides a strategic framework for reshaping services to meet resident needs within available resources. This is not just a response to financial pressures but a proactive effort to modernise and improve outcomes. Progress is being made, but further coordination and alignment to existing streams of work is needed to establish strong foundations that will enable better assessment of progress and allow the Council to adapt its approach as needed.

3.30. Key areas of change include digital collaboration, preventative wellbeing strategies, data-driven decision-making, leadership alignment, community-centric service design, workforce development, and asset optimisation. A more centralised approach to assessing the value and alignment of grant funding is also being developed. Robust governance, risk management, and organisational capability will underpin the successful delivery of this programme.

Capital Programme

3.31. Given ongoing financial constraints and rising construction costs, the Council faces significant challenges in delivering its capital investment programme. Demand for capital resources exceeds what is available, requiring careful prioritisation of projects, the pursuit of external funding, and collaboration with partners. Inflation is increasing the price of materials and contracts, while external grants have not kept pace, making affordability a key concern. The need for ongoing investment is heightened by an ageing asset base, and annual allocations are focused on tackling the most urgent maintenance and refurbishment needs, though these efforts are insufficient to fully resolve the backlog.

3.32. The Council's Capital Strategy provides a framework for investment decisions, ensuring alignment with corporate objectives and promoting transparent planning. All projects are being reviewed for timing and strategic relevance, with non-urgent schemes potentially deferred to prioritise critical works or generate capital receipts. The Capital Programme for 2026-2030 will be reassessed during the budget process to ensure affordability and sustainability, with a refreshed Capital Strategy to be presented alongside the final budget in March 2026.

Budget timetable

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

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

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

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

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

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

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

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1. Whilst the nature of this report does not require any evaluation, the annual budget process is reviewed on an ongoing basis and based on feedback received from the public, members and officers. Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team review the process and feedback and recommendations for improvement.

6.2. The six-monthly MTFP update is part of the evaluation criteria set as part of the MTFS and which includes the reporting of update against the delivery plan as contained in appendix 1.

7. REASONS:

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

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

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

9. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
All Cabinet Members

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Medium Term Financial Plan update – November 2025

11. AUTHORS:

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Medium term financial plan update – November 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Council's Medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and plan (MTFP) are the link between its long-term policy objectives and its financial capacity. It seeks to ensure that the Council's strategic objectives can be achieved within the confines of the financial resources available.

1.2. The MTFS, as approved, committed to a six-monthly update of the MTFP, including an update of progress against the performance framework and delivery plan embedded within the MTFS. The timeline to of budget updates since the adoption of the MTFS is as follows:

Event	Date	Details
MTFS Approval	July 2024	MTFS approved with commitment to six-monthly MTFP updates
First MTFP Update	October 2024	Received by Cabinet on 16th October
Draft 2025/26 Budget published	January 2024	Draft budget published by Cabinet for consultation and engagement
Final 2025/26 Budget approved	March 2025	Final budget endorsed by Cabinet and approved by full Council that included an updated MTFP forecast
Six monthly MTFP Update	July 2025	Received by P&O Scrutiny and Cabinet in July 2025
Six monthly MTFP Update	November 2025	This document

2. Strategic Financial Context and Outlook

2.1. Overview

2.2. The Council's financial planning has been shaped by a consistent and disciplined approach in response to a prolonged period of fiscal constraint. Since the 2009 financial crisis, the Council - like many across Wales and the UK has operated within a challenging financial environment.

2.3. The wider economic context continues to present a challenge, and although there has been a dampening in some of the impacts upon the Council's cost drivers, there remains upward pressure on the cost of delivering council services.

2.4. This report sets out the key factors impacting the Council's financial planning and how the changes in these will be fundamental to developing a balanced budget for 2026/27 and over the MTFS window.

2.5. **Financial Performance and Resilience**

2.6. The Council maintains a strong track record in delivering value for money and managing public resources effectively. It has successfully navigated the impacts of austerity, financial crisis, economic recession, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.7. The 2025/26 budget approved in March accommodated over £17m of additional service pressures resulting from increased demands for Council services, and the inflationary impact on both pay and non-pay costs. The budget identified specific areas of financial headwinds, notably:

- Cost of living challenges and the wider socio-economic landscape continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and reduced demand for income generating services;
- The wider public sector challenges which impact upon Council services, notably within Health where efforts to improve patient pathways impact upon the level and complexity of demand for Social care;
- Headline inflation rates remain above UK Government targets, with some discrete areas of Council services continuing to experience cost pressures on supplies and services alongside supply chain issues;
- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained higher for longer and above previous UK Government forecasts.

2.8. The first two financial updates received by Cabinet in October and November 2025 demonstrate a much improved forecast performance against budget than has been the case over recent years. Whilst an initial over spend of £533,000 and significant use of budget contingency was forecast in the first financial update in October, this has now been reversed by update two, with a balanced budget outturn now forecast and the £850,000 contingency budget remaining in place.

2.9. If this position continues to hold or can be improved upon through to year-end, it will aid in stabilising the Council's reserves and provide a stronger financial foundation in which to develop the 2026/27 budget.

2.10. **Forward Outlook**

2.11. Looking ahead to 2026/27, the financial outlook remains uncertain. Significant changes at both national and local levels are expected to influence the Council's operating environment, including economic conditions, political uncertainty, policy shifts, additional responsibilities, and changes in demographic trends.

2.12. The UK Government Autumn budget will be published on the 26th November with a potential funding shortfall to be resolved. It is currently unclear whether there will be any impact upon public services expenditure and consequently any impact upon the multi-year settlements made available to Welsh Government through to 2028/29.

2.13. In light of this uncertainty, it is essential that the assumptions, modelling, and risk assessments underpinning the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) remain up to date.

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

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

3. External context

3.1. The MTFP is set within the context of the UK economic position and public expenditure plans, with the decisions made by the UK Government and the subsequent funding levels it passes onto Welsh Government having a direct impact upon the expenditure plans of the Council.

3.2. The financial year to date has been marked by considerable global economic uncertainty, primarily stemming from the impact of US trade tariffs. These tariffs led to pronounced volatility in both equity and bond markets, with notable divergence between US and UK government bond yields. The UK has also faced domestic challenges, including speculation surrounding the autumn Budget and concerns about its fiscal position, which contributed to rising yields on medium and long-term gilts and heightened economic uncertainty.

3.3. Inflationary pressures have persisted, as UK headline annual CPI rose significantly above the Bank of England's 2% target, reaching 3.8% in August. Meanwhile, the UK economy showed modest expansion, with GDP growth of 0.7% in the first quarter and 0.3% in the second, although growth stalled in July. The labour market softened, with rising unemployment and slowing earnings growth, but not enough to prompt further aggressive rate cuts from the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

3.4. Central banks responded to the evolving economic landscape with policy adjustments. The Bank of England reduced its Bank Rate twice, while the US Federal Reserve held rates steady before a cut in September, and the European Central Bank lowered its refinancing rate in June. Forecasts suggest inflation will gradually return to target levels, supported by increased spare capacity and tighter policy measures, although near-term GDP is expected to remain subdued amid ongoing uncertainty.

3.5. Financial markets have experienced volatility, with bond yields fluctuating and equity markets recovering earlier declines. Credit conditions remained stable, as evidenced by the management of credit default swap prices and rating agency actions, including upgrades and downgrades of several major banks. Overall, market sentiment has improved from initial declines, but persistent volatility and ongoing monitoring of credit stress remain key features shaping financial activity during the year.

3.6. The context outlined above has consequences the Council's medium term financial planning. These are summarised below and are central to the update of the budget assumptions for 2026/27 and over the medium term.

Factor	Planning Implications
Inflation	• Increased costs across supplies and services • Contractual arrangements calculated via CPI/RPI • Impact on pay awards
Labour market	• Availability of staff and external professional expertise • Impact on commissioned services and agency staff • Real living wage implications
Utilities prices	• Impact on energy costs across Schools, Leisure centres, Offices, and Street Lighting • Fuel costs for Council vehicles • Impact on contracted transport providers
Interest Rates	• Implications on the revenue cost of borrowing • Affordability of the capital programme

Economic & political landscape	• The future level of funding for public services • Global events - such as trade tariffs, conflicts, or political unrest can shift UK Government's financial priorities • Domestic policy decisions, such as prioritising spending on healthcare, can also affect how much funding is available for other public services

4. Funding context

4.1. 60.5% of the funding of the Council's revenue budget for 2025/26 came from the Welsh Government settlement (Aggregate External Funding), with the remaining 39.5% through council tax income. Regularly reviewing and updating these funding elements are fundamental in developing robust medium term financial plans.

4.2. **Welsh Government settlement**

4.3. In June 2025, the UK Government's Spending Review set out multi-year settlements for the Welsh Government. It provided resource budgets for the financial years up to 2028/29 and capital budgets up to 2029/30. The longer-term horizon provided additional certainty for the Welsh Government and increased the ability to plan for the future.

4.4. The Welsh Government announced on the 1 July 2025 that it will publish a one-year budget in October 2025, which will increase departmental budgets in line with inflation. This budget will include a pool of unallocated funding, reserved for the next Welsh Government following the 2026 Senedd election.

4.5. The approach is described as responsible and forward-looking, aiming to balance certainty for public services during an election year with flexibility for the next administration.

4.6. The outline Draft Budget was published on 14th October and was supported with more detail on 3rd November. The Final Budget will be released on 20 January 2026, with a debate and vote scheduled for 27 January.

4.7. The main implications resulting from the Welsh Government draft budget that impact upon Local Government are:

- There will be an average growth of 2.5% in Local Government funding
- Local authorities will retain the growth in non-domestic rates income in 2026/27
- Welsh Government are providing £8.9m for a funding floor so that no Local Authority receives less than a 2.3% uplift

- The full-year impact of the additional funding provided for the 2025 teachers' pay award will be made recurrent
- The additional funding to support increases in employers' National Insurance contributions in the public sector will be recurrent
- The additional funding of £30m for social care, £30m for childcare and £8m for the funding floor made at last year's final budget will be recurrent
- The 2026/27 Budget will not introduce major new spending commitments

4.8. In addition to Aggregate External Funding (AEF), Councils receive specific grants subject to defined terms and conditions governing their use. For the 2025/26 financial year, these grants constitute approximately £58 million of Council income. As these funds are typically provided on an annual basis, they present challenges regarding recruitment and financial planning, especially when inflation diminishes their real-term value. The Welsh Government has pledged to alleviate administrative burdens for local authorities, including undertaking a review to consider the potential transfer of certain specific grants into AEF. It is important to recognise that such transfers may impact the reported percentage change in funding during headline announcements. For the purposes of financial planning, the level of specific grants is assumed to remain constant unless there is robust evidence to suggest otherwise.

4.9. The provisional Local Government settlement is scheduled to be published on the 24th November 2025 and will provide further clarity on how the above changes will impact the amount of funding made available for 2026/27.

4.10. **Council Tax**

4.11. The updated Council Tax planning assumption is currently modelled at a 3.95% increase for each year of the MTFP.

4.12. Council tax income accounts for nearly 40% of the Council's overall income, which proportionately is the highest in Wales. The level of Council tax income will consequently always be an important consideration for the Council in being able to support local services.

Financial Year	Band D Council Tax £*	Band D Council Tax (All Wales average) £*	Increase over Previous Year	All Wales average increase
2015/16	1094.98	1087.91	4.95%	4.36%
2016/17	1138.23	1127.40	3.95%	3.63%
2017/18	1183.19	1161.65	3.95%	3.04%
2018/19	1241.76	1219.07	4.95%	4.94%

2019/20	1315.64	1294.22	5.95%	6.16%
2020/21	1380.76	1354.02	4.95%	4.62%
2021/22	1434.47	1402.51	3.89%	3.58%
2022/23	1476.79	1433.42	2.95%	2.20%
2023/24	1564.66	1512.48	5.95%	5.52%
2024/25	1686.70	1630.83	7.80%	7.82%
2025/26	1,818.26	1746.58	7.80%	7.10%
* Council only charge - excludes the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, and Community Council Precepts				

4.13. Consideration of any increase in 2026/27 will need to be given to local context, such as the affordability for communities, balanced against the ongoing need to meet increasing demand and cost pressures of essential services.

4.14. Cabinet have not yet made any consideration of the level at which Council Tax will be set for 2026/27, and the rate of increase used is for illustrative purposes only at this stage.

4.15. **Fees & Charges for services**

4.16. Fees and charges make a significant contribution to the Council's budget, with £24.8m budgeted to be received in 2025/26. Any significant changes to fees and charges are presented for consideration as part of the Council's draft budget proposals and are ultimately approved by Council at final budget setting stage.

4.17. The annual planning assumption is that Fees and charges will normally increase at a minimum of the prevailing inflation rate that is applicable in September in the year preceding the budget year.

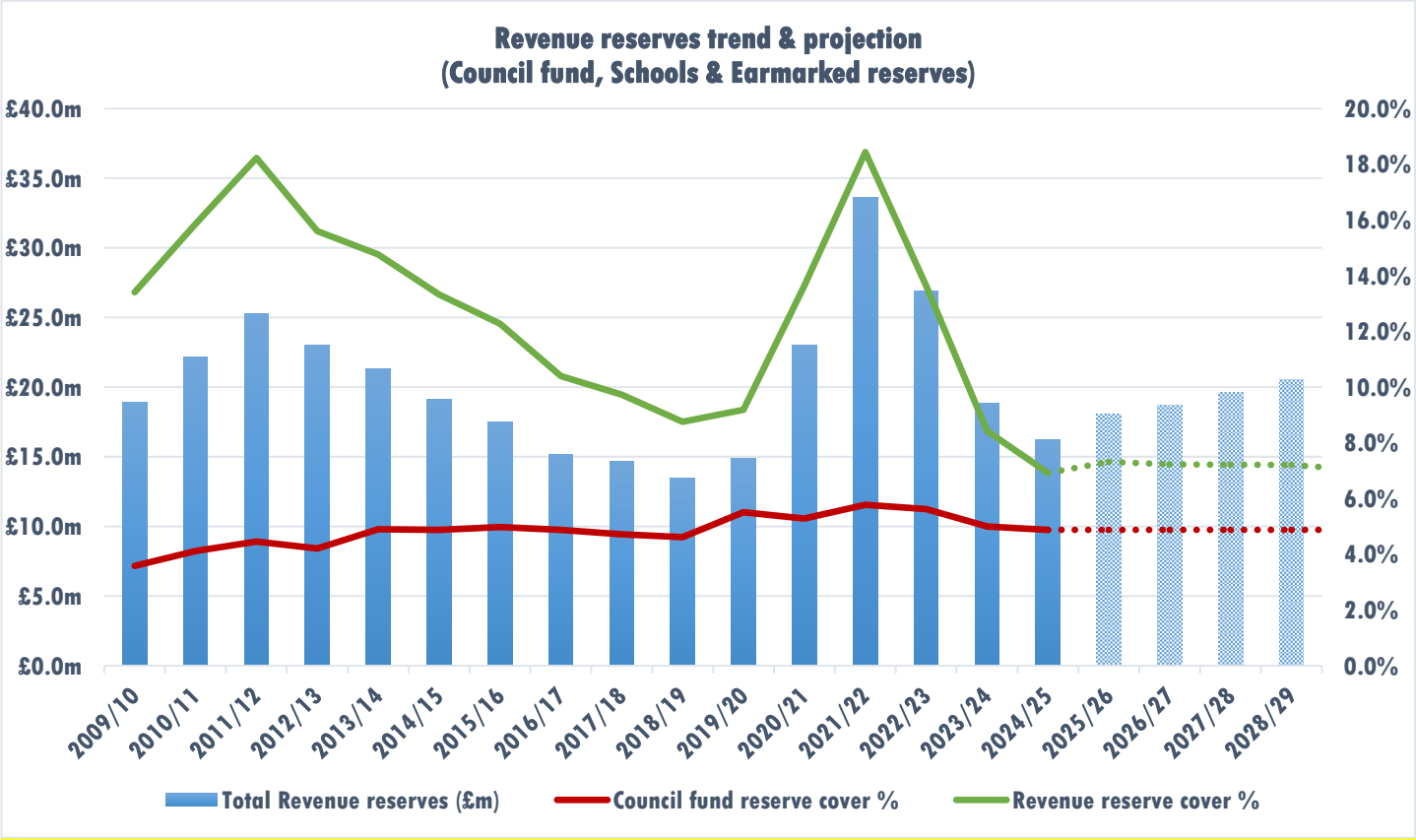
5. Reserves

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

5.2. The decisions to utilise reserves were made with careful consideration. Without this intervention, the Council would have faced severe and immediate impacts on service delivery. A balanced approach was necessary in light of the inflationary pressures and increased demand arising from the cost-of-living and public health crises.

5.3. Although the 2024/25 financial year saw a modest replenishment of the Council Fund and earmarked reserves, this was outweighed by a £3.187 million increase in the schools reserve deficit, bringing the cumulative schools reserve position to a £4.1 million deficit. Despite additional investment in schools' base budgets for 2025/26, a further draw on reserves is currently forecast. This trend weakens the Council's balance sheet, undermines financial resilience, and heightens risk exposure by reducing available resources.

5.4. The current and projected levels of the Council's usable revenue reserves are detailed below:

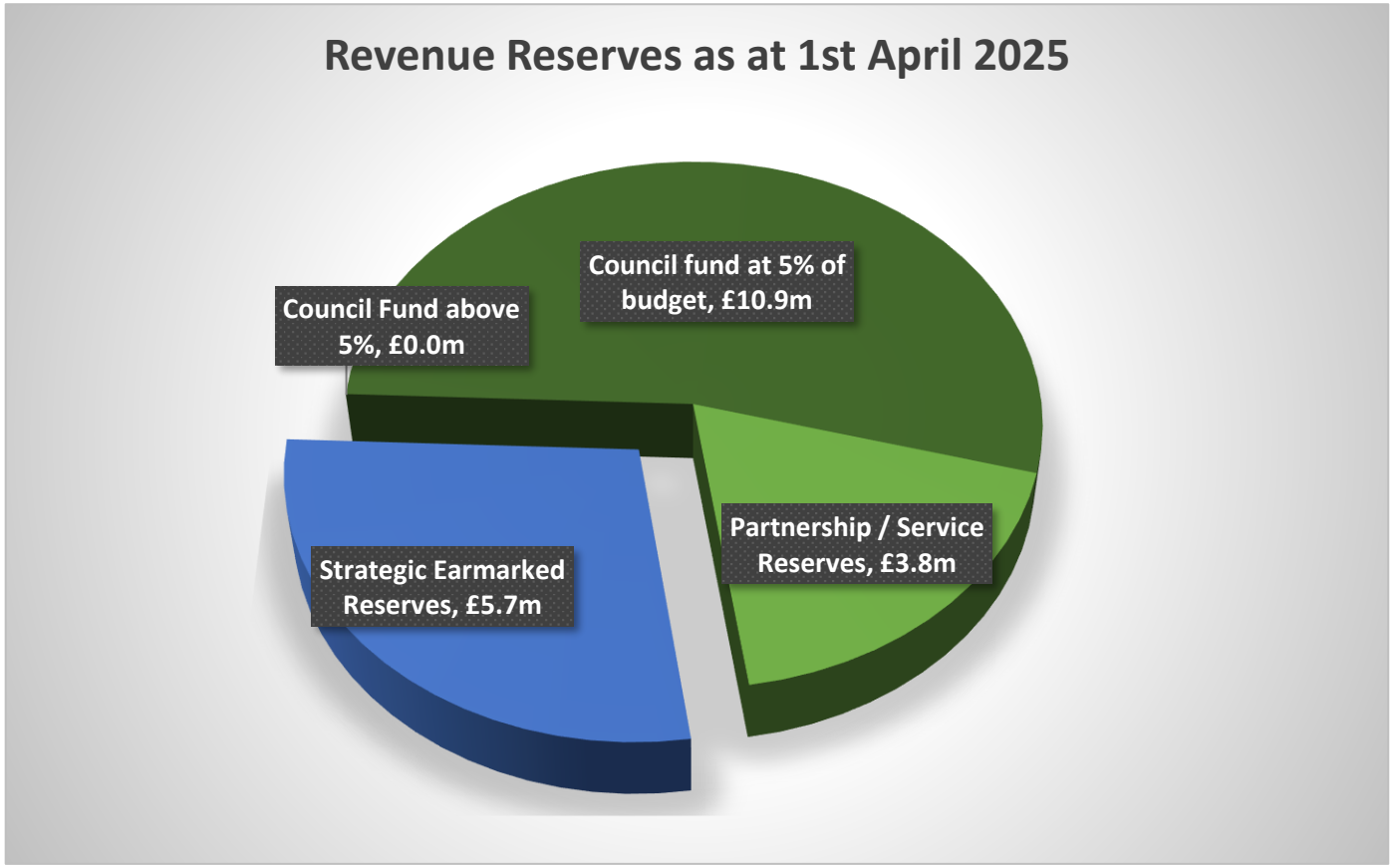


5.5. The Council Fund remains at 5% of the net revenue budget, a level deemed prudent and sufficient to manage short-term financial risks.

5.6. Over the medium term, overall reserve levels are expected to remain relatively stable. However, it is important to note that Monmouthshire currently has the lowest reserve cover as a percentage of net revenue budget in Wales[1]. This necessitates a revised reserves policy that prioritises the protection of revenue reserves to safeguard against both anticipated and unforeseen risks. Strengthened budget management and in-year financial discipline will be essential to promptly identify overspends and implement mitigating actions or savings.

5.7. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that many reserves are earmarked for specific services, partnerships, or timing adjustments, leaving a limited proportion available for strategic use, as outlined below:

[1] Audit Wales report on financial sustainability of local government, December 2024 – Table 3



5.8. The 2025/26 budget planning framework emphasised the need to place the Council on a path toward long-term financial sustainability, including the preservation of an appropriate and prudent level of reserves.

5.9. The framework established clear principles for the use of general and earmarked reserves, including a commitment to avoid reliance on revenue reserves to balance the budget.

5.10. The reserves policy will continue to evolve to ensure that revenue reserves are both protected and replenished over the medium term, thereby maintaining the Council's capacity to respond to future financial risks.

6. Schools' budgets and reserve balances

6.1. The Council allocates funding to schools through an annual delegated budget, known as the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), for which each school's governing body holds direct responsibility. However, the Council retains a key oversight role in monitoring the overall financial performance of schools.

6.2. For the 2025/26 financial year, the total ISB delegated to schools amounts to **£60.45 million**, representing approximately **27%** of the Council's net budget.

6.3. The majority of school funding is provided by the Council, which receives resources for pre-16 education through the Welsh Government's local government revenue settlement and local taxation. Post-16 education funding is allocated via specific Welsh Government grants. Schools may also generate supplementary income through voluntary contributions, donations, and the rental of premises to community groups.

6.4. Schools begin each financial year with reserve balances that reflect cumulative surpluses or deficits from previous years.

6.5. The trend in net school reserve balances over recent years is as follows:

Year	Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's
2015/16	(1,156)
2016/17	(269)
2017/18	(175)
2018/19	232
2019/20	435
2020/21	(3,418)
2021/22	(6,956)
2022/23	(4,257)
2023/24	905
2024/25	4,092

2025/26 (Forecast)	7,061

6.6. The latest in-year financial information indicates a continued overall increase in the total schools' deficit. As a result, 18 out of 35 schools are now forecast to be in deficit by the end of March 2026.

6.7. There is considerable variation in financial performance across schools. While some continue to deplete their reserves, raising concerns, others maintain relatively healthy surpluses. Whilst pandemic-related grants temporarily boosted school balances, this masked underlying structural deficits in some schools.

6.8. Over the past decade, ISB funding has generally increased at a rate exceeding the Council's own settlement from the Welsh Government. However, during and immediately following the pandemic, this trend reversed, coinciding with a period of substantial grant funding to schools.

6.9. The legacy of the pandemic continues to affect schools, particularly in areas such as attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, and additional learning needs. Addressing these challenges has required increased staffing and specialist support, driving up costs.

6.10. The post-pandemic period has also seen sustained inflation and higher pay awards for teaching and non-teaching staff - costs that have not always been fully funded.

6.11. Schools have also been expected to contribute to addressing the Council's broader budgetary pressures during successive challenging financial years.

6.12. Concurrently, schools are required to implement the Welsh Government's long-term education reform agenda, including the Curriculum for Wales, reducing absenteeism, closing the attainment gap, and meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act.

6.13. In light of the current funding context and the structural deficits within some schools, the level of future investment in education will be a critical consideration in the upcoming budget process.

6.14. The Council's approach must be evidence-based and strategically balanced, taking into account the variability in school financial positions, the overall budget gap, and the need to develop a sustainable, balanced budget.

7. Budget assumptions and the projected budget gap

7.1. The Authority's medium term budget modelling is reviewed regularly and reported into the Performance & Overview scrutiny committee and Cabinet on a six-monthly basis. The model contains the base budgets of the Authority overlaid with assumptions that are then updated in the light of updated data and information. This allows prudent changes to be made to the modelling to enable the gap between resources and expenditure to be highlighted.

7.2. External data from sources such as the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), and the Wales Fiscal Analysis unit support the budget assumptions applied within the modelling.

7.3. This is further supported by the work that Welsh Local Authorities produce through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), that allows validation and challenge of the assumptions made throughout the budget process.

7.4. The latest budget planning assumptions are shown below which reflect the updated assumptions following new data and information coming forward:

Budget assumptions 2026/27	Previous assumption July 2025	Updated Assumption Nov 2025	Impact of 1% change in £000's
Expenditure:			
Pay award (non-teaching staff)	3.00%	3.00%	1,099
Pay award (teaching staff – from September 2026)	3.00%	3.00%	419
Superannuation rates	23.9%	21.90%	668
Non-pay inflation	2.00%	2.00%	1,279
Service pressures (non-schools)	£7.5m	£7.9m	
Service pressures (schools)	£0.0m	£1.0m	
Borrowing cost pressures	£1.0m	£1.0m	
Fire levy	3.95%	3.95%	62
Income and Efficiencies:			
Staff vacancy factor (non-schools)	3.00%	3.00%	659

Fees and charges	2.00%	3.8%	217
Funding:			
Welsh Government Settlement (AEF)	1.3%	2.3%	1,352
Council Tax (MCC) - Band D increase	3.95%	3.95%	786
Capitalisation direction support	£2,708,000	£2,708,000	

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

Superannuation rates	**Reduce from 23.9% to 21.9%.** The Council's Local Government Pension Scheme valuation review in 2025 indicated a significant funding surplus that will result in a revision to the Councils contribution rate over the medium term. It is currently anticipated that this will result in a reduction to 21.9% in 2026/27 and each year thereafter in the MTFP. The Teacher's Pension Scheme (TPS) was subject to its actuarial review which increased contributions with effect from 1st April 2024 and funded via Welsh Government grant.
Employers' national insurance	In August Welsh Government confirmed that Monmouthshire will receive £2.56 million to meet the additional employers' NI costs for directly employed staff. This is lower than the actual cost increase the Council faces of £3.32 million and does not take account of any impact on the indirect costs that external providers may pass on through higher fees. Whilst the full £2.56 million will transfer into the Council's funding settlement for 2026/27, the shortfall of £761,000 will need to be considered as a budget pressure.
Service pressures (schools)	**Increase from £0.0m to £1.0m.** Given the funding context as outlined in Section 6 above, and the most up to date financial monitoring for 2025/26, the level of further investment in schools over and above meeting new pay and non-pay pressures, continues to be a key consideration during the budget process.

	At the current stage of the budget process, an increase to £1m is considered prudent. Any investment as part of the budget will need to be carefully balanced with overall funding landscape for the Council, the need to set a balanced budget, and the need for schools to operate within a financially sustainable budget.
Fees and charges	**Increase from 2% to 3.8%.** As a general rule, the council's policy is based on full cost recovery with inflationary uplifts considered annually to ensure that the Council recovers its costs for the services it provides. The inflationary rate applied is the prevailing rate in September preceding the budget year. This has now been confirmed at 3.8%.
Welsh Government Settlement (AEF)	**Increase from 1.3% to 2.3%.** Welsh Government published their draft 2026/27 budget on 14th November which included a commitment to a funding floor for Local Government that will ensure that no Council receives less than a 2.3% increase in core funding. It is currently anticipated that given the roll over nature of the Welsh Government budget, that Monmouthshire will require a contribution from the funding floor. The rate of increase is therefore set at 2.3%.

7.6. The effect of these revised assumptions and pressures being incorporated into the updated modelling is shown below for 2026/27, indicating a reduction in the projected budget shortfall from £13.6m to £11.5m.

7.7. This still represents an early assessment of the budget landscape for 2026/27. Services are currently developing their budget models for 2026/27 which will further inform the level of cost pressures and savings that may need consideration for inclusion. The budget process is always a dynamic one, and all assumptions will continue to be revised and updated during the process.

2026/27 projected budget gap	Current Estimate November 2025 £000's		Previous Estimate July 2025 (£000's	
2025/26 Balanced Budget		**0**		**0**
Pay				
Superannuation rate	-2,004		-668	
Pay inflation - non-teaching	3,243		3,243	
Pay inflation - teaching	1,385		1,385	
		2,624		**3,940**
Non-Pay				
Non-pay inflation	2,558		2,558	
Service pressures (non-schools)	7,910		7,500	
Service pressures (schools)	1,000		0	
Waste Adjustment	2,147		3,035	
Increased employers' national insurance – annualised funding shortfall	761		0	
Indicative budget savings	-1,178		-819	
Treasury, Corporate & Reserves	1,693		1,700	
		14,891		**13,974**
Income				
Council tax increase	-3,106		-3,106	
WG settlement increase	-3,111		-1,758	
Fees & Charges	-791		-434	
Reduction in capitalisation directive support	1,000		1,000	
		-6,008		**-4,298**
Budget Gap		**11,507**		**13,616**

7.8. The medium term outlook remains uncertain. It is not anticipated that Welsh Government will provide any form of multi-year indicative funding settlements as part of their final budget proposals. Therefore, budget assumptions have been based on the premise that inflation

will remain under control, and that public spending by UK Government and the consequential impact on local government in Wales are in line with independent analysis. The Council will need to remain aware that there are downside risks that could adversely impact further the budget shortfalls modelled over the medium term.

7.9. The most up to date modelling indicates significant budget gaps over the medium term:

Budget shortfall	In Year (£m)	Cumulative (£m)
2026/27	11.5	11.5
2027/28	9.1	20.6
2028/29	8.7	29.4
2029/30	8.0	37.4

8 Budgetary Risk

8.1. In preparing the Council's 2026/27 budget, a number of financial uncertainties will continue to be a feature throughout the process. These are driven by limited forward-looking information and a volatile economic environment that continues to place pressure on public services. In this context, it is essential to maintain a robust risk management framework that enables the identification, assessment, and mitigation of financial risks wherever possible.

8.2. The principal risks currently influencing the Council's financial planning are summarised below:

Area	Description	Potential mitigation
Service cost pressures	There is currently limited information available on the level of recurrent service cost pressures that will carry forward, as well as new pressures anticipated for 2026/27. The initial work carried out as part of the budget process in November will aid in providing some clarity, however the nature of the budget process means that uncertainty will continue to feature throughout the budget process.	Robust scrutiny and challenge of any service cost pressures being proposed.

National living wage / Real living wage	The Council's pay structure, particularly at the lower end, is directly influenced by increases in the National Living Wage. Each financial year must begin with the lowest pay scale meeting or exceeding the NLW expected in the following April. Although no forecasts are currently available, historical trends show that even during periods of low inflation, the NLW has typically increased by at least 4%, with the exception of 2021. Additionally, as a Real Living Wage employer, the Council ensures all staff and apprentices are paid at or above this level, which is closely aligned with NLW movements. The NLW also has significant implications for commissioned care services, where the Welsh Government expects local authorities to ensure care workers are paid in line with the NLW.	Ensuring a robust evidence base is provided into Welsh Government of the full cost implications of the Council meeting its pay obligations.
Economic factors	Inflation and interest rate fluctuations continue to impact the cost of goods, services, and borrowing, placing additional pressure on the Council's financial position.	Robust treasury management based on realistic medium term budget projections. Holding a contingency budget to mitigate inflationary risk.
Delivery of budget saving proposals	81.6% of the £10.9 million in-year savings for 2024/25 were delivered - broadly consistent with historical performance. However, this highlights the potential risk in achieving full delivery of any savings targets made for 2026/27.	Robust financial management during the financial year with a key focus on high risk budget areas.
Variations to settlement Assumptions	Each 1% change in the Welsh Government settlement equates to approximately £1.3 million, significantly influencing the Council's ability to plan and deliver services effectively.	Ensuring a robust evidence base is provided into Welsh Government of the Councils overall cost pressures.
Income & Debt recovery	The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to affect household disposable income, which in turn impacts demand and collectability for income-generating Council services.	Prudent income targets set that are based on a reliable evidence base.

	The new responsibilities under the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for Waste are yet to be fully embedded within services, with the corresponding funding levels being based upon future disposal performance.	Robust financial procedures and collection action that ensures recovery of income due.

9. Bridging the gap between expenditure and available resources

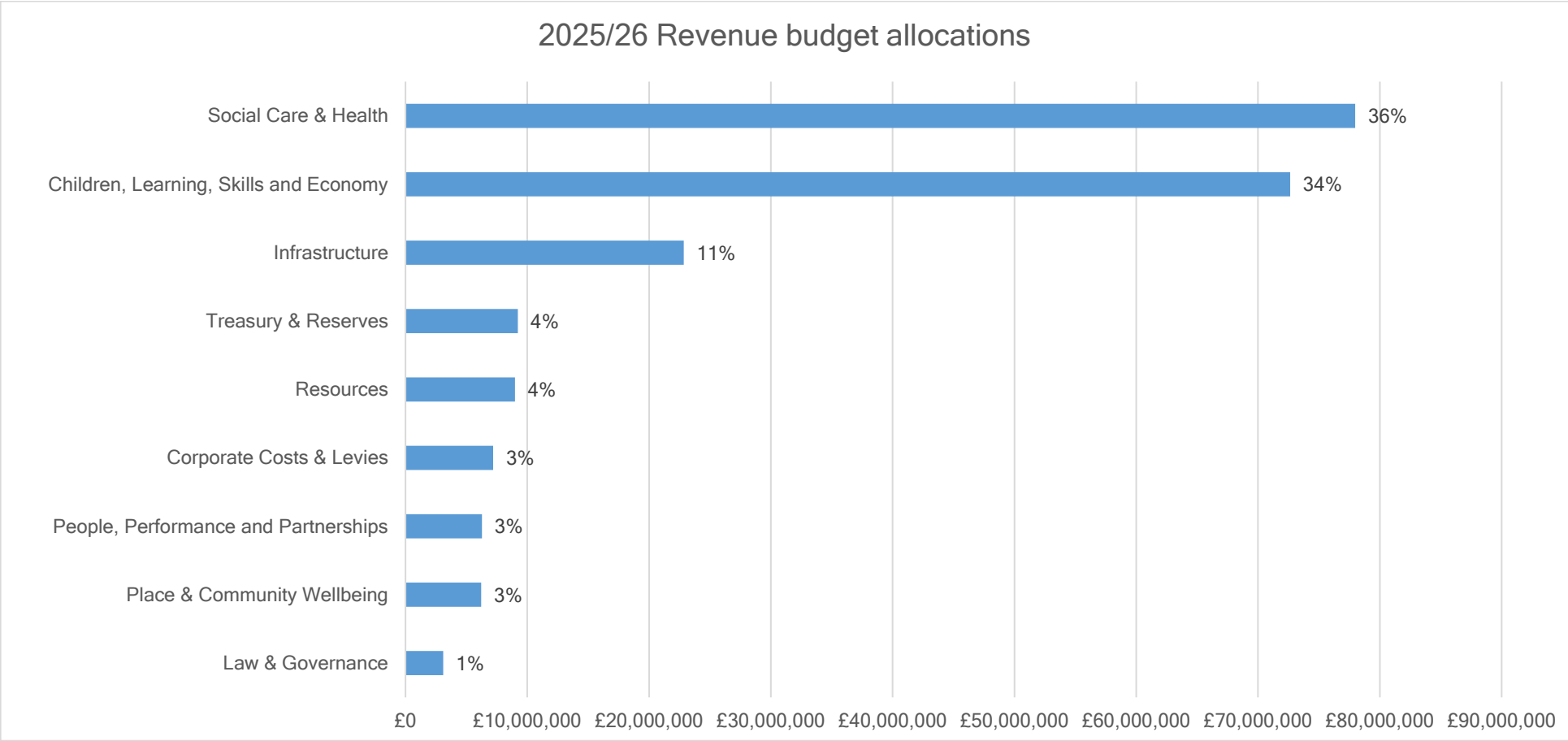
9.1. As the Council prepares for the 2026/27 budget and looks ahead over the medium term, Cabinet must carefully assess the extent to which further cost savings can be achieved through service efficiencies or reductions. This assessment must also consider the potential for mitigating budget shortfalls through additional funding streams or income generation.

9.2. Since 2010, the Council has responded to sustained financial austerity by delivering significant efficiencies across services. Many areas are now operating at the minimum level required to meet statutory obligations. Given the budget shortfall over the medium term, a more strategic, evidence-led approach is essential to ensure that resident needs continue to be met within a financially sustainable framework.

9.3. Persistent cost pressures, coupled with funding settlements that have not kept pace with inflation or rising demand, and the introduction of new, often underfunded responsibilities, have led to a growing reliance on savings, efficiencies, and the use of reserves and capital receipts to balance the budget.

9.4. With reserve levels now comparatively low and the scope for further efficiencies increasingly constrained, the Council faces a significant financial challenge. Addressing this will require a deliberate and forward-looking response - one that prioritises long-term reform, financial resilience, and the transformation of service delivery.

9.5. Of the Council's £214 million service delivery budget, 81% is allocated to three core service areas: Social Care & Health; Children, Learning, Skills & Economy; and Infrastructure (including Waste, Highways, and Transport). Achieving financial sustainability over the medium term will necessitate substantial and targeted programmes of change within these high-expenditure areas.



Budgetary Framework for 2026/27

9.6. It is important that the strategic budget principles approved as part of the MTFS guide the budget approach, and that Community & Corporate plan objectives remain central. The strategy needs to have regard to the whole budget and not just areas that aid in closing the budget gap.

9.7. The approved strategic budget principals, as approved by Council in July 2024 are:

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

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

10. Medium-term approach

10.1. The Council's evolving programme of change, underpinned by strong financial governance, provides the strategic framework through which services will be reshaped to meet resident needs within available resources. This programme is not simply a response to financial pressures but also a proactive effort to modernise and improve outcomes.

10.2. Positive progress continues across the programme of change. To maximise its impact, there is a requirement for coordination and discipline to how this work is captured, aligned, and reported. Doing so will help create a more coherent and connected picture of the overall programme, even though different elements are at varying stages of development.

10.3. By putting strong foundations in place, better assessment can be made of the quality and direction of the work underway, ensuring that the outcomes being achieved are moving the Council in the right direction. This will also allow the Council to quickly adapt and refine approach as needed.

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

10.5. The key areas of development include:

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

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

10.7. Given the more medium-term nature of this work, it is not considered prudent include any financial impact within the 2026/27 budget proposals. As the programme continues to develop, consideration will be given to the implications this will have on shaping the budgetary framework for 2027/28 and beyond.

11. Capital programme

11.1. In the current climate of financial constraint, capital investment must remain within affordable limits. Demand for capital resources continues to exceed availability, making the prioritisation of projects, securing external funding, and collaboration with partners essential to meeting investment needs.

11.2. Rising construction and material costs are impacting the capital programme and wider asset management. Inflation is driving up prices, creating capacity constraints, affecting contract tenders and risk pricing. External grants have tended not to match these increases, raising affordability risks for ongoing and proposed projects.

11.3. While ongoing condition surveys and monitoring help identify and manage risks, the ageing asset base will inevitably require increasing levels of investment to maintain or refurbish infrastructure to acceptable standards.

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

11.5. The current draft capital MTFP is outlined below:

Scheme	Final Budget 2025/26	Indicative Budget 2026/27	Indicative Budget 2027/28	Indicative Budget 2028/29	Indicative Budget 2029/30
Expenditure	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**
Property Maintenance	1,872	1,653	1,653	1,653	1,653
Property Maintenance Fees	236	236	236	236	236
County Farms Maintenance	301	301	301	301	301
Upgrade School Kitchens	40	40	40	40	40
Asset Management Schemes	**2,449**	**2,230**	**2,230**	**2,230**	**2,230**
Abergavenny 3-19 school	12,232	0	0	0	0
School Development Schemes	**12,232**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Carriageway major works	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137

Carriageways & Structures – additional improvements	2,743	1,312	1,312	1,312	1,312
Safety fence upgrades	76	76	76	76	76
Footway Reconstruction	197	197	197	197	197
Reconstruction of bridges & retaining walls	449	449	449	449	449
Road safety & trafficman programme	162	130	130	130	130
Signing upgrades & disabled facilities	38	38	38	38	38
Street Lighting Defect Column Programme	171	171	171	171	171
Flood Alleviation Schemes	30	11	11	11	11
Drainage & Gully works	375	375	375	375	375
Structural Repairs - Public rights of way	437	118	118	118	118
Surveys and Closures - Public rights of way	90	90	90	90	90
Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	170	100	100	100	100
Infrastructure & Transport Schemes	**6,076**	**4,205**	**4,205**	**4,205**	**4,205**
Capital Region City Deal	730	730	730	730	730
S106 Schemes	288	0	0	0	0
Regeneration Schemes	**1,018**	**730**	**730**	**730**	**730**
Disabled Facilities Grant	900	900	900	900	900
Access for all - Schools	50	50	50	50	50
Access For All	250	250	250	250	250
Inclusion Schemes	**1,200**	**1,200**	**1,200**	**1,200**	**1,200**
ICT Hardware replacement	126	260	260	260	260
Network Estate replacement	100	50	50	50	50
SRS capital reserve contribution	61	61	61	61	61
Business world upgrade transition	40	0	0	0	0
Asset Management software transition	51	0	0	0	0
Ransomware & security	85	42	42	42	42
ICT Schemes	**463**	**413**	**413**	**413**	**413**
Vehicle Leasing	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Vehicles Leasing	**1,500**	**1,500**	**1,500**	**1,500**	**1,500**
Capitalisation Directive	3,708	2,358	1,358	0	0

Capitalisation Directive	**3,708**	**2,358**	**1,358**	**0**	**0**
Fixed Asset Disposal Costs	50	50	50	50	50
Match Funding of Grant applications	500	500	500	500	500
Contingency budget	0	560	560	560	560
Other Schemes	**550**	**1,110**	**1,110**	**1,110**	**1,110**
Total Expenditure	**29,195**	**13,745**	**12,745**	**11,388**	**11,388**
Funding	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**
Supported Borrowing	(2,432)	(2,432)	(2,432)	(2,432)	(2,432)
Unsupported Borrowing	(18,069)	(4,257)	(4,257)	(4,257)	(4,257)
Grants & Contributions	(3,334)	(3,046)	(3,046)	(3,046)	(3,046)
Reserve Funded	(103)	(103)	(103)	(103)	(103)
Capital Receipts	(3,758)	(2,408)	(1,408)	(50)	(50)
Vehicle Lease Financing	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)
Total Funding	**(29,195)**	**(13,745)**	**(12,745)**	**(11,388)**	**(11,388)**
(Surplus) / Deficit	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

11.6. The Council's Capital Strategy sets out the framework for making and managing capital investment decisions aligned with corporate objectives. It ensures a consistent, informed, and transparent approach to investment planning. The Capital Strategy will be refreshed and presented alongside final budget proposals to Council in March 2026.

11.7. While the core capital programme remains in place and supports infrastructure investment, significant backlog pressures persist outside the programme due to affordability constraints. These pressures carry varying levels of risk that must be actively managed and mitigated.

11.8. All schemes within the indicative programme will be reviewed for timing and alignment with strategic priorities. Non-urgent projects may be deferred to focus resources on priority schemes or to release capital receipts for wider service redesign.

11.9. The Capital Programme for 2026-2030 will be reviewed during the budget-setting process to ensure revenue implications are accurately reflected and that capital plans remain affordable, prudent, and sustainable.

11.10. The capital receipts summary below shows the expected level of receipts and planned usage, highlighting the balances available in the next few years. Future investment in capital schemes, is in part dependent on future success of achieving capital receipts as it mitigates the requirement for borrowing.

Capital receipt balances	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**
	£000's	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**
Balance as at 1st April	6,083	1,810	1,330	375	428
Capital receipts used to finance capital expenditure	(606)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	0	0
Capital receipts Received	0	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,278	803	103	103
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	**1,810**	**1,330**	**375**	**428**	**481**

12. Budget Process and Timetable

12.1. In the context of all the above, setting a balanced budget for 2026/27 will be significantly challenging and will involve difficult decisions that will allow Cabinet to align and deliver the aims and aspirations set out in its revised Corporate and Community plan, and within the confines of available funding. The work required needs to involve Members and Monmouthshire communities as early in the process as possible.

12.2. The milestone dates in developing the budgetary process for 2026/27 is as follows:

Review of latest of budget modelling using updated assumptions & data	September 2025
High level pressure & saving mandates produced for Cabinet scrutiny	October 2025
MTFP update report - Cabinet	November 2025
Consideration of Welsh Government Provisional settlement	November 2025
Final pressure & saving mandates to be produced	December 2025
Budget assumptions, pressures and savings to undergo further Cabinet scrutiny	December 2025

Set Council tax base - ICMD	December 2025
Consideration of draft revenue & capital budget proposals - Cabinet	January 2026
Scrutiny of Proposals - Select Committees	January & February 2026
Public Consultation for 2026/27 budget	January & February 2026
Consideration of Welsh Government Final settlement	January 2026
Consideration of scrutiny, consultation, final pressures, savings & assumptions	February 2026
Final budget proposals - Cabinet	March 2026
Formal Council Tax Resolution & Budget Proposals - Council	March 2026

13. Progress against the MTFS Delivery plan

13.1. The medium term financial strategy (MTFS) approved by Council in July 2024 outlined the delivery plan that will convert the MTFS into practice. The plan contains the actions proposed in accordance with the strategy document. These align to the strategy's key aims and objectives.

13.2. There was a commitment made to provide a six-monthly update on progress against the delivery plan to monitor progress of the plan against the core objectives. The latest update of progress is outlined below:

Action No.	Action/Description	Outcome/Output	Milestones			Timescale for completion	Responsible Officer/Body	Progress update November 2025
			25/26	26/27	27/28			
1	Develop a Change and Improvement plan to enable delivery of required savings over the medium term	Programme of work developed with overarching governance to enable delivery to be co-ordinated	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing – will embed into MTFP as outcomes become clear	Cabinet/SLT	Programmes of work continuing be shaped with consideration of resourcing required and outcomes expected, both financial and non-financial.
2	Delivery of budget holder training	Refresh and rollout of training to all budget holders	✓	✓	✓	Spring 2026	Head of Finance	Appointment of vacant finance manager post will

Action No.	Action/Description	Outcome/Output	Milestones			Timescale for completion	Responsible Officer/Body	Progress update November 2025
								enable timely rollout of training
3	Self-assessment of compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code	Self-assessment to identify further actions to improve the Council's financial management		✓	✓	March 2026	Deputy Chief Executive	
4	Independent financial resilience review to be undertaken	Independent review to highlight and further areas for improvement		✓		March 2026	Deputy Chief Executive	
5	Enhance approach to modelling future growth, demand, demographic and inflationary pressures in the MTFP		✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Head of Finance	Developing as part of the budget process.
6	Revenue reserves (including school balances) and useable capital receipt review to be undertaken in line with the revised reserves policy	Rationalisation of revenue reserves	✓			July 2026	Deputy Chief Executive; Head of Finance	2024/25 review completed as part of financial outturn. Next update will take place as part of the same process in July 2026.
7	Financial risk register to be maintained and regularly updated	To ensure that suitable mitigations are in place against key financial risks	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Head of Finance	Risks have currently been identified and updated as part of this plan update. Also captured through various risk registers.

Action No.	Action/Description	Outcome/Output	Milestones			Timescale for completion	Responsible Officer/Body	Progress update November 2025
8	Annual review of fees and charges	To benchmark and assess fees and charges to ascertain scope for further income potential	✓	✓	✓	December 2025 and annually	Head of Finance	Will be completed as part of annual review of fees and charges on a service by service basis.

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SUBJECT:	**ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2024/25**
MEETING:	**PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**
DATE:	**18th NOVEMBER 2025**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	**WHOLE AUTHORITY**

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To present the Council's Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25 (Appendix 1) and afford members the opportunity to scrutinise the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the Committee scrutinises the Annual Health and Safety Report and provides feedback to inform future reports.

2.2 That the Committee endorses the health and safety priorities identified for 2025/26 which will strengthen the Council's health and safety management framework.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

3.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees, service users, contractors and members of the public affected by its activities.

3.2 Failure to manage health and safety effectively exposes the Council to legal, financial, and reputational risks.

3.3 This inaugural Annual Health and Safety Report reflects the Council's commitment to strengthening its health and safety culture and improving transparency and accountability in this critical area.

3.4 The report covers a wide range of health and safety topics including accident and incident data, sickness absence trends, occupational health, training, regulatory oversight, and assurance mechanisms. It also outlines the Council's alignment with national health and safety priorities and sets clear priorities for 2025/26.

Key Messages

3.5 **Restructure and Capacity Building:** In 2024/25, the Council undertook a strategic reconfiguration of the Corporate Health and Safety function. This included the appointment of a dedicated Schools Health and Safety Advisor and the realignment of the Senior Health and Safety Advisor from Neighbourhood Services to the Corporate team. These changes have increased capacity and resilience, enabling a more proactive approach to health and safety management.

3.6 **Improvement and Assurance:** The report highlights areas of good practice and progress, including improvements in accident reporting, training delivery, and health surveillance. However, it also identifies areas requiring further attention, such as the need for more robust monitoring, better data quality, and improved support for employees affected by violence and aggression.

3.7 **Service Maturity**: The Corporate Health and Safety function is not yet a mature service. It is recognised throughout the report that further development work is required to ensure it can provide the necessary level of assurance around health and safety performance and compliance.

3.8 **Strategic priorities for 2025/26**: Clear priorities have been identified for 2025/26, including:

,

- Strengthening health and safety assurance frameworks
- Enhancing sickness absence management, particularly in relation to that which is work related and psychological illness
- Improving property-related health and safety compliance and assurance
- Expanding digital reporting and training platforms
- Developing an Employee Protection Register

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

4.1 Effective management of health and safety has positive impacts across all well-being goals and protected groups. It strengthens the Council's ability to safeguard staff and communities, prevent harm and promote equality, well-being and long- term sustainability.

4.2 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is available at Appendix 2.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 The effectiveness of the Council's health and safety management arrangements can be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Statutory Compliance**: Evidence of compliance with relevant legislation and official guidance

- **Risk Management**: Effectiveness of risk identification, control measures, and assurance processes

- **Incident Performance**: Trends in reported accidents and near misses, work related sickness and occupational health data

- **Training and Competence**: Completion rates and impact of health and safety training programmes

- **Continuous Improvement**: Progress against Corporate Health and Safety Action Plans

- **Leadership and Culture:** Evidence of senior management commitment, communication and engagement

5.2 The Committee is invited to note that one of the key priorities for 2025/26 is to strengthen the Council's health and safety performance framework by developing a dashboard of performance indicators that can be monitored through our Corporate Health and Safety Group and reported annually.

6. REASONS:

6.1 The Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25 provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's current position and future direction. It demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement and acknowledges the need to further develop the Corporate Health and Safety function to meet organisational and regulatory expectations.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any actions requiring expenditure will be met from existing service budgets or through separate business cases.

8. CONSULTEES:

8.1 The Governance and Audit Committee acknowledged the health and safety risk register and mitigating actions when they considered the report on 30 October. The Committee also endorsed the health and safety priorities identified for 2025/26 which will strengthen the Council's health and safety management framework.

8.2 The following have also been consulted on the report:

- Corporate Health and Safety Group
- Strategic Leadership Team
- Cabinet Member Resources
- Head of HR
- Resources DMT
- Principal Insurance and Risk Management Officer

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 - Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25
Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment

10. AUTHOR: Kate Thompson, Corporate Health and Safety Manager

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Health and Safety Matters

Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25

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INTRODUCTION

Monmouthshire County Council is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for its employees, service users, pupils, and all those impacted by its operations. This report highlights the progress made in 2024/25 to strengthen our health and safety culture, reduce risk, and enhance wellbeing across the organisation.

Key achievements include the appointment of a dedicated Health and Safety Advisor for schools and the strategic realignment of the Senior Health and Safety Advisor to the Corporate team, moves that have significantly increased our capacity for proactive support and resilience. These changes were informed by a comprehensive review, and have already begun to address previously identified risks, laying the foundation for a safer and more responsive organisation.

Our Health and Safety Network continues to grow stronger, with regular virtual meetings fostering collaboration and consistency across directorates. In response to feedback from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), we successfully launched a targeted asbestos management training programme, delivered in partnership with a neighbouring authority. The initiative was well received, with the HSE Inspector commending the depth of knowledge demonstrated by our managers.

The increase in working days lost through sickness absence across our organisation, particularly those attributed to psychological illness is a matter for concern. At present, we are unable to reliably distinguish from our sickness reports that which is work-related and that which is not. Addressing this challenge will be a key focus for 2025/26, as we seek to better understand the underlying causes and implement effective interventions to support our workforce.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we are optimistic. With increased capacity and a clear set of priorities, we are well-positioned to embed a robust health and safety culture, raise awareness, and deliver tangible improvements that protect and empower our workforce and communities.

PROGRESS UPDATE

- In 2023/24 we reviewed capacity and capability in our Corporate Health and Safety team and implemented a managed move to provide additional capacity and resilience.

- We further strengthened health and safety support and guidance to our schools, appointing a Schools Health and Safety Advisor.

- We successfully piloted a new e-voucher scheme for DSE user eye tests.

- We developed and piloted the use of a Schools Security Audit Checklist. By identifying and addressing potential threats, we can create a secure and nurturing environment that supports the growth and development of our learners.

- We developed and piloted an audit checklist to assess the effectiveness of arrangements for managing the risks children face from vehicles when walking on and immediately outside their school sites at drop off and pick up times.

- We provided health and safety input to the Corporate Induction programme and Managers Reset programmes

- We developed a health and safety risk register for the Authority - see Appendix 1.

- In collaboration with a neighbouring authority, we commenced the roll out of a comprehensive training programme for managers, including headteachers, with responsibility for buildings which contain asbestos.

- In response to increasing incidents of violence towards our employees we developed and delivered Violence and Aggression training for front line officers across the authority.

- We achieved demonstrable health and safety improvements at some of our depots and work will continue in 2025/26 to secure further improvements.

- We have worked to further reduce the risk to operatives associated with waste collection on potentially hazardous routes.

- The Council's Health Surveillance Programme is back on track after falling slightly behind last year.

- We have refined our approach to accident/incident investigation which means we are better able to identify trends, contributory factors and root causes.

Good progress has been made in strengthening our arrangements for managing health and safety in 2024/25. The new officer structure introduced in January 2025 provides a firm foundation for the future and the capacity to enable the service to develop a more proactive approach.

AT A GLANCE

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Health & Safety 2024/25

188
Work-related accidents/incidents reported online.

(289 reported in 2023/2024)

16
RIDDOR notifications

(25 reported in 2023/2024)

93
Staff attended health surveillance clinics

59
In-house First Aid courses

35,340
Number of working days lost through sickness absence.

33,796 in 2023/2024

12.7
Days lost through sickness per FTE

11.8 in 2023/2024

29
Staff referred to occupational health for work related stress

In house Management of Aggression & Personal Safety Awareness courses

8

39%
Musculo skeletal disorders **down** (last 7 years)

Psychological illness **up** (last 8 years)

54%

MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Council's arrangements for managing health and safety are set out in our Corporate Health and Safety Policy, with our Chief Executive having ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by our undertakings.

Strategic management of health and safety has been delegated to our Deputy Chief Executive (who is accountable to Cabinet for the authority's health and safety performance) and to other members of the Strategic Leadership Team in respect of services under their control.

Our Cabinet Member for Resources takes an active interest in health and safety, meeting regularly with the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Health and Safety Manager to maintain a consistent focus on emerging priorities. This regular engagement helps ensure timely action and alignment with our strategic goals.

Directorates with nominated health and safety leads have demonstrated strong leadership, establishing effective arrangements and fostering a culture of collaboration. These leads work closely with the Corporate Health and Safety Manager and actively contribute to the Corporate Health and Safety Group, ensuring Directorate-level insights inform Council-wide improvements.

Where these leads are in place, communication is strong and proactive, with regular meetings helping to maintain momentum and drive continuous improvement. The Corporate Health and Safety Group, which meets quarterly and includes Trade Union representation, provides a valuable forum for shared learning, partnership working, and collective problem-solving.

Together, these arrangements are helping to embed a more resilient and responsive health and safety culture across the organisation - one that supports our people, protects our services, and delivers better outcomes for our communities.

We have strengthened our Health and Safety Network providing a firm foundation for the future.

In 2025/26 we will establish Directorate Health and Safety Groups in those Directorates where they do not already exist.

We recognise the need to strengthen our corporate health and safety systems and processes, improve the quality of information and data and establish more effective arrangements for health and safety monitoring, inspection and audit. This will provide our Strategic Leadership Team with the necessary assurances and enable us to demonstrate continual improvement.

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

Monmouthshire County Council remains committed to continuous improvement in health and safety performance, with a strong focus on creating a safer and healthier workplace for all. Our proactive approach to accident and incident management is central to reducing work-related harm and fostering a culture of learning and prevention.

Reporting and Investigation Process

Managers are empowered to report and investigate all work-related accidents and incidents using structured reporting proformas, some of which have been digitalised

This process supports the identification of root causes and contributing factors, enabling the implementation of corrective actions to prevent recurrence and improve working conditions.

Investigations are proportionate to the severity of the incident, with support provided by Directorate Health and Safety Leads and the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

For serious incidents, the Corporate Health & Safety Manager leads the investigation to ensure a thorough and consistent response.

All reports are reviewed by the Corporate Health and Safety Team to:

- Confirm work-related status
- Ensure investigations are completed appropriately
- Meet statutory reporting requirements under RIDDOR

This oversight ensures compliance and supports timely, targeted interventions.

Incident Overview – 2024/25

A total of 263 incidents were reported via the Council's online system. Following review, 188 incidents were confirmed as work-related, a welcome reduction in the 289 reported in 2023/23, and 75 incidents were deemed non-work-related and managed locally with appropriate communication

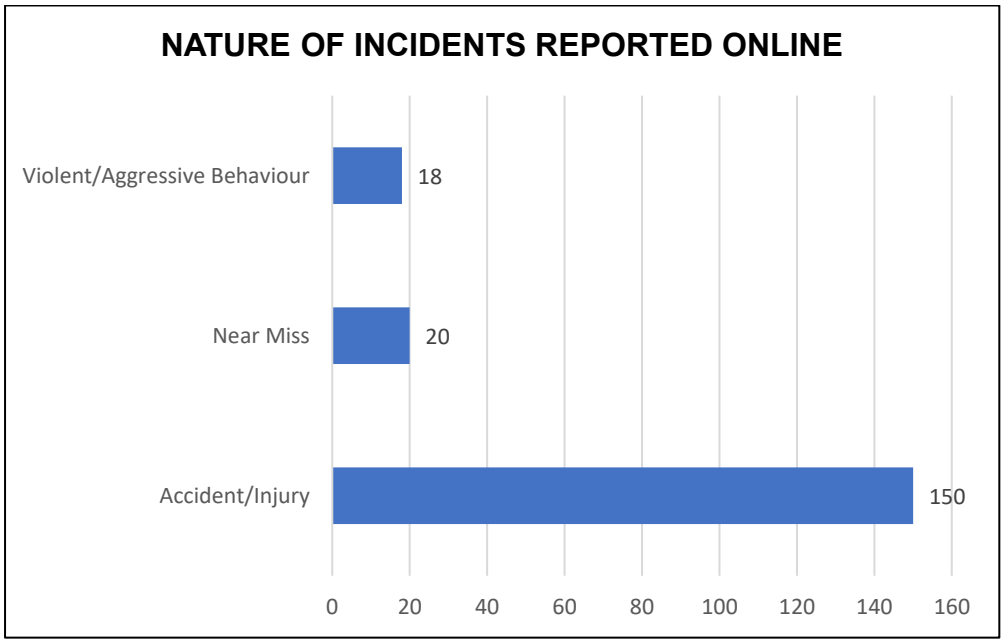
Non-work-related incidents included sports injuries and falls in care settings where environmental or supervisory factors were not involved.

The Communities and Place Directorate reported the highest number of work-related incidents (100), followed by Social Care, Safeguarding and Health (59). These

figures reflect strong engagement with the reporting process and provide valuable insights for future improvements.

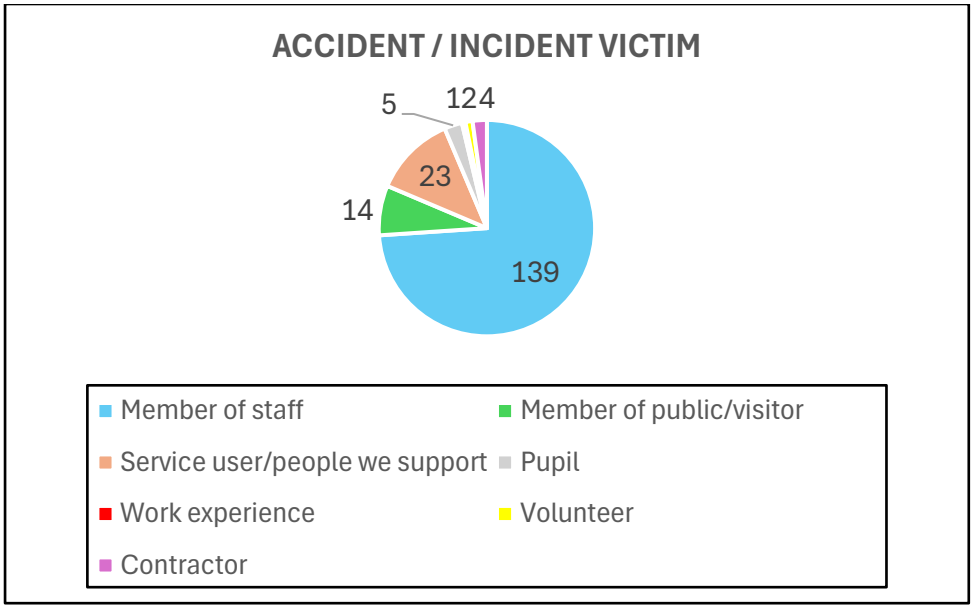
Incident Types

Most of the incidents reported online were accidents/injuries (**150**), although there were **18** cases of violent/aggressive behaviour and **20** near misses.



Victim Profile

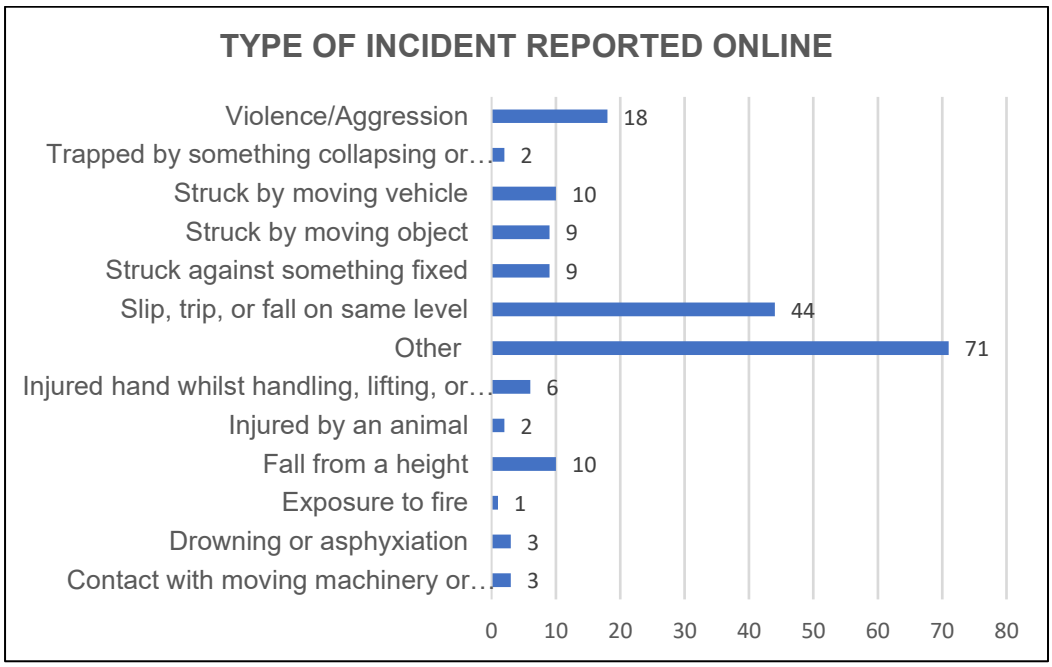
In 74% (139 cases) of work-related accidents/incidents reported online the victim was a member of staff:



Accident categories

There was significant variation in the types of accidents reported. The most common were:

- Slips, trips, or falls on the same level (23%)
- Other (38%) – a broad category capturing diverse incidents



Violence and Aggression in Schools

In addition to incidents reported via the Council's online system, schools reported:

- 145 incidents of violence/aggression toward school employees
- 15 work-related accidents/incidents/near misses

Incidents of violence and aggression in schools are increasing, reflecting a national trend. In March 2025, the NASUWT published *Violence and Aggression in Schools*, highlighting that:

- Violent incidents in schools have more than doubled in the last three years
- 35.5% of teachers experienced physical abuse or violence from learners in the past year
- 92% experienced verbal abuse
- The crisis may be contributing to increased teacher absences due to poor mental health.

Priorities for 2025/26

While improvements have been made in accident and incident reporting, further work is required to enhance data quality, particularly in relation to violent and aggressive behaviour, where underreporting remains an issue, especially in schools where the reporting process has not yet been digitalised.

In 2025/26, the Council will prioritise:

- Strengthening reporting and investigation processes
- Improving support for employees affected by violence and aggression at work
- Enhancing data capture and analysis to inform targeted interventions

By fostering a culture of accountability, learning, and continuous improvement, we are making meaningful progress toward a safer and more resilient organisation. In 2025/26 we will be working to ensure employees subject to work related violence and aggression are more effectively supported.

RIDDOR NOTIFICATIONS

Some workplace accidents/incidents are notifiable to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) and there are strict timescales within which notifications must be made.

The purpose of a RIDDOR is to inform the HSE that a serious work-related accident or incident has taken place. This allows the appropriate enforcing authority to respond and ensure compliance with health and safety law. Employers, the self-employed, and people in control of work premises are responsible for submitting RIDDOR reports.

The following injuries are reportable under the RIDDOR Regulations when they result from a **work-related accident**:

- the death of any person
- specified injuries to workers
- injuries to workers which result in them being incapacitated for more than 7 consecutive days immediately following the day of the accident
- non-fatal injuries to people other than workers (such as customers or volunteers) which result in them being taken directly to hospital for treatment

Occupational diseases

Employers and self-employed people must report the diagnosis of certain occupational diseases, where these are likely to have been caused or made worse by their work.

Dangerous occurrences

A dangerous occurrence is one which ‘arises out of or in connection with work’ and could risk harm to others. Not all of these events need to be reported.

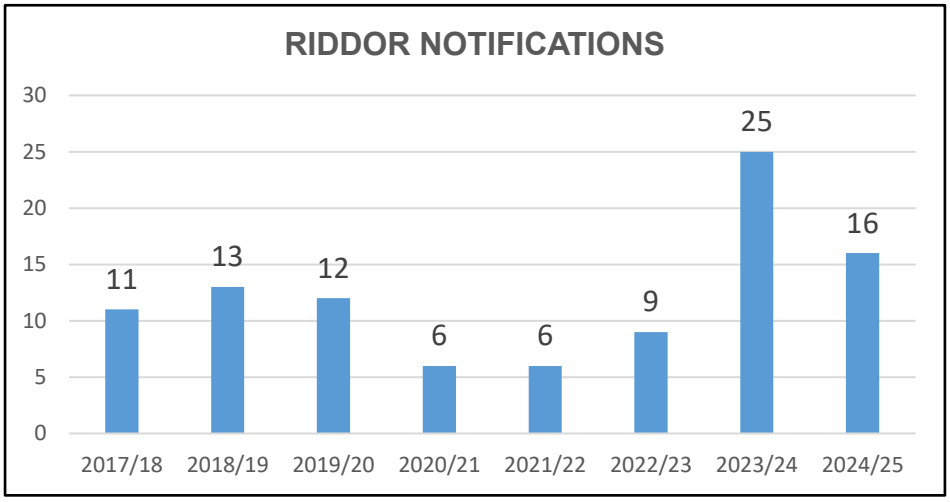
Gas incidents

Distributors, fillers, importers and suppliers of flammable gas must report incidents in connection with that gas, where a serious incident has occurred.

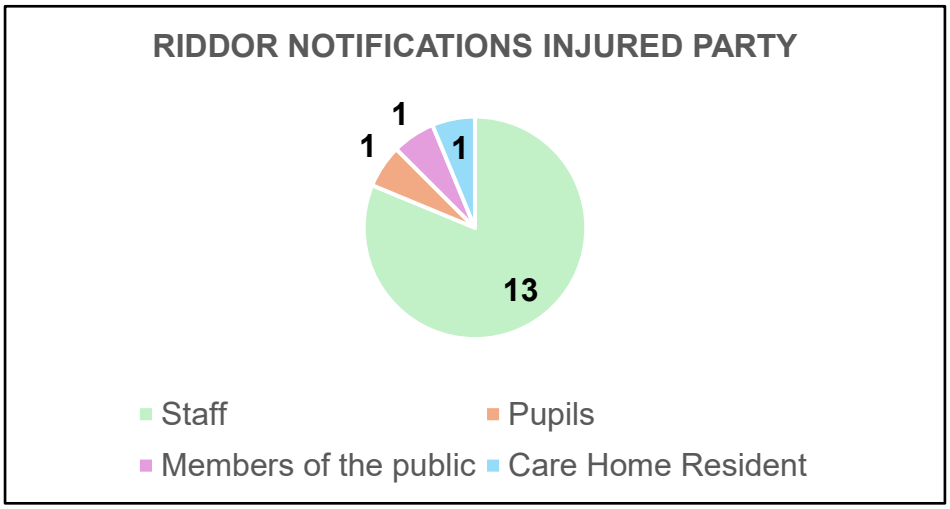
RIDDOR notifications are submitted online by our Corporate Health & Safety Team following discussion with the relevant manager. Further information is available at the link below:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/key-definitions.htm

In 2024/25 the Council reported 16 accidents/incidents to the HSE under RIDDOR compared with 25 in the previous year. Details of these, together with subsequent remedial actions to prevent a recurrence are provided in Appendix 2.

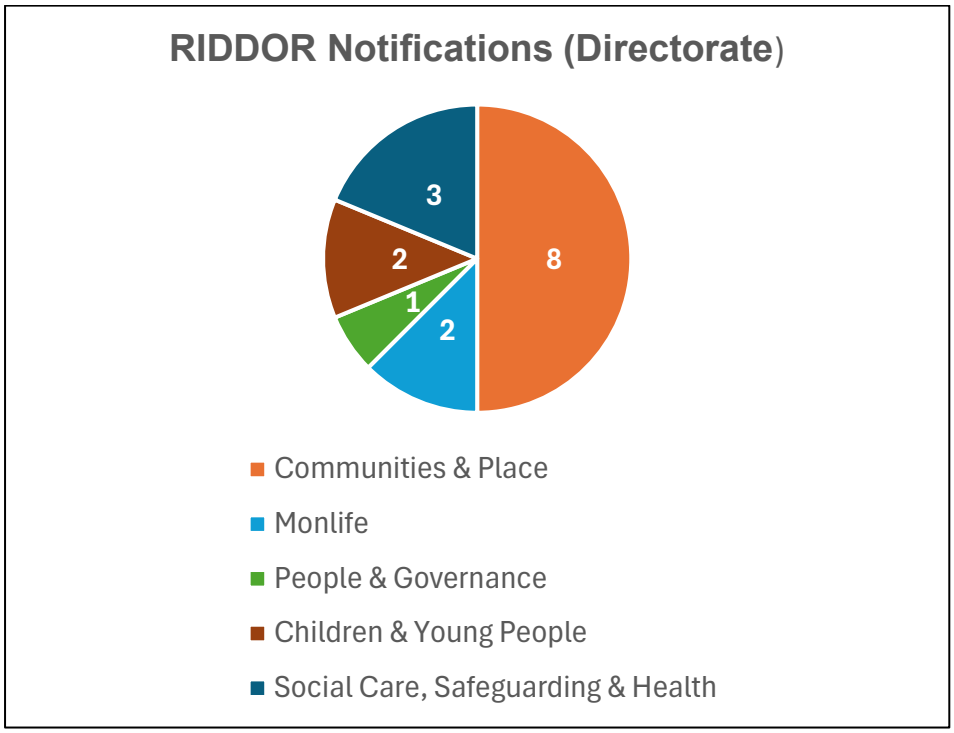


Thirteen of the RIDDOR notifications related to employees, of which three had sustained fractures and a further 10 had reported more than 7 consecutive days off work as a result of their injuries. The remaining three RIDDOR notifications related to injuries to an adult in our care (1), a pupil (1) and a member of the public (1).



Slips, trips and falls were the cause of eight of the RIDDOR notifications relating to employees.

The chart below illustrates RIDDOR notifications by Directorate with Communities and Place (8) reporting the highest number, followed by Social Care, Safeguarding & Health (3).



Whilst none of the notifiable accidents/incidents were subject to further investigation by the HSE, we carried out our own investigations and used the learning to implement changes to prevent recurrences.

Although the number of RIDDOR notifications was down on the previous year, they are still higher than each of the previous six years. This could be the result of increased awareness of the reporting requirements.

As a result of work to digitalise our processes, confidence in the quality of our data and processes relating to RIDDOR notifications is high and timely notifications are made to the HSE.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

Sickness absence is an inevitable aspect of working life, with employees occasionally requiring time off due to physical or mental health issues. It is essential that both aspects of health are treated with equal importance. According to the Office for National Statistics, an estimated 148.9 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury across the UK in 2024, equating to an average of 4.4 days per worker. More working days were lost by workers in the public sector than the private sector, with **5.9** working days lost per worker in local government.

Within our organisation, a total of 35,340 working days were lost to sickness absence during 2024/25. This equates to **12.68** lost working days per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee, compared to 11.76 in 2023/24 and 12.48 in 2022/23. Of these, **66.2%** were attributed to **long-term** absence and **33.8%** to **short-term** absence.

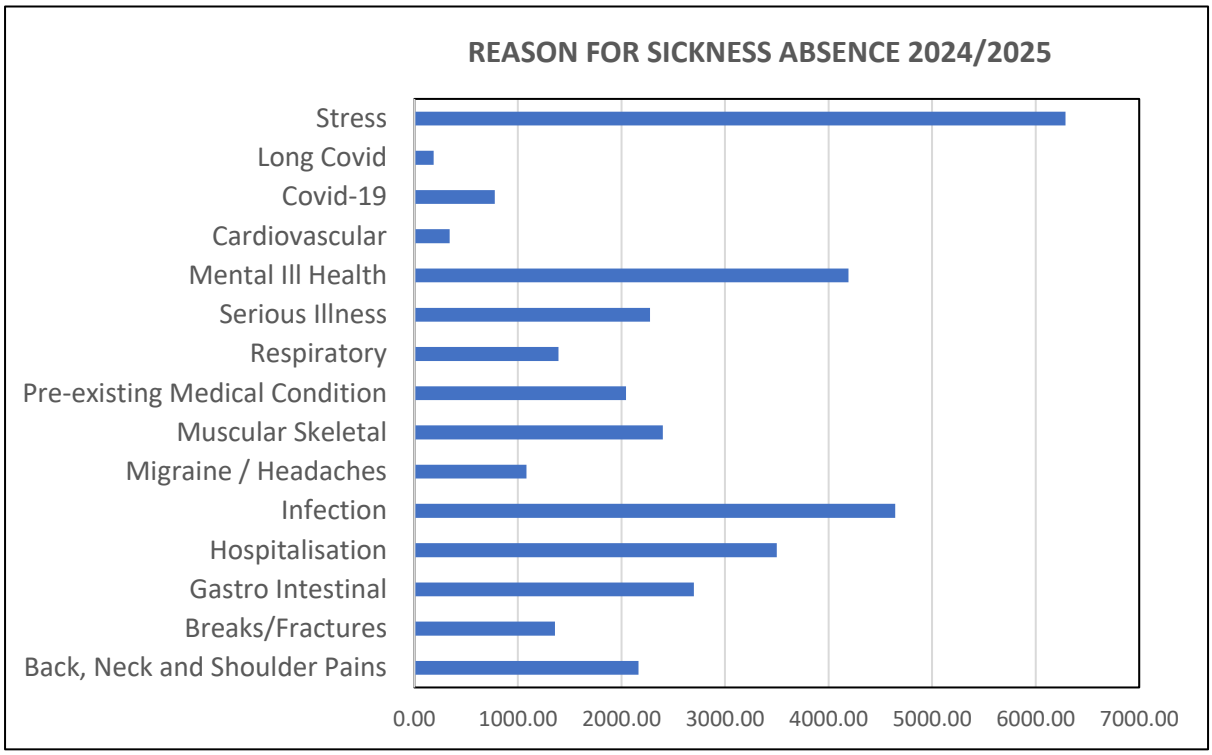
The following table shows the number of lost working days per FTE by Directorate.

NUMBER OF LOST WORKING DAYS PER FTE BY DIRECTORATE 2024/25	
Chief Executives	**6.00**
Children & Young People	**6.13**
Communities & Place	**16.16**
Law & Governance	**2.62**
Monlife	**9.84**
Resources	**7.24**
Schools	**10.21**
Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	**17.58**
Whole Authority	**12.68**

Directorates with larger headcounts and frontline services tend to report higher levels of sickness absence per FTE.

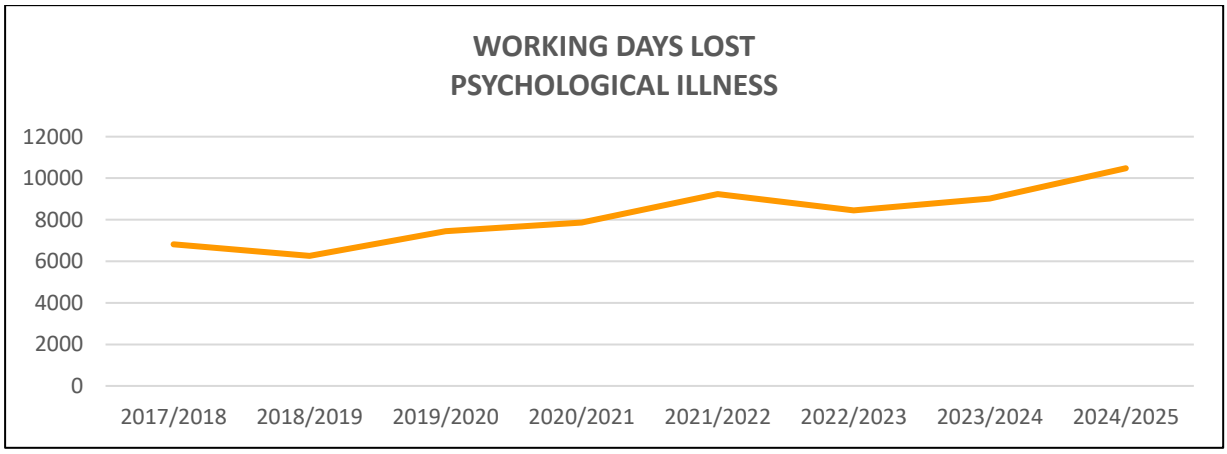
Primary Causes of Sickness Absence

The leading cause of absence in 2024/25 was psychological illness, including mental ill health and stress. This was followed by infection and hospitalisation. The breakdown of sickness absence by category is as follows:



Psychological absence accounted for 10,479 lost working days, an increase from 9,015 in 2023/24 and 8,450 in 2022/23. This category now represents 29.7% of all sickness absence, up from 26.7% and 23.5% in the previous two years respectively.

The overall upward trend in psychological absence is shown below:



Work Related Sickness Absence

Although we record detailed information about sickness absence, our reports do not currently enable us to identify that which is work related with sufficient confidence. We will be prioritising work in 2025/26 to enable us to report work related sickness and target suitable interventions to secure improvements as appropriate.

Financial and Operational Impact

The high level of sickness absence presents a significant concern, not only due to direct costs but also because of indirect impacts, including:

Replacement labour: Temporary staff or agency cover

Overtime payments: Additional hours for existing staff

Administrative burden: HR and managerial time spent managing absences

Training costs: For temporary replacements

Service quality: Potential decline in customer satisfaction

Team morale: Reduced productivity among remaining staff

Planned Actions for 2025/26

To address the increasing burden of sickness absence, the following strategic actions will be prioritised:

- Strengthening absence management processes, including a review of our Sickness Absence Management Policy
- Enhancing mental health support
- Promoting physical health initiatives

We recognise that sickness absence is a significant and increasing financial burden on the authority and in 2025/26 we will work to strengthen our sickness absence management processes.

We will also prioritise efforts to better identify and address work-related sickness absence. Improved collaboration between Corporate Health and Safety, HR, Systems and Data teams will be essential to enable targeted interventions.

The re-launch of Connect 5 Wellbeing Training in 2025 will empower employees to improve their own mental wellbeing and support others through confident, informed conversations. wellbeing.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

In 2024/25, the Council continued its partnership with Insight, our outsourced Occupational Health provider. Insight plays a key role in supporting the management of sickness absence, conducting work-health assessments, and delivering health surveillance programmes.

Health Surveillance Programme

Working collaboratively with Insight, we delivered a proactive health surveillance programme targeted at employees exposed to specific occupational health risks. Health surveillance is a statutory requirement for individuals who may be exposed to hazards such as:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Dust
- Fumes
- Hazardous substances

These checks are essential even when control measures are in place, as such measures may not always be fully reliable despite regular maintenance, training, and monitoring.

Managers are responsible for identifying employees who require health surveillance.

In 2024/25, 93 employees attended health surveillance clinics. Two levels of surveillance were offered:

Basic checks: Audio and Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

Safety Critical Medicals, which included:

- Audiometry
- Spirometry
- Skin assessments
- HAVS screening
- Blood pressure monitoring
- Musculoskeletal evaluation
- Vision testing
- Comprehensive medical questionnaire

It is important to note that health surveillance differs from health monitoring, health promotion, or general health screening. It is specifically designed for workers at risk and serves to:

- Identify necessary actions to prevent harm
- Provide a platform for employees to raise health concerns
- Reinforce health and safety training and education

The health surveillance programme was successfully delivered to target in 2024/25.

Occupational Noise Assessment

An occupational noise exposure assessment was commissioned during the year which identified elevated noise levels among employees operating glass collection vehicles. Exposure was found to exceed the lower exposure action value, prompting the implementation of enhanced control measures to mitigate the risk of work-related hearing damage.

Occupational Health Referrals

Insight provides managers with expert occupational health advice and support. In 2024/25, **327** employees were referred to Insight for occupational health assessments. Referral reasons varied, with **29** cases related to work-related stress and **3** cases linked to work-related accidents.

HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

Training is a fundamental component of the Council's health and safety management system. In line with our legal obligations, we are committed to providing employees with appropriate information, instruction, and training to safeguard their health and safety, as well as that of others. This duty is embedded in key legislation, including:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations

Training Delivery Methods

Training is delivered through a variety of formats to suit operational needs and learning preferences:

- Formal face-to-face sessions
- Informal, on-the-job instruction
- Written guidance
- E-learning (self-paced)
- Online learning (real-time instruction)
- Verbal instruction

Key Developments in 2024/25

- The Council focused on improving the capture of training data to identify gaps, share best practice, and promote consistency and efficiency across services.
- Collaboration with a neighbouring authority to deliver Asbestos Awareness and Management of Asbestos training following a review which identified areas for improvement.
- RLSS Trainer Assessor Awards: Three employees were upskilled to deliver lifeguard training and support monthly refresher sessions.

It is anticipated that going forward, more health and safety training will be delivered through e-learning and our Corporate Health and Safety Manager is working closely

with our Corporate Training Team to explore opportunities using *Thinqi*, our new digital learning management system. The benefits of e-learning include:

- Flexibility and self-paced learning
- Cost efficiency
- Consistency in delivery
- Improved time management and motivation
- Scalability and personalised learning
- Enhanced analytics and reporting

Corporate Training Team Delivery (2024/25)

The following health and safety courses were delivered centrally, in addition to service-specific training:

Title	Number of courses
First Aid at Work	3
Emergency First Aid at Work	23
Paediatric First Aid	2
Emergency Paediatric First Aid	3
Management of Aggression & Personal Safety Awareness	3
Fire Evac Chair	5
Manual Handling Awareness	10
Fire Safety Awareness (Thinqi)	1517 members of staff
Fire Warden	4
L2 Health & Safety in the Workplace (Highfield)	2
Legionella Awareness	2
Risk Assessment Awareness/Dynamic Risk Assessment for Drivers	10
Ladder Safety/Working at Height	5
COSHH	4

Operations related training (Number of courses)
• L1 H&S in a Construction Environment = 5 days (this isn't a course; a group of delegates complete a test paper only) • Highways Induction = 3 • Reversing Assistant = 5 • Traffic Management = 43 • Vehicle Restraint Systems = 27 • Telehandler = 7 • Abrasive Wheels = 3 • Load Security & Safe Trailer Hitching = 6 • Chainsaw/Strimmer/Brushcutter/Hedgecutter/Woodchipper = 8 • Excavator = 4 • Pesticides = 1 • Pressure Washer (depot wash down bays) = 23 • Winter Service Operations = 11 • Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) = 4 • Forklift Truck = 9

MON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
WHERE YOU MATTER

Social Care & Health Directorate
Health & Safety Training

The Mon Workforce Development Team delivers tailored health and safety training to social care and health employees, foster carers, micro carers, third sector organisations, and partners. This training is aligned with Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) priorities and is provided free of charge.

Training is delivered by one full-time and two part-time in-house trainers, supported by subject matter experts from the Council and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Sessions are held at Innovation House, across weekdays, evenings, and weekends, with access to specialist equipment including hospital beds, hoists, and first aid kits.

A total of **1,833** individuals received health and safety training through this programme:

Course Title	No. of courses	No. of people trained
Face to Face		
Emergency First Aid	19	218
First Aid at Work	3	33
Paediatric Emergency First Aid	6	24
Personal Safety Awareness	5	113
Fire Evacuation	2	38
Fire Warden	2	16
Manual Handling Foundation	17	192
Manual Handling Refresher	21	135
Key Handler 3 day	3	16
Reablement and positive risk taking	6	121
Manual Handling Sitting, Standing, Walking	4	15
Care of Medications	15	281
Food Safety Level 2	4	40
Food Safety Level 3	1	13
Trainer led foster carer H&S learning (various)	18	186
Virtual		
COSHH Awareness	Self-directed	102
Infection Prevention		92
Health & Safety		93
Food Safety Level 2		105

Changing The Conversation on Mental Well-Being

In 2025/26, the Council will re-launch Connect 5 Wellbeing Training, a free programme for sector providers. Its objectives include:

- Empowering individuals to improve their own mental wellbeing
- Building confidence to engage in open conversations about mental health
- Providing suicide awareness and signposting resources

Looking Ahead to 2025/26

Key priorities for the coming year include:

- Developing a consistent approach to mandatory health and safety training across services
- Expanding the use of the Thinqi learning management system
- Increasing the range of health and safety e-learning modules available

The Council's digital learning platform provides an exciting opportunity to deliver and manage health and safety training. We will be increasing the range of health and safety e-learning available in 2025/26

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

The health and safety regulator for local authorities in Great Britain, including Monmouthshire County Council is the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE**). **South Wales Fire and Resue** is the fire safety regulator.

Regulators carry out both **planned** and **reactive** interventions at workplaces to ensure they are safe and may use their enforcement powers to secure improvements. There are strict penalties for non-compliance with can include **unlimited fines** and/or **imprisonment for up to two years**.

In the case of the HSE, they operate a **fee for intervention scheme** whereby they recharge employers for their time if they identify a **material breach**.

Regulatory Activity in 2024/25

During the reporting period, the Council was subject to further intervention by the HSE following previously identified concerns regarding the management of asbestos risks. Inspections were carried out at:

- **Abergavenny Market**
- **Gilwern Outdoor Centre**
- **Abergavenny Leisure Centre**

The HSE Inspector acknowledged progress since the previous visit but expressed concern regarding the Council's capacity and capability to manage asbestos risks in full compliance with regulatory requirements.

In addition, an unannounced fire safety inspection was conducted by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service at Shire Hall, Monmouth in June 2024. The inspection had a **positive** outcome, with **no areas of non-compliance** identified.

The Council has developed positive working relationships with both health and safety regulators. Our Corporate Health and Safety Team acts as a single point of contact, ensuring consistent communication and appropriate escalation of issues to the Strategic Leadership Team when necessary.

In direct response to HSE feedback, the Council is developing proposals to strengthen the capacity and capability of its Property Services Team, ensuring more effective management of property related health and safety risks going forward.

INSURANCE CLAIMS

Employer's Liability Claims

An **employer's liability claim**, often referred to as a **workplace accident claim**, may arise when an employee or volunteer suffers injury or financial loss due to a work-related incident. To succeed in such a claim, the claimant must demonstrate that the Council was **negligent**, and that this negligence directly caused the incident and resulting harm.

The Council acknowledges its **duty of care** to all employees and volunteers, and takes all reasonable steps to provide a safe working environment. Compliance with health and safety legislation is central to this commitment. Breaches of these regulations can result in serious consequences, including injury and legal liability.

Key employer responsibilities include:

- Providing appropriate and adequate training to ensure safe working practices
- Supplying suitable equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Maintaining a safe working environment and regularly inspecting equipment
- Implementing and maintaining safe systems of work

Where these duties are not met, the Council may be subject to an employer's liability claim. To mitigate this risk, the Council maintains **comprehensive employer liability insurance** to cover potential compensation costs arising from proven negligence or statutory breaches.

Since 2019, the Council has received **14 employer liability claims**, resulting in **£27,768** in compensation payments. In 2024/25, **one new claim** was received, which remains open. The potential compensation for this case is **£7,250**, subject to change as the case progresses.

Public Liability Claims

A public liability claim may be made when a member of the public suffers injury in a public space due to alleged negligence. Claimants typically have three years to initiate such claims.

In 2024/25, the Council received 28 public liability claims where potential health and safety shortcomings may have contributed to the incident. To date, £4,993 has been paid in compensation. However, 22 cases remain open, with potential further payments of up to £78,974.

Learning from Claims

The Council's Principal Insurance and Risk Manager plays a key role in the Corporate Health and Safety Group, supporting a collaborative approach to learning from insurance claims. Through effective communication and data triangulation, we are strengthening our understanding of incidents and improving future risk management.

We recognise the value of learning from both successful and defended claims. Where compensation has been paid, we examine the circumstances to identify improvements. Conversely, where claims have been successfully defended, we use these cases to reinforce the importance of robust health and safety practices and documentation.

We have effective communication mechanisms in place ensure that lessons learned from insurance claims are shared and acted upon.

PROVIDING ASSURANCE

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, all employers are required to have arrangements in place for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring, and review of measures to protect people at work.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) promotes the **Plan, Do, Check, Act approach** as a best practice framework:

Plan: Identify what needs to be done

Do: Implement the plan effectively

Check: Monitor and evaluate control measures

Act: Take corrective action where necessary

This cyclical process supports continuous improvement by:

- Identifying areas for development
- Enabling timely interventions to protect staff and others
- Embedding a culture of ongoing review and improvement

Internal and Service-Level Monitoring

The Council's Internal Audit Team plays a key role in providing assurance by reviewing health and safety risk assessments and verifying the implementation of control measures where it is appropriate. Findings are reported to senior managers and the Corporate Health and Safety Manager.

In addition, several service areas have developed their own compliance monitoring arrangements, and some have achieved third-party accreditation. However, we acknowledge that in some areas, there is insufficient evidence of formal, planned monitoring. This limits our ability to provide the Strategic Leadership Team with full assurance that health and safety risks are being effectively managed.

Examples of Assurance in Practice

- **Highways Team**: Maintains exemplary health and safety standards in a high-risk environment. Accredited to ISO 45001, the team is regularly audited by the South Wales Trunk Road Agent (SWTRA) and Welsh Government (WG), and has been commended for its robust systems, site safety practices, and team engagement.
- **Grounds Team**: Achieved SMAS Worksafe accreditation, demonstrating best practice in workplace health and safety.
- **Indoor Playcentre, Monmouth**: Successfully met RoSPA health and safety standards during its annual inspection.
- **Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre**: Awarded a licence under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (AALR) 2004.
- **Property Services**: Compliance officers conduct regular inspections of Council properties to verify adherence to health and safety requirements.

It is essential that monitoring activities are not only carried out but also clearly communicated to managers and used to drive improvement. Monitoring must be seen as an input that leads to measurable outcomes, such as improved compliance and a reduction in incidents.

In 2025/26, we will prioritise the development of a risk-based, more consistent and robust approach to health and safety monitoring and assurance across all Directorates. This work will be informed, in part, by an internal audit of the Property Services compliance function scheduled for the year.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

National health and safety priorities 2025/26

- **Occupational Lung Disease**.
  This includes managing risks associated with asbestos
- **Legionella Control**
  With a focus on preventing Legionnaires disease particularly in infrequently used water systems or those with a poor history of control
- **Work Related Stress**
  Raising awareness and addressing the impact of work related stress on employee wellbeing
- **Violence and Aggression**
  Mitigating risks to lone workers and customer facing employees
- **Musculoskeletal Disorders**
  Ensuring adequate risk assessments for manual handling activities
- **Noise in the Workplace**
  Focusing on the use of hearing protection and health surveillance
- **Planned Preventative Maintenance**
  Ensuring work equipment is properly maintained

The Corporate Health and Safety team will work to ensure Council priorities for health and safety are aligned with national priorities where this is appropriate. This will protect the Council's interests and ensure areas of most risk are afforded the highest priority.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our priorities for 2025/26

- Complete the review of the Council's health and safety policies
- Work closer with HR, Systems and Data colleagues to develop a better understanding of the proportion of sickness absence that is work related
- Explore with colleagues across the organisation strategies for tacking lost working days due to psychological illness
- Develop the Council's online health and safety training offering
- Develop health and safety information on the Hub and explore options for improving access to health and safety information for schools
- Further develop online accident and incident reporting focusing particularly on violence in schools and develop and deliver accompanying training
- More effectively support employees who are subject to violence and aggression at work
- Improve health and safety communications
- Further digitalise health and safety systems and processes
- Establish Directorate Health and Safety Groups in those Directorates where they do not already exist
- Further strengthen arrangements for managing asbestos in Council properties
- Review the Council's arrangements for managing fire risks in its buildings
- Develop proposals for a programme of health and safety assurance audits
- Develop proposals for an Employee Protection Register
- Re-launch Connect 5 wellbeing training
- Strengthen our health and safety performance framework, developing a dashboard of performance indicators that can be monitored through our Corporate Health and Safety Group and regularly reported to enable us to track progress

The production of this Annual Health and Safety Report has provided the opportunity to reflect on our achievements in 2024/25 and consider our priorities for the year ahead.

Additional capacity in the team means we can adopt a more proactive approach and consider how we can most effectively obtain the necessary assurances around the Council's health and safety performance.

Health & Safety Risk Register (updated September 2025)

Ref	**1**	**Risk**	**Potential risk that:** The Council's health and safety policies and guidance are not subject to regular review and there are some policy gaps. The risk is that: • they may not be consistent with current legislation and official guidance • respective roles and responsibilities for health and safety may not be sufficiently clear • staff and others impacted by the Council's activities may be exposed to health and safety risks • there will be an inconsistent approach to managing health and safety risks across the Council • the Council may not be able to defend insurance claims • the Council may be at risk of enforcement action for breaches of health and safety/fire safety legislation						
Risk Owner		Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Ensuring the Council's health and safety policies and guidance is subject to regular review will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat
Reason why Identified								
Some of the Council's health and safety policies are out of date and do not sufficiently set out respective roles and responsibilities. This can lead to role ambiguity and lack of ownership of health and safety potentially compromising the health, safety and well-being of staff and others affected by the Council's activities.								

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target Risk Level
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	3	4	High	12	Low (4)
2025/26	3	4	High	12	2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	
2026/27	2	4	Medium	8	2026/27	1	4	Low	4	

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Review Corporate Health and Safety Policy and communicate revised Policy to staff to ensure roles and responsibilities for H&S across the Council are clear and understood.	KT • Review by June 2024 • Consultation June-September 2024 • Sign off by Chief Executive October 2024 • Communication of revised Policy March 2025	Completed	
ii) Adopting a risk- based approach, develop and implement a plan for reviewing the Council's suite of subordinate health and safety policies and guidance.	KT • Risk based policy review timetable to be developed and agreed by Corporate H&S	Review timetable in place and good progress being made. Draft policies considered by Corporate Health and Safety Group prior to approval by JAG. Work ongoing.	

Where gaps are identified develop new policy documents. .	Group September 2024 • Progress in delivering the policy review plan against the timetable to be reported to Corporate H&S Group quarterly		

Ref	2	Risk	**Potential risk that:** The Council's arrangements for reporting work- related accidents, incidents (including violence) and near misses are not sufficiently robust which may mean: • missed opportunities to take action to prevent recurrences • unable to learn lessons from accident investigations • health and safety risks not being identified and/or appropriate controls being implemented • unable to provide accurate information in response to requests for information (FOI's) • failure to notify HSE of relevant incidents within statutory timescales					
Risk Owner	Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Improving arrangements for reporting and investigating work-related accidents and incidents will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat
Reason why Identified							
Online reporting has been rolled out across all Directorates, with the exception of schools. Until the roll out has been completed there is a reliance on emailing accident reports and maintaining records on spreadsheets. There is evidence of both under and over reporting. There is a need to complete the roll out, increase awareness of the online reporting system and develop training for managers and staff.							

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target Risk Level
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	2	4	Medium	8	Low (4)
2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	
2026/27	2	4	Medium	8	2026/27	1	4	Low	4	

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Work with Digital team to Implement necessary modifications to online accident/incident reporting system to reflect structural changes	KT December 2025 (subject to availability of support from Digital team)	Further modifications required to reflect new structures	
ii) Complete the roll out of on-line accident and incident reporting to schools (including violence)	KT December 2025	Work continuing with digital team to develop a more robust solution for schools	
iii) Review and revise Council accident and incident reporting and investigation policy	KT December 2025	Drafted and scheduled for consideration by Corporate Health and Safety Group October 2025	

iv) Develop e-learning on workplace accident, incident and near miss reporting which will be mandatory for all staff	KT December 2024	Development ongoing. Scheduled for completion December 2025	
v) Develop accident/incident investigation training for managers	KT December 2024	Development ongoing. Scheduled for completion September 2025	

Ref	3	Risk	**Potential risk that:** Arrangements for staff health and safety training are inconsistent and, in some areas, inadequate with the risk of: • non-compliance with legislation, Council health and safety policies and guidance • staff sustaining injuries and/or health conditions at work • insurance claims which the Council cannot defend • enforcement action against the Council

Risk Owner	Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Adopting a more consistent approach across the Authority to health and safety training will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat

Reason why Identified

The provision of health and safety training is a legal requirement

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					**Risk Level (Post-mitigation)**					**Target Risk Level**
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Low (4)
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	2	4	Medium	8	
2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	2025/26	1	4	Low	4	
2026/27	1	4	Low	4	2026/27	1	4	Low	4	

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Develop and implement mandatory H&S awareness and Fire Safety awareness training for all staff.	KT September 2024	Fire safety e learning developed and available on Thinqi	
ii) Source and roll out health and safety training for leaders and senior managers	KT March 2026	NEBOSH HSE *Certificate in Health and Safety Leadership Excellence* has been identified as suitable training. This training is available online. Decision around funding and further options to be explored.	
iii) Carry out a survey to explore current health and safety training provision across the Council, assess adequacy and opportunities for cost savings, highlight good practice, identify any gaps and make appropriate recommendations	KT December 2025	Survey completed. Good practice and some significant gaps identified. Report with recommendations to be considered by Corporate Health and Safety group January 2026	
iv) Having regard to iii) above develop a health and safety training strategy and plan	KT March 2026		

Ref	4	Risk	**Potential risk that:** The systems and processes in place to gain assurance around health and safety are not sufficiently robust across the Council. The HSE has produced Guidance (HSG65) *Managing for Health and Safety* which advocates a Plan. Do, Check, Act approach. Monitoring and reporting are important elements of health and safety management and, acknowledging that 'paperwork' on its own is not a good performance measure, arrangements should be in place to assess how well risks are being controlled in practice. In some circumstances health and safety inspections or audits are necessary to obtain the evidence necessary to provide this assurance. Failing to manage health and safety in accordance with HSG65 could mean that the Council is unable to demonstrate that it is doing enough to comply with the law, specifically the duty under Regulation 5 of the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 which states: *Every employer shall make and give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate, having regard to the nature of his activities and the size of his undertaking, for the effective planning, organisation, control,* ***monitoring*** *and review of the preventive and protective measures.*						
Risk Owner	Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Improving the Council's arrangements for monitoring its health and safety performance will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat
Reason why Identified							
There is a legal requirement (Reg. 5 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999) to put in place arrangements to monitor and review health and safety preventive and protective measures.							

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target Risk Level
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	4	4	High	16	2025/26	4	4	High	16	
2026/27	*	*	*	*	2026/27	*	*	*	*	
2027/28	*	*	*	*	2027/28	*	*	*	*	

**The risk levels pre and post mitigation are yet to be determined for future years as the mitigating actions planned for 2024/25 will provide evidence of the adequacy of current arrangements but not in themselves reduce the risk. Implementation of any recommendations will reduce the risk.*

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Undertake a health and safety assurance audit to identify current arrangements in place across the Council to monitor and report health and safety performance.	KT April 2025	High level review completed which identified some good practice but also some significant gaps.	
ii) Having regard to i) above, assess the adequacy of current arrangements and make recommendations for improvement as necessary, having regard to capacity and capability across the Council	KT December 2025	Work to develop recommendations for improvement ongoing. Capacity in Corporate H&S increased to provide central resource for assurance function. Preliminary discussion with internal audit about proposal for H&S assurance in schools. To be informed by internal audit of Compliance function in Property Services. Revised completion date December 2025.	

Ref	5	Risk	**Potential risk that:** Controls to protect the health, safety and welfare of lone workers are either not in place or not being effectively implemented across some services which compromises staff safety					
Risk Owner	Peter Davies		**Strategic objective**	Implementing effective controls to protect the health and safety of lone workers will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat

Reason why Identified

The risks associated with lone working and the need for improved controls has been raised by staff. The Council has a legal duty to ensure workers are safe.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					**Risk Level (Post-mitigation)**					**Target Risk Level**
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	3	4	High	12	2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	
2026/27	2	4	Medium	9	2026/27	1	4	Low	4	
2027/28	1	4	Low	4	2027/28	1	4	Low	4	Low (4)

Mitigating Actions			
Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Review and revise as appropriate the Council's lone working policy.	KT September 2025	Completed and will be considered by JAG September 2025	
ii) Following consultation and sign off, communicate the Council's lone worker policy to staff	KT October 2025	Awaiting sign off	
iii) Identify and roll out suitable lone worker training for staff and managers	KT October 2025	E learning under development. Face to face training currently being rolled out across Directorates.	

Ref	6	Risk	**Potential Risk that:** Workers are subject to violence and aggression at work which may result in injury, lost working days, anxiety and subsequent insurance claim and the Council's arrangements for managing these risks are found to be inadequate.

Risk Owner	Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Improving the Council's arrangements for managing the risk of violence and aggression to workers will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat

Reason why Identified

The Council has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to assess the risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective: planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. The risks covered should include the need to protect employees from exposure to reasonably foreseeable violence. There is evidence of an increase in violence and aggression to workers and it is important that the Council has robust arrangements in place for managing the risks and recording incidents. Trade Unions have requested consideration of a *Potentially Violent Persons Register* to be available to the Council's front- line workers.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					**Risk Level (Post-mitigation)**					**Target Risk Level**
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	2	4	Medium	8	

2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	2025/26	*	*	Medium	*	
2026/27	*	*		*	2026/27	*	*		*	

**Further reducing the risk in 2026/27 will be dependent on the development and maintenance of a Potentially Violent Persons Register for the Authority which can be accessed by front line officers.*

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Review and revise as appropriate the Council's Violence at Work Policy	KT March 2025	New policy drafted and currently subject to consultation	
ii) Following consultation and sign off, communicate the revised Violence at Work policy to staff	KT December 2025 onwards	See above. New policy to be considered by JAG December 2025	
iii) Roll out training in managing violence and aggression at work to managers and staff	KT March 2025	Good progress being made with training delivered across Social Care, Monlife, Housing. Training ongoing.	
iv) Develop proposals for a *Employee Protection Register* which can be accessed by front line workers for consideration by Corporate Health and Safety Group	KT March 2026	Initial proposals discussed by Corporate Health and Safety group. Work ongoing.	

Ref	7	Risk	**Potential risk that:** Work-related sickness absence will increase. Nationally, the rate of self-reported, work-related ill health was higher in 2022/23 than the 2018/20 pre-COVID level, driven by a higher rate of self- reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety which had shown signs of increasing in the recent years prior to the coronavirus pandemic having been broadly flat since 1998/99. Across the Authority, psychological ill health absence (includes stress, depression, anxiety, low mood) accounted for 9,014.74 lost working days in 2023/24 of which 4,040.15 were work related. This is an increase on 8,450 reported in 2022/23. Psychological illness represented 26.7% of the Authority's sickness absence (12% was work related), and there has been an overall upward trend over the last seven years.						
Risk Owner	Peter Davies		**Strategic objective**	Improving the Council's arrangements for reporting and managing work-related sickness absence will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a safe place to live	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat
Reason why Identified								
Work-related sickness absence is a financial burden on the Authority. Reducing work-related ill- health can help to reduce the burden on healthcare services, as well as the social and economic costs of absenteeism and long-term sickness. Robust systems need to be in place to record and manage work- related ill - health and a key challenge for the Authority is the need to address the underlying causes. This may involve changes to working practices and/or providing more support and training for employees, to help them manage the physical and psychological demands of their work. The national regulator for workplace health and safety, the HSE has identified reducing work-related ill health as its top priority for the next decade. This objective reflects a growing recognition of the significant impact that work-related ill health can have on individuals, families, and society as a whole.								

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target Risk Level
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	2	4	Medium	8	
2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	2025/26	*	*	Medium	*	
2026/27	*	*		*	2026/27	*	*		*	

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Establish a task and finish group to review the adequacy of the systems in place for recording and reporting **work-related** sickness absence (both psychological and physical ill- health) and implement improvements as necessary.	PG December 2025	Functionality of system is under review to ensure we are able to provide accurate reports on work related sickness absence going forward.	
ii) Using data from i) provide quarterly **work-related** sickness absence reports to Directorate Health & Safety working groups and the Corporate Health & Safety group to identify any trends and hotspots	PG December 2025	See above	

and inform actions for improvement.			
iii) Implementing actions in Risk 2 relating to the reporting and investigation of accidents and incidents, Risk 3 Training, Risk 4 Assurance, Risk 5 Lone workers, and Risk 6 on Violence at Work should have a positive impact on work -related sickness absence.	March 2026	See above	
iv) Promote the Council's Wellbeing and Health offering to employees	LKD March 2026	Information available on The Hub. Further work will be carried out to increase awareness	
v) Managers to do more timely referrals to Occupational Health	PG March 2026	This has been identified as a priority for HR. Absence management policy currently under review	

Ref	8	Risk	**Potential risk that:** Arrangements for managing health and safety risks associated with Council properties, may not be sufficiently robust . **Health and safety considerations include fire, asbestos, water hygiene and safety, radon, electrical safety, gas safety, emergency lighting, extraction systems, fuel oil storage, glazing, lifts and hoists, swimming pools, spas, hydrotherapy pools, playground equipment, trees, compulsory display of notices, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, pedestrian/vehicle segregation, welfare facilities, mobile buildings, slips and trips,*					
Risk Owner	Peter Davies	**Strategic objective**	Managing health and safety risks associated with Council properties will contribute to ensuring Monmouthshire is a **safe place to live**	**Risk category and appetite level**	**Risk Categories** • Legal and regulatory • People • Reputational • Governance **Appetite level** • Health & Safety (1) • Reputational (2) • People (1) • Legal & Regulatory (1)	**Terminate/treat/ transfer/tolerate**	Treat

Reason why Identified

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a general duty on employers to "ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees" and section 3 of the Act, General Duty to Others requires employers to conduct their undertaking in a way that does not pose risk to the health and safety of non-employees

Councils have a duty to ensure that properties under their control comply with appropriate statutory standards. This task is becoming increasingly difficult in the context of various potentially competing drivers including:-

- The increasing burden of legislative duties on building occupiers and the need to demonstrate competency in identifying and controlling risks
- Delegation of relevant budgets and responsibilities to individual establishments, notably schools but with ultimate accountability still resting with the corporate body of the Council
- The consequences of increased delegation which has put pressure on resources retained centrally to develop and monitor compliance with relevant standards
- Governance arrangements in establishments are becoming increasingly more complex through the move to Shared Services and Partnering arrangements that do not fit easily with traditional landlord and tenant definitions

The Council is faced with the situation where day to day responsibility and resources are often delegated to premises/service level but with the ultimate accountability remaining at corporate level within the Council. Compliance officers in property services undertake compliance visits to properties and consider some health and safety risks identified. However, the outcome of these visits is not reported in such a way that trends can be identified or conclusions made around levels of compliance, and performance in rectifying non compliances is not reported. Even if all relevant policies and procedures were in place the Council is faced with the situation of simply not knowing the level of compliance across the portfolio for which it has responsibility. The discovery of non-compliance may only be as a result of an incident on a particular site. In addition to the direct consequences of any incident, the Council could be faced with damage to its reputation, financial loss, individual officers could be faced with legal proceedings and in the worst case, lives of building users could be lost.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					**Risk Level (Post-mitigation)**					**Target Risk Level**
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Risk Level 4
2024/25	3	4	High	12	2024/25	2	4	Medium	8	
2025/26	2	4	Medium	8	2025/26	1	4	Low	4	
2026/27	1	4	Low	4	2026/27	1	4	Low	4	

Mitigating Actions

Mitigating Action	Responsibility Holder & Timescale	Mitigation action progress	RAG
i) Develop and deliver training for staff responsible for properties 'responsible persons' on property related health and safety matters	KT March 2026	On track. Generic *Headteachers as Property Managers* training completed. Programme of asbestos training completed including *Asbestos Awareness*, *Duty to Manage Asbestos. Health and Safety Handbook for Property Managers* developed to be launched October 2025.	
ii) Internal audit review of compliance function in Property Services scheduled 2025/26	JF September 2025	Audit completed and draft report issued. Awaiting management feedback.	

iv) Implement recommendations arising from ii) above	NK March 2026	Awaiting finalisation of audit report	

Appendix 2

RIDDOR REPORTS 2024 /2025

RIDDOR REFERENCE	RIDDOR DATE	INCIDENT DATE	DIRECTORATE	TYPE OF INCIDENT	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT	REMEDIAL ACTION
B9BDAA8D17	29/04/2024	20/04/2024	Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	More than 7 day absence.	Injured party accidentally dropped pyrex bowl, instinctively caught it but it had struck worktop and smashed. Deep lacerations to 3 fingers	None
9D16D9BF4D	30/04/2024	12/04/2024	Communities & Place	More than 7 day injury,	Slip, trip, fall on same level to waste collection operative due to pot hole in road. Twisted ankle	Pot hole reported to Highways department for repair. PPE in place - non - slip boots. Supervisors advised waste staff not to rush & take extra care.
A6C410A127	30/04/2024	19/04/2024	Communities & Place	More than 7 day injury,	Lifting handling sustained back injury loading waste bags onto vehicle	All grounds staff trained in manual handling. “Toolbox” given via supervisors not to lift / push / pull items which are too heavy and seek assistance.
F516992123	30/04/2024	16/04/2024	Communities & Place	More than 7-day injury,	Slip, trip, fall on same level. Employee tripped over stone on yard floor performing banksman duties Sustained sprained ankle	Depot yard area swept to remove any large debris. PPE in place - non - slip boots in place. Supervisor

						advised all depot staff not to rush & take extra care.
E7D393FF12	20/06/2024	09/06/2024	Communities & Place	More than 7 day injury,	Worker sustained laceration to shin while manoeuvring over some vehicle safety fence	Highways team advised to take extra care and not rush.
16C123FD15	04/07/2024	01/07/2024	Monlife	Child taken directly to hospital for treatment	Finger entrapment in fire door causing laceration. No damage to bones or tendons confirmed. Wound dressed.	Visiting school staff to be briefed on need to maintain supervision and engage pupils with some of the resources available on site and planned activities rather than provide them with free time in the evenings. Exploring provision of fire door retainers and finger guards.
15E8911417	08/07/2024	04/07/2024	People & Governance	Fracture to foot	Employee tripped when foot went into hole in grass while taking down sign outside polling station	Church warden notified of incident so they can take remedial action to prevent a recurrence i.e. fill holes.
C114711A17	11/07/2024	02/07/2024	Communities and Place	More than 7 day injury.	Employee hit by vehicle driven by member of the public during waste collection	Full PPE worn by all operational staff which includes High visibility jackets & trousers, bump caps and gloves. No fault of staff. Member of public who was driving to blame.
C3DDB41231	19/08/2024	06/08/2024	Communities and Place	More than 7 day injury.	Employee fell through rusty manhole cover while strimming	Risk assessment for task updated to include: All areas to be walked & visually

					grass sustaining strained ligament to knee	checked for potential hazards, areas prior to cutting & strimming. Manhole wasn't checked for safety by NHS property services. No fault of MCC staff member.
105B111CE7	29/08/2024	22/08/2025	Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	Fractured wrist	Employee slipped on stairs	Manager reinforced need for flat, enclosed, sensible footwear by staff also to use handrail provided and . walk slowly and steadily, do not rush.
11A1558614	14/10/2024	12/10/2023	Monlife	Member of Public taken directly to hospital for treatment	Asphyxiation leisure centre pool	Internal investigation by Corporate H&S Manager. Report with recommendations to prevent recurrence issued to management. Recommendations accepted and being implemented.
17211F9586	25/10/2024	17/10/2024	Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	Care home resident taken directly to hospital for treatment	Laceration to head sustained during fall	Internal investigation by manager identified shortfall in standard of care by agency worker during night shift. Agency notified of incident and standards expected reinforced. Duty to Report submitted to safeguarding.

F817DD4D08	29/01/2025	22/01/2025	Communities and Place	More than 7 day injury	Fall from height down some stairs, sprain right hamstring and right gluteal	Staff member advised to concentrate on the task when walking downstairs
11D12E15B1	05/02/2025	04/02/2025	Children and Young People	Teaching assistant fracture to arm	Tripped over computer cable	Computer cable unplugged by and staff in SRB reminded of important of cable safety. Wider communication to staff also issued by Headteacher.
12B136DA12	26/02/2025	16/02/2025	Communities and Place	More than 7 day injury	Employee tripped off edge of pavement spraining ankle and wrist	Staff member advised to take extra care and not to rush.
C212F13E12	25/03/2025	17/03/2025	Children and Young People	More than 7 day injury	School caretaker went to hospital, torn ligament sustained lifting black bag into refuse bin	Headteacher reminded staff not to overload black bags. Training need identified for caretaker. Caretaker manual handling training to be delivered 2025

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	**Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal**
Kate Thompson **Phone no:** 07792 558027 **E-mail:** Katethompson@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25 To present the Council's first Annual Health and Safety Report to the Governance and Audit Committee and afford members the opportunity to i) provide feedback on health and safety performance and progress in 2024/25 and ii) endorse priorities for 2025/26.
Name of Service area	**Date**
Corporate Health and Safety	30 October 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.

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 *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.*	Effective health and safety management promotes safe working environments for all age groups and supports tailored risk management for young workers.	None	

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability *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.*	Effective health and safety management ensures reasonable adjustments and accessible work environments. Emphasises risk assessments for those with additional needs.	None	
Gender reassignment *Consider the provision of inclusive services for transgender people and groups. Also consider what issues there are for employment and training.*	Effective health and safety management supports fair treatment and inclusive workplace practices.	None	
Marriage or civil partnership *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.*	Health and safety policies apply equally to all staff.	None	

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Pregnancy or maternity *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.*	Ensures risk assessments and appropriate adjustments are in place to protect new and expectant mothers.	None	
Race *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.*	Health and safety information and training are provided inclusively and resources can be sourced in a range of languages	None	
Religion or Belief *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.*	A flexible approach to health and safety management ensures inclusive participation.	None	

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
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.*	Effective health and safety management ensures equal protection for male and female employees in all work environments.	None	
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.*	Effective health and safety management promotes an inclusive culture with no discrimination in health and safety processes.	None	

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

Socio-economic Duty	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?
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?	Effective health and safety management supports fair treatment and safe conditions for all employees including those on lower incomes, or in higher risk front line roles. This contributes positively to reducing inequality of outcomes associated with socio economic disadvantage.	None	

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: *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 that the English language. Include any data and evidence e.g. WESP, Census Data, Cymraeg 2050, Welsh Language Strategy.*	N/A		
Operational: **Recruitment & Training of workforce** *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.*	N/A		
Service Delivery: **Use of Welsh language in service delivery** *When advertising our services you must promote the fact that people can deal with the council in Welsh by*	N/A		

phone, email, twitter, Facebook, letters, forms, website transactions etc.			

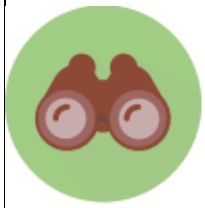
4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

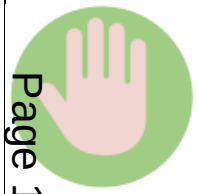
Well Being Goals	**Describe the positive impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.**	**Describe the negative impacts the proposal has on the wellbeing goal.**	**What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?**
A prosperous Wales *An 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.*	A safer healthier workforce supports higher productivity and reduced sickness absence. Promotes effective service delivery and sustainable employment.	None	
A resilient Wales *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).*	Encourages a culture of prevention and resilience within the workforce, reducing environmental and operational risks. Organisations that manage risks well are better prepared for emergencies or unexpected hazards.	None	
A healthier Wales *People's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.*	Directly contributes by reducing workplace injury and illness, promoting physical and mental health and supporting staff wellbeing initiatives.	None	

Well Being Goals	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?
A Wales of cohesive communities *Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected*	Promotes safe environments in schools, community spaces and public settings enhancing trust in local services and confidence in local services.	None	
A globally responsible Wales *Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing*	Embeds ethical and responsible practices through safe, sustainable and well governed operations.	None	
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language *Promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and participation in the arts, and sports and recreation*	Although health and safety may seem mainly about compliance and accident prevention, it plays a deep supporting role in nurturing culture and language by: **Creating safe environments for cultural participation.** • Festivals, community events, museums, theatres and heritage sites depend on robust health and safety management tom operate safely. • When people feel safe at cultural gatherings they are more likely to participate and engage. • Effective health and safety management ensures these events run smoothly, inclusively and without unnecessary risk, helping cultural expression thrive. **Protecting the workforce in cultural and creative sectors**	None	

Well Being Goals	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?
	• Many people work in arts, tourism and heritage, sectors that are vital to Wales's cultural identity. • Good health and safety practices protect these workers ensuring sustainable careers and the continuation of Welsh cultural industries.		
A more equal Wales *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)*	Ensures all employees and service users regardless of protected characteristics have equitable access to safe workplaces and services.		

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

Sustainable Development Principles	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future *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)*	Health and safety management supports the long term health and wellbeing of staff, service users and communities by reducing preventable accidents, ill health and associated costs. Encourages sustained improvements in safety culture.	
Working together with other partners to deliver objectives	Annual report developed collaboratively with Directorates, HR, Insurance and our occupational health provider. Promotes shared responsibility for health and safety across all service areas.	

Sustainable Development Principles	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?
Involving those with an interest and seeking their views *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?*	Effective health and safety management engages employees, managers and service users through training, consultation and feedback mechanisms to shape safer working practices and support a positive safety culture.	
 Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	Effective health and safety management focuses on proactive management of risks through improved monitoring training and early intervention. Helps prevent harm, sickness absence and operational disruption.	
Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies *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*	Effective health and safety management aligns health, safety and wellbeing objectives with the Council's Corporate Plan, Workforce strategy and Wellbeing objectives. Contributing to an effective and resilient organization.	

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?**
Safeguarding *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.*	Effective health and safety management: is a cornerstone of safeguarding in that it:. • Creates safe environments • Promotes a culture of care and accountability • Supports staff training and awareness • Ensures safe recruitment and supervision • Promotes wellbeing and inclusion • Promotes effective record keeping and risk assessment	None	

Corporate Parenting, Care Leavers and Care Experienced People *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.*	Effective health and safety management ensures environments, such as residential homes, schools, workplaces or community spaces are physically and psychologically safe.		

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

This 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.

This is only the Council's second Annual Health and Safety Report and the first to be presented to elected members. It provides a baseline position against which future performance can be compared.

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

Effective management of health and safety has positive impacts across all well-being goals and protected groups. It strengthens the Council's ability to safeguard staff and communities, prevent harm and promote equality, well-being and long- term sustainability.

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

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

10. **VERSION CONTROL: The 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 *e.g. budget mandate, DMT, SLT, Scrutiny, Cabinet etc*	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Governance and Audit Committee	October 2025	

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monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SUBJECT:	**COMPLAINTS PROCESS**
MEETING:	**Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee**
DATE:	**18 NOVEMBER 2025**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	

1. PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of Social Services complaints, compliments and comments received during 2024-25, which enables the committee to form a view on the effectiveness of the authority's complaints processes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the committee uses the report to seek assurance about the process and performance for dealing with complaints, comments and compliments and makes recommendations where it identifies any shortcomings.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Accountability

3.1 Overall accountability for ensuring that the complaints procedure is followed falls to the Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships and the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement. The Customer Relations Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the work including recording, allocating, monitoring, advising on and reporting on complaints.

Policy and Procedure: Social Services

3.2 Social Services complaints are dealt with under the Social Services complaints procedure. It is a statutory requirement for the authority to operate a complaints procedure that follows the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and The Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

The guidance on handling complaints and representations by local authority social services state that we must publish an annual report on the handling and statistical information relating to the complaints and representations we've dealt with.

The complaints procedure has two stages:

3.3 Stage 1 Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage is to resolve the complaint locally wherever possible by means of discussion and problem solving.

This approach should allow for the quick and successful resolution of most complaints, to the satisfaction of the complainant. The emphasis is on achieving service user satisfaction rather than avoiding a formal investigation.

Stage 2 Formal Investigation – Where initial discussions have not achieved a resolution, complainants have the right to make a formal complaint. Investigations are undertaken and are subject to statutory time limits for completion of the investigation (25 working days). The complainant receives a full response detailing findings, conclusions and recommendations.

- If the complaint or representation is not resolved
- If the complaint or representation is not resolved at the Formal Investigation stage, the complainant has the right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

3.4 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) will determine on a case-by-case basis whether to consider a complaint, but generally the Ombudsman is able to consider complaints made to her within one year of the matters complained about (or within one year of the complainant becoming aware of them).

Number of Complaints

3.5 50 complaints were made in total about Social Services. 22 related to Adult Services and 28 related to Children's Services.

3.6 Appendix one provides more detail of the number and types of the complaints received from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 along with figures for previous years.

Timeliness

3.7 65% of all Stage 1 complaints were dealt with in the prescribed 17 working days timescale. All the Stage 2 complaints exceeded the 25 working days timescale. Independent investigators are taking longer to investigate the complaints and this can be due to the sheer complexity of the case, their own workloads, availability of complainant / staff for interviews and cross-referencing file records of cases.

Comments

3.8 Comments are captured and logged in the same way as complaints. These issues are important as they help the authority understand where problems may be arising that customers do not wish to formally complain about, but want appropriate action taken to prevent issues arising in future.

92 comments were received during this reporting period. Adult Services received 75 comments, a higher number than Children's Services because a Community Care questionnaire is sent out monthly to service users and comments received from the questionnaire are followed up with the appropriate service areas.

Compliments

3.9 We value and take pride in the compliments received as it highlights all the good work that staff do.

76 compliments were received; 63 for Adult Services and 13 for Children's Services.

Effectiveness of our procedure

3.10 Appendix 1 provides an overview for the year, broken down by service areas and complaint types. The report highlights key trends and themes drawn from our database.

3.11 Managers reflect on lessons learned from complaints investigations and take the appropriate action to deliver improvements. When formal investigations have taken place, we produce action plans to improve practice where required and always apologise when things have gone wrong. Action plans are monitored by the relevant Head of Service to ensure that all actions are completed.

3.12 Social Services have a Quality Assurance group that reviews the outcomes of complaints and any learning from them is disseminated through the department's management teams.

3.13 The PSOW's Complaints Standards Authority has provided free online training and extended this into the coming year on investigation skills. This training helps staff and services to respond more consistently to complaints and in line with best practice recognised by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

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

There are no specific implications that have been identified in respect of this proposal.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

There are no alternative options associated with the recommendations in this report.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The effectiveness of a complaints process is not always easy to assess. A low number of complaints may mean that an organisation has made it too difficult to complain or that customers see little point in doing so. A very high number of complaints could be a sign of real problems. For this reason, it is important to look at trends over time rather than any one year in isolation.

6.2 It is important to acknowledge that an increase or decrease in the number of complaints does not necessarily reflect a change in the standard of service provided. An increase may indicate the positive view that is taken towards complaints, and that people are more well informed about how to make a complaint.

6.3 Of the 5 complaints investigated at the formal stage in Adult Services, 3 complainants contacted the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), whose decision was not to investigate. Of the 10 Children's Social Services formal complaints received, 2 contacted the PSOW, whose decision was not to investigate. This shows the Ombudsman was satisfied that thorough investigations and recommendations had been made.

7 REASONS:

To ensure that the committee is able to fulfil its role to oversee the effectiveness of the authority's process for dealing with complaints, comments and compliments.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

For Social Services complaint investigations, the legislation requires that external independent investigating officers must be appointed for formal investigations. There is an existing budget for this work and we will endeavour to keep within the budget expenditure. However, we cannot forecast how many complaints will be made.

9 CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team

10 AUTHOR:

Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager

11 CONTACT DETAILS:

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monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT

REPRESENTATION AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025

August 2025

1 Introduction

This report presents information relating to comments, compliments and complaints received during 2024-2025 for social services.

Everyone who makes a complaint about social services has a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively.

Despite our best intentions, things can go wrong. We recognise this and the representation and complaints procedure provides the opportunity for people to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied so that the issue can be sorted to their satisfaction wherever possible; make compliments and suggest improvements.

2 Making a complaint

General advice about the procedure can be found in our complaints leaflet “How to be heard”. Alternatively, people can contact the Customer Relations team for help and advice about how to make a complaint.

Translations of the representation and complaints procedure can be provided on request and we can also arrange interpretation services where required.

We can arrange for advocacy services to be provided for complainants in some cases.

Our aim is to secure a better service for people and we are:

- Accessible and supportive to those with particular needs
- Prompt and responsive with resolution at the earliest possible time
- Operate without prejudice or discrimination

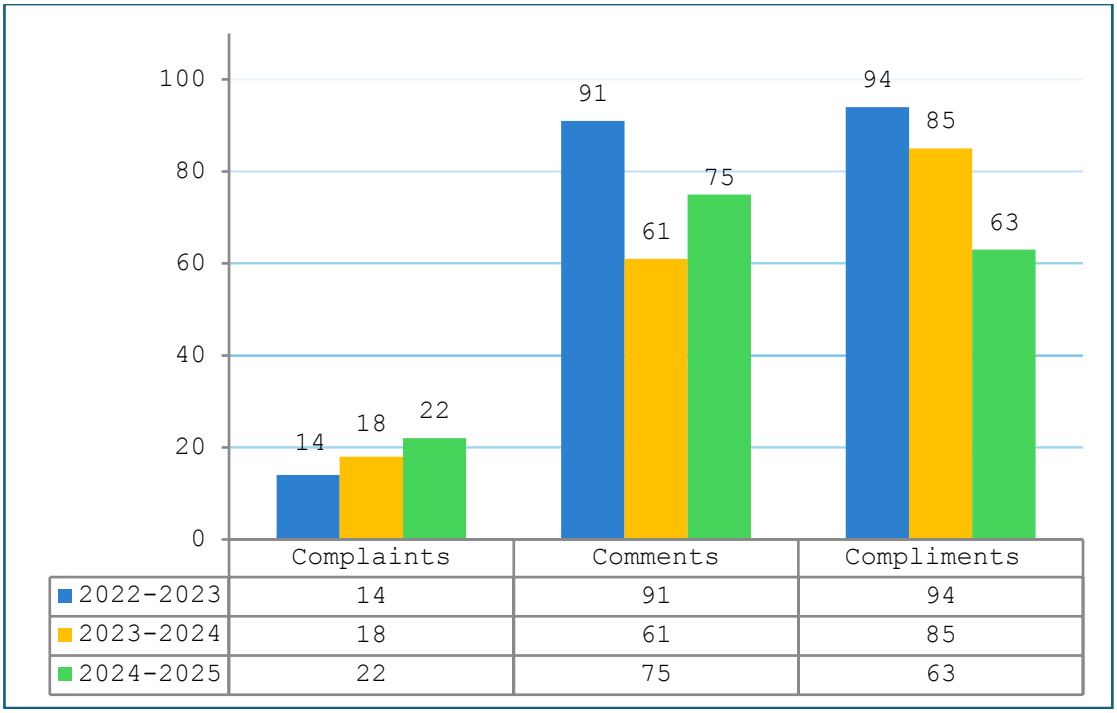
Llais Advocacy service assists people who wish to raise a complaint about a NHS or social care service, they help support individuals to make a complaint about a service, care or treatment provided by NHS or the local authority.

3 How many complaints / comments / compliments were made

The following chart shows the number of complaints, comments and compliments received for each of the three years to March 2025 concerning **Adult Services.**

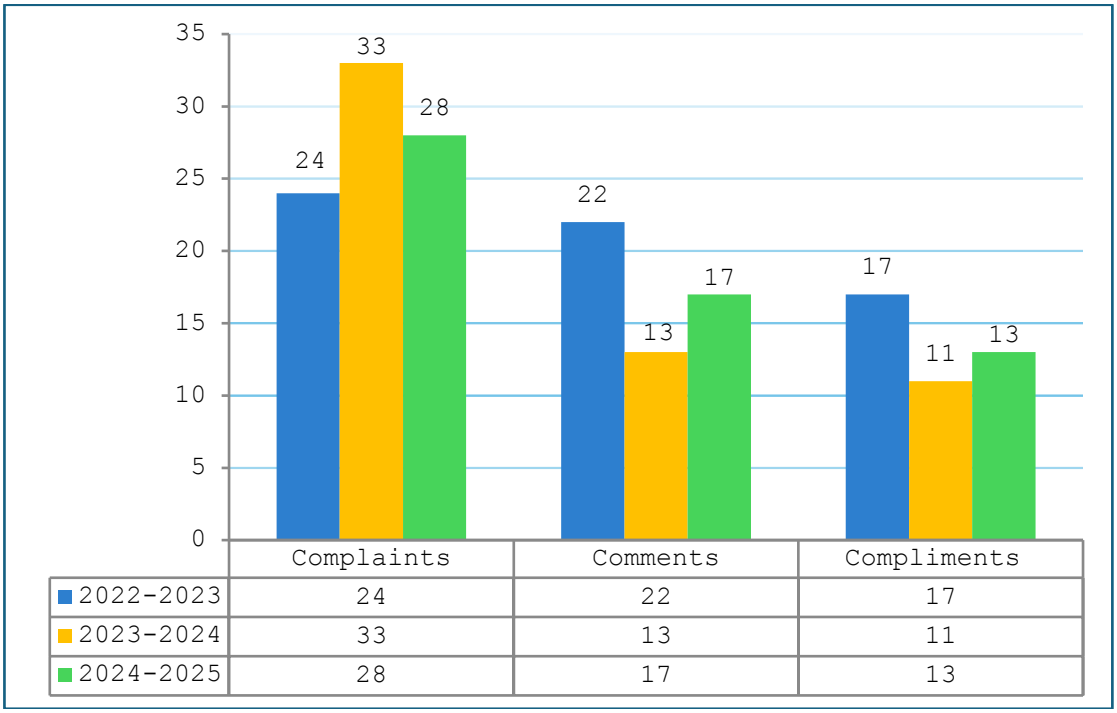
22 Complaints were received in the year ending 31 March 2025.

This is a 57% higher than the figure in 2022-23 when 14 complaints were made.



The chart below covers the last three years up to March 2025 concerning **Children's Services.**

28 Complaints were received in the year ending 31 March 2025. This is 16% higher than 2022-2023 when 24 complaints were made.



4 Adult Services Complaints

22 complaints have been received about Adult's Services for this set period. Llais Advocacy service assisted 3 people to raise their complaints about Adult Services.

Llais Advocacy is an independent body and it's a free Advocacy service and can provide information, advice and support to members of the public who may wish to raise a concern.

19 complaints were registered at Stage 1.

1 Stage 1 complaint from 2023-2024 was also started in this period.

16 complaints were either resolved or no further contact made at Stage 1, the local resolution stage.

Below are examples of complaints about services:

- Alleged failure of processes
- Decision to withdraw support
- Staff conduct
- Reduction in services
- Communication issues
- Hospital discharge issues
- Concerns over care and support package
- Concerns regarding process for Continuing NHS Health Care
- Issues concerning deprivation of assets
- Decision making regarding direct payments
- Issues with allocation of social worker
- Issues with transfer of care
- Financial issues
- Care home placement and funding

A breakdown of Adult Services complaints by each section is shown in the table below.

Distribution YTD	**Informal**					**Formal**				
	YTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	**YTD**	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Care at Home Central	**1**	1								
Community Learning Disability Team	**2**	1		1						
Domiciliary Care External	**1**			1						
Finance	**3**		1		2					
Integrated Services Central (Monmouth, Usk, Raglan)	**3**	1		1	1	**2**	1			1
Integrated Services North (Abergavenny)	**4**	1	1	2						
Integrated Services South (Chepstow and Caldicot)	**2**	1	1							
Mental Health Service	**3**	1		2		**3**	2	1		
Safeguarding	**1**				1					
Total	**20**	**6**	**3**	**7**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**1**		**1**

5 Children Services Complaints

28 complaints have been received about Children's Services for this set period. Llais Advocacy service assisted 3 people to raise a complaint about Children's Services.

23 stage 1 complaints were started.

17 complaints were either resolved or no further contact made at Stage 1, the local resolution stage.

Some examples of the most common aspects of services complained about were:

- Staff conduct
- Communication issues
- Concerns regarding action taken
- Standard of service/care received
- Issues concerning Court direction being followed
- Decision making
- Quality of service received
- Lack of support
- Issues regarding safeguarding process
- Issues regarding financial payment plan

A breakdown of Children's Social Services complaints by each section is shown in the table below.

Distribution YTD	**Informal**					**Formal**				
	YTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	**YTD**	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Building Stronger Families	**1**				1	**1**				1
Children with Disabilities	**1**				1					
Early Help and Assessment Team	**9**	3	1	3	2	**4**		1	2	1
Family Support and Protection Team – North	**3**		1		2	**3**	2			1
Family Support and Protection Team – South	**4**		1	2	1	**1**			1	
Long Term Support Team	**4**	1	1		2	**1**		1		
Safeguarding	**1**		1							
Total	**23**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**9**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**3**

6 Stage 2 Complaints relating to Adult Services

5 complaints were dealt with at the formal investigation stage.

- 2 complaints escalated from stage 1 and there were 3 complaints that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

One complaint concerned the lack of communication / failure to take action / inaccurate information. Two elements of the complaint were upheld, and one element was not upheld.

One complaint concerned the reduction of direct payments / issues concerning the assessment. Both elements of the complaint were upheld.

One complaint concerned issues regarding a financial assessment and deprivation of assets. Both elements of the complaint were not upheld.

One complaint concerned the disagreement with the decision made regarding their relatives financial assessment and their financial assets. One element of the complaint was upheld; four elements of the complaint were not upheld, and one element of the complaint was partially upheld.

One complaint was in regard to no annual review of need being undertaken and the inadequate support of their care and treatment plan. Both elements of the complaint were not upheld.

7 Stage 2 Complaints relating to Children's Services

10 complaints were dealt with at the formal investigation stage.

- 6 complaints escalated from stage 1 and there were 4 complaints that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

One complainant felt staff involved in their lives lacked compassion, understanding and errors were made throughout the process. There were also issues regarding miscommunication, misrepresentation and inaccuracies in documents.

There were 25 elements to this complaint, 19 of them were not upheld; 4 were partially upheld and 2 were upheld.

Two complaints were withdrawn.

One complainant said that the assessment was inaccurate and incomplete and there were issues concerning not following procedures.

Six complaints were upheld; 1 was not upheld and 1 deemed inconclusive.

One complaint concerned not being informed when they were subject to a safeguarding referral; not spoken with during the investigation of the allegation; no information provided on timeframes; a lack of communication and staff conduct.

There were numerous elements to the complaint, 8 were upheld, 5 not upheld and 2 partially upheld.

One complaint concerned misinformation, alleged statements made at conference were based on assumptions and not on evidence; issues with contact arrangements; poor communication with the department.

All the elements of the complaint were not upheld.

One complaint concerned the poor handling of a Section 47 investigation; failure to inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation; not offered with any care or support; the report submitted to Court was allegedly flawed.

Three elements of the complaint were upheld; 8 elements were partially upheld; 4 were deemed inconclusive and 6 elements were not upheld.

One complaint concerned not providing evidence that statutory duties were followed; poor communication; incorrect reports; repeated delays in support provision.

Four elements of the complaint were not upheld. One element was partially upheld.

One complaint concerned staff conduct; lack of continuity of support, failure to conduct statutory visits; receiving correspondence late; issues with contact sessions; lack of communication.

There were 6 elements of the complaint upheld; 3 were partially upheld; 8 were not upheld.

One complaint concerned issues with the social worker's visits to their child; lack of responses; issues regarding Child Looked After reviews and staff conduct.

Two elements of the complaint were upheld and 8 were not upheld.

8 Complaints made by children and young people

Most complaints concerning Children's Services are from parents/carers. For this reporting period, we did not receive any complaints directly from young people. However, we received two from NYAS Advocacy service who advocated on behalf of two young people

9 Comments relating to Adult Services

75 comments were received in 2024-25, 16 (21%) less than in 2022-23.

- These include comments received from the Community Care questionnaire that is sent to users of social care and comments made to our Commissioning team.

- The highest numbers of comments received related to Independent Domiciliary care providers.

Below are a selection of comments made:

- Inconsistency of domiciliary carers
- Timings of carers visits not favourable / not communicated with service user
- Not happy with change of care provider
- Days for showering changed
- Contact is impersonal, no named contact
- Would welcome more social opportunities
- Long waiting time for care provider

- Reduction of care package
- Meals on wheels changed delivery time without notice
- Better contact details for new Severn View care home

The breakdown of comments received for each Adult Services team is below:

Distribution YTD	Comments				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Adults' Services	**15**	**13**	**19**	**14**	**61**
Care at Home Central	2		1		3
Care at Home North				3	3
Care at Home South				2	2
Community Learning Disabilities Team		2	1	1	4
Community Meals			1		1
Domiciliary Care External	3	7	5	3	18
Integrated Services Central (Monmouth, Usk, Raglan)	2	1	1	1	5
Integrated Services North (Abergavenny)	4	2	3		9
Integrated Services South (Chepstow and Caldicot)	3		3	1	7
Mental Health Service	1	1	3	2	7
Safeguarding			1		1
Severn View Residential Services				1	1
Other	**6**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**14**
General	2	1	2		5
External Provider	4	1	2	1	8
No particular section		1			1
Total	**21**	**6**	**23**	**15**	**75**

10 Comments relating to Children Services

17 comments were received about Children's Services in 2024-2025, 5 less than in 2022-2023 but 4 more than in 2023-2024.

Some examples of Comments made:

- Concerns regarding allegations made about them
- Concerns regarding alleged defamation of character
- Alleged breach of confidentiality
- Issues raised regarding safeguarding concerns
- Issues raised regarding support
- Concerns raised about statements made by social worker
- Concerns regarding Rights of parent
- Issues with contact arrangements
- Issues regarding staff late for meetings with complainants

All the comments received are considered carefully and where appropriate, replies given and any necessary action taken.

The breakdown of comments received for Children's Services team are below:

Distribution YTD	Comments				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Children's Services					
Children with Disabilities				1	1
Early Help and Assessment Team	3	1	1	3	8
Family Support and Protection Team – North		1		1	2
Family Support and Protection Team – South	1			3	4
Long Term Support Team		1			1
Safeguarding	1				1
Total	**5**	**3**	**1**	**8**	**17**

11 Compliments for Adult Services

63 compliments were received regarding Adult services for 2024-25, 31 (48%) less than in 2022-2023.

A range of compliments about the whole of the service was received recognising the care and compassion of Social Services teams with so many individual staff named for their kindness, help and professionalism. Their messages reflect their appreciation for support and highlight the valuable role staff play in building trust and improving lives. All staff were informed of the compliments received about them and their efforts commended.

People said things like:

- *"Mardy Park day centre who have been excellent and a tremendous help for 4 hours a week"*
- *"The wonderful carers from Mon Home Care, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks not only for the care you have taken with my mother, but all the times you looked after my Dad before he passed. You are such kind and loving people and to do what you do, under a lot of stress and for little reward, makes you all heroes in our eyes."*
- *"Moving to Lavendar Gardens has been the best thing for me"*
- *"Your meals on wheels service is excellent'*
- *'I am very happy with the flexibility that direct payments give and that I chose my own PA to completely match my needs each week'*
- *'Thank you for the support and care, it is invaluable and keeps me independent '*
- *"The whole service at Monnow Vale was good, quick and efficient. Monnow Vale did very well"*
- *"The carers I had were very kind and caring, and made me feel special'*

- *"Thank you for all your effort and the care team to give *** the happiness in the later year of his life with excellent care and consideration. He was sometimes difficult and trying at times but I know he did really appreciate all your help."*
- *"Thank you to Staff at Severn View Park Care Home for the absolutely first-class service that they provide. The new home is fantastic; a very modern, state-of-the-art facility and my mother was lucky enough to be placed there. Of course, the wonderful new home and facilities are nothing without the people you employ. It is the staff that make the service. All staff at the home are such friendly, courteous, kind, and efficient individuals, who genuinely care about all the residents they look after. Nothing is too much trouble for them and they go about their daily duties with great professionalism and enthusiasm."*
- *"To Monmouth care team, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for taking the time and effort to care for my mother. The support you provided to enable her to continue to live at home as independently as possible over the past few years was greatly appreciated and without you it would not have been possible."*
- *"The reablement team were kind, respectful and caring at all times. They took great care of Mum."*
- *"The reablement and therapy support - how fabulous the wrap around was from hospital to home and therapy to reablement and a smooth transition of support."*
- *"The direct payments are very efficient and provides essential support so that. living at home independently in familiar surroundings provides immense security and peace of mind."*

The breakdown of compliments for Adult Services teams are below.

Distribution YTD	**Compliments**				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Adults' Services	**18**	**11**	**13**	**17**	**59**
Care at Home Central		2	2	1	5
Care at Home North	3			2	5
Care at Home South	3	3	4	3	13
Community Meals	1		1		2
Direct Payments	1	1	1		3
Domiciliary Care External	2	2	3	5	12
Integrated Services Central (Monmouth, Usk, Raglan)				3	3
Integrated Services North (Abergavenny)	1			1	2
Integrated Services South (Chepstow and Caldicot)	3	2	1	2	8
Mardy Park Day Services	1				1
Mental Health Service	1				1
Monmouth Resource Centre	1				1
Severn View Residential Services	1	1	1		3
Other	**2**		**1**	**1**	**4**
External Provider	2		1	1	4
Total	**20**	**11**	**14**	**18**	**63**

12 Compliments for Children's Services

13 compliments were received that related to Children's Services in 2024-2025, 4 less than in 2022-2023.

Compliments about staff in Children's services were received with individual staff named for their support, help and professionalism. All staff were informed of the compliments received about them.

Some examples of compliments received:

- *"I have been impressed with the social worker's approach to this case and mother has found her approach particularly kind. This has, no doubt, assisted mother to take ownership of her difficulties and make child-focussed decisions, feeling supported whilst doing so".*
- *"You've gone absolutely above and beyond what's expected of your role and helped out with anything and everything asked of you and been so approachable and easy to work with it's brilliant! What you've done has been amazing! Since your involvement *** has gone from having almost no hopes of passing any exams and not even being entered to sit many to passing 10 GCSE exams. Your work has been absolutely life changing for *** and without you none of this would have been possible and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart."*
- *"Thank you for supporting both me and the girls in that process, with kindness, compassion and confidence. In turn your approach has both empowered me and re-built my confidence in my parenting and decision making."*
- *"It's been great working with you, you've helped things move along so much for which I'm grateful for. I'm actually no longer doing engineering any more and have decided to pursue a-level business and law along with ICT and welsh bacc is required in sixth form. Thanks again for all the hard work*"
- *"The support she has been proactive in putting in place from other agencies has been exceptional and has "kept her going" and played a huge part in the placement being maintained through some very difficult times."*
- *"I just wanted to see if you r good, I am and kids This is the truth, if it wasn't for u I think my relationships would b disaster....I'm too old to deal with that but without the freedom class, I doubt I would of recognised the sign or I doubt I would b strong enough, So thank you and if u ever wanted me to speak to other women as YOUR SUCCESSFUL STORY lol then I'm more than willing .....thankyou'*

The breakdown of compliments received for Children's services teams are below:

Distribution YTD	Compliments				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Children's Services					
Children with disabilities				1	1
Early Help and Assessment Team		1			1
Family Support & Therapy Services				1	1
Family Support and Protection Team – North			1	2	5

Family Support and Protection Team – South	1	1		3	5
Long Term Support Team			1	1	2
Total	**1**	**2**	**2**	**8**	**13**

13 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Complaints

Complaints data is also collated for the PSOW's Complaints Standards Authority on a quarterly basis and available on their website : https://www.ombudsman.wales/complaints-standards-authority

14 Analysis of Complaints

Adult Services

The numbers of Stage 1 complaints have increased from 2022-23 and stage 2 complaints have slightly increased from those of previous years. There's no particular trend of complaint, apart from complainants' views regarding the quality of service received.

Year	Stage 1		Stage 2	
		External Providers		External Providers
2024-25	**19**	**1**	**5**	**0**
2023-24	14	0	5	0
2022-23	12	0	3	0

Children Services

The number of stage 1 complaints are less than last year, however formal complaints have increased by 50% with 10 complaints being dealt with at the formal stage of the complaints procedure. The trend running through the complaints relates to communication issues and quality of service issues which features in most of the complaints. Communication issues remains consistent with previous years.

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2
2024-25	**23**	**10**
2023-24	30	5
2022-23	21	4

15 Response Timescales

There are statutory requirements established in respect of the timescales for responding to complaints. A full response should be provided in 17 working days for stage 1 complaints and for stage 2 complaints, a full response is required within 25 working days after the complaints have been agreed by the complainant and the local authority. Where we need to exceed these limits, we will obtain the service user/carer's agreement.

These tables shows the length of time it has taken to respond to complaints:

Adult Services

Social Services Timescales	2023-2024		2024-2025	
	Stage 1	**Stage 2**	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**
Up to 17 working days	9 (64%)	0	13 (65%)	0
18 - 25 working days	1 (7%)	0	3 (15%)	0
26+ working days	4 (28%)	5 (100%)	4 (20%)	5 (100%)
Total	**14**	**5**	**20**	**5**

Children Services

Social Services Timescales	2023-2024		2024-2025	
	Stage 1	**Stage 2**	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**
Up to 17 working days	14 (46%)	1 (20%)	15 (65%)	2 (20%)
18 - 25 working days	4 (13%)	0	4 (17%)	0
26+ working days	12 (40%)	4 (20%)	4 (17%)	8 (80%)
Total	**30**	**5**	**23**	**10**

Where complaints go over 25 working days, this is often due to the complexity of the matter under investigation and the need to consult with others (who may not be available) before concluding matters.

16 Actions for Improvements

Our approach is based on getting it right first time, and if not, then putting it right as soon as possible. We always listen to what people say and ensure we make improvements where services have fallen short of our prescribed standards.

We recognise that some people do not always want to complain but they may wish to make comments about the service they receive. We ensure that comments are noted and responded to.

Some examples below of actions for improvements made resulting from complaints investigations.

- Ensure that apologies are provided where complaints have been upheld.
- Practitioners reminded of the importance of completing lateral checks with all relevant professionals to inform assessments and reports.
- Children's Social Care to review the practice guidance produced by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) on Harmful Conflict and Domestic Abuse to consider whether there are aspects of this guidance that could be usefully adopted to improve practice within the service.
- Practitioners working within Children's Social Care should attend training on domestic abuse in accordance with The National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

- Reflective learning event to be held with practitioners to consider
    - The role of fathers and their importance to children
    - The role of Children's Services in promoting relationships of children with fathers up to date assessment of their care and support needs.

- Review of care needs be undertaken, with a focus on current need and how best to meet those needs.

- Advocacy services be offered to support individuals participating in review meetings.

- Adult Services develop straightforward public facing information that sets out the assessment, care and treatment planning, and review processes.

- Clear, open, honest and transparent communication between the service and families to facilitate building constructive and positive relationships.

- Staff should ensure that all individuals and their carers engaged in the assessment for Continuing Health Care are provided with all the relevant information required to enable them to understand the process and who is responsible for the process.

- Workers to ensure that even when all the information is provided orally and in writing there is clear and necessary role for them in regularly reinforcing the information given and checking that the individual understands what they are being told.

The most commonly mentioned reasons for making a complaint are that:

- A genuine grievance is recognised and acknowledged
- An apology is provided
- Practical action to remedy an injustice is undertaken
- Where it has been identified as having failed, departmental policy, procedure and practice is reviewed
- Action is pursued against staff and managers

While some complaints may raise concerns, many reflect individual perceptions rather than necessarily systemic issues. The expression of dissatisfaction does not inherently indicate the presence of a wider issue, however individuals are encouraged to raise concerns. These are treated with respect, even when they may not indicate broader service failings.

There are always lessons to be learned from complaints and customer feedback. Key lessons include:

- Communication – feedback consistently highlights the importance of clear and timely communication. Customers expressed frustration with delays and lack of updates.
- Early resolution – most complaints are resolved at stage 1. Comments can flag issues early, before they escalate into complaints

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SUBJECT:	**SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT POLICY**
MEETING:	**PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**
DATE:	**18TH NOVEMBER 2025**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To present the Socially Responsible Procurement Policy (Appendix One) for consideration and scrutiny, prior to presentation to Cabinet.

1.2 Following consideration, delegated authority will be requested to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Resources, to approve any updates to reflect national Guidance and/ or meet new legislative requirements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note the contents of the Policy and offer any comments for consideration, prior to presentation to Cabinet, and the subsequent request for approval, for the adoption of the Policy on the 10th of December 2025.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 The Ardal procurement service, run by Cardiff Council, delivers the collaborative procurement partnership across Monmouthshire, Cardiff, Torfaen, and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. Ardal's aim is to deliver value for money and socially responsible procurement for Ardal partners through shared resources, knowledge, learning and expertise.

3.2 To deliver efficiencies for all Ardal Councils and standardise procurement processes for organisations who want to work with any Ardal Council, a Socially Responsible Procurement Policy has been created for each Council, that is built around the same eight socially responsible objectives, as detailed in paragraph 3.7 of this report. The purpose of Monmouthshire's Policy is to set out the steps the Council will take to implement Socially Responsible Procurement and the same clear expectations of what we will require from our suppliers and contractors.

3.3 The policy, which is an external facing document, aims to maximise social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being through the procurement activities offered by the Council. It also sets expectations for suppliers and contractors, in conjunction with Ardal's Selling to the Council Guide, and aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3.4 As stipulated in the 'Purpose' of the Policy', requirements for contracts will be proportionate to the size of the contract, to ensure no unnecessary barriers to participation are created. The actual requirements suppliers will be expected to meet and / or comply with will vary for each tender according to contract value or where a contract requires a specific Well-being impact. Where the contract is

sizeable, suppliers will be encouraged to contact Business Wales who provide free business support to businesses wishing to partake in public sector procurements, details can be found on the Ardal website by using the link contained within the Policy document.

3.5 The Council has a strong record of using procurement as a vehicle to deliver local and national policy priorities. The Council's Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Delivery Plan, this Policy and all the supporting procurement processes and procedures i.e. Contract Procedure Rules, are geared towards maximising the delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being through Council contracts. This includes decarbonisation, promoting fair work, maximising the delivery of community well-being benefits (formerly social value) and maximising the opportunities for local businesses to bid for contracts, all of which align with the ambitions of the Council's Community and Corporate Plan. Delivery will be monitored and reported in the Council's annual self-assessment report of the enabling strategies.

3.6 Figure One below details the standardised approach taken by Council's within Ardal. In essence, the primary aim of the *Socially Responsible Procurement Policy* is to ensure that Ardal Councils maximise the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing that it delivers through its procurement activity; the *Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy* sets out the key role procurement will play in enabling each Ardal Council to deliver their strategic priorities and the *Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs)* set out how each Council will undertake procurement in a consistent way, by adopting the same four Procurement Routes.

Figure One: Ardal's Common Approach

3.7 At the heart of the Policy is the policy framework which contains eight socially responsible objectives aligned to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's four well-being Outcomes. The eight socially responsible objectives are:

- Reducing Carbon Emissions.
- Enhancing the Natural Environment and Biodiversity.
- Embedding Fair Work and Ethical Employment.
- Creating Sustainable Employment and Skills Growth.
- Working with our Communities.
- Protecting the Well-being of Young People and Vulnerable Adults.
- Supporting our Local Economy.
- Promoting a Vibrant Culture, Heritage and Welsh language.

3.8 The Policy references and links to relevant legislation, Welsh Procurement Policy Notes, wider national/local policy and guidance:

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act
- Procurement Act (2023)
- Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act (2023)

3.9 Further guidance is awaited from the Welsh Government around the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act, including details of the requirements on public bodies to publish an annual Procurement Report and to report on a series Well-being Impact Measures, which have yet to be finalised. This may result in updates being needed to the Policy and the delegation is proposed to deal with this, along with updates to meet new legislation requirements.

3.10 Awareness of the Policy will be generated amongst Officers through the soon to be established Procurement Network, which will bring together Officers with Procurement responsibilities to increase their skills and knowledge. Specification document development updates will also be available to Officers to support the tendering process. Wider awareness will be raised through a planned Communications campaign which will be targeted at various audiences including Members and the business community and third sector, who will also be invited to targeted 'Meet the Buyer' events being planned for early 2026.

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

4.1 An Equality and Future Generations Evaluation Assessment is not appliable in this case as there are no proposed changes to existing service delivery and policy.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 This is a covering report to present the Socially Responsible Procurement Policy for consideration, prior to presentation to Business Cabinet, and the subsequent request for approval, for the adoption of the Policy by Cabinet. An options appraisal is therefore not required.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Socially Responsible Procurement Policy sets out a series of well-being objectives that are to be demonstrably considered when considering

Commissioning and Procurement arrangements to the range of services that the Council delivers and requires. As with all Commissioning and Procurement arrangements, work must be undertaken to ensure that the likely cost of the service or goods is robustly estimated prior to a decision being made. It is also required that the funding sources are identified prior to a decision with clear mitigations in place in the event of actual costs exceeding the estimate.

7. CONSULTEES

7.1 Ardal Colleagues, Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet

7.2 Engagement has taken place with Council policy leads over the summer of 2024; with the final stage of engagement being an open market engagement exercise by Ardal to encourage suppliers and contractors the opportunity to respond to a survey to provide feedback on the eight themes and how their obligation could be met. 23 contractors responded in late 2024, all saying they supported the eight socially responsible objectives as described and that there were no additional objectives required. The Policy was updated to reflect the comments received from Ardal Councils and contractors. Overall, there has been a positive response from all to the Policy.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act
- Procurement Act (2023)
- Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act (2023)
- https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Socially-Responsible-Procurement-Strategy-2023-28-Final.docx

9. AUTHORS

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Socially Responsible Procurement Policy

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EDITION

JULY 2025

The Ardal Councils are Cardiff, Torfaen, Monmouthshire & Vale of Glamorgan Councils who have developed this Guide.

CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT POLICY

Monmouthshire County Council

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INTRODUCTION

The Ardal procurement service, run by Cardiff Council, delivers the collaborative procurement partnership across Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. Ardal's aim is to deliver value for money and socially responsible procurement for our Ardal partners through shared resources, knowledge, learning and expertise.

Monmouthshire County Council spends £140 million per annum on purchasing a diverse range of goods, services, and works. The Council remains committed to achieving value for money through its procurement processes but also recognises the wider well-being impact its decisions can have. So, the Council will use its purchasing power to reduce both our, and our suppliers, carbon footprints, to support our local economy and local jobs, to help to address poverty and inequality through fair work and ethical employment practices, and to support our local communities by creating employment, skills growth and supporting the most vulnerable within our society.

To this end Monmouthshire County Council has worked with Cardiff, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils within the Ardal Procurement collaboration to develop and commit to the eight Socially Responsible Objectives in this Socially Responsible Procurement Policy. Although this policy will reflect our commitment to and progress against this agenda, we believe that we can make a difference by aligning our practice to allow us to learn from each other but also to make it easier for the suppliers and contractors who we rely upon to deliver much of our aspiration and priorities.

Each Ardal Council will adopt its own Socially Responsible Procurement Policy built around the same eight Socially Responsible Objectives but setting out their local priorities.

ARDAL PROCUREMENT – WORKING TOGETHER TO AFFECT CHANGE

Our Shared Procurement Objectives

- Contributing to being carbon neutral by 2030.
- Making procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector.
- Increasing community well-being benefits delivered by suppliers.
- Improving fair work and safeguarding practices adopted by suppliers.

The Ardal procurement service run by Cardiff Council delivers the collaborative procurement partnership across Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. Our aim is to deliver value for money and socially responsible procurement for our Ardal partners through shared resources, knowledge, learning and expertise.

During 2024/25 the four Authorities spent over £1.3 billion buying a diverse range of goods, services and works from over 15,000 suppliers and contractors.

All four Local Authorities recognise the key role procurement will play in accelerating the move to net zero, ensuring fair work and ethical employment throughout our supply chains, and maximising the local economic and social impact of our spend to help tackle poverty and inequality. This is reflected in **Our Shared Procurement Objectives** contained within the Procurement Strategy for each Authority.

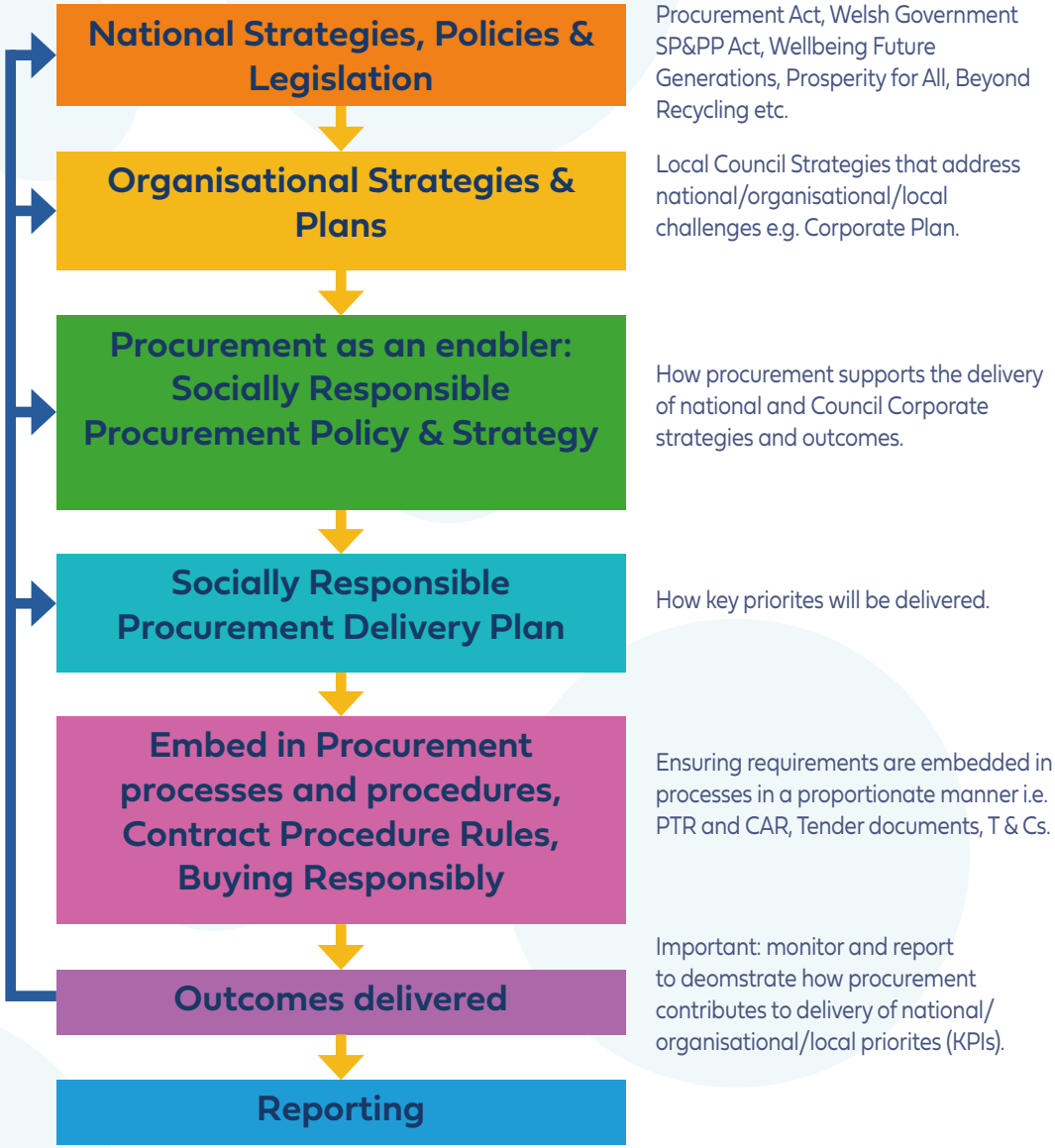
To support this, all four authorities have supported the development of an aligned **Socially Responsible Procurement Policy**. As well as addressing the legislative requirements summarised within this document, it also reflects the strong policy commitment that all four authorities have made through their own corporate plans, policies, and public statements.

By working together, we believe that we can embed these priorities into the way we manage our procurement activity and importantly provide those who work with us a consistency in expectation and requirement.

ARDAL'S COMMON APPROACH

To deliver efficiencies for all Ardal Councils and standardise procurement processes for organisations who want to work with any Ardal Council, all Ardal Councils have adopted the same:

- **Socially Responsible Procurement Policy** brings together a number of different legislative requirements, policy initiatives and aspirations into a single coherent framework underpinned by 8 key procurement objectives. The primary aim of the Policy is to ensure that Ardal Councils maximise the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing that it delivers through its procurement activity. Ardal Councils want to work with organisations who share their values around promoting well-being.
- **Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy** - each Strategy sets out the key role procurement will play in enabling each Ardal Council to deliver their strategic priorities including accelerating the move to net zero, ensuring 'Fair Work' through our supply chains, and maximising the local economic and social impact of our spend.
- **Contract Procedure Rules** - all Ardal Councils have adopted the same four Procurement Routes within their Contract Procedure Rules. These Rules, and the supporting standardised documentation, set out how each Council will undertake procurement in a consistent way.



PURPOSE

This policy document contains a Well-being Policy framework, aligned to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, for achieving **environmental, social, economic, and cultural Well-being** and for maximising our contribution to achieving the Well-being goals.

It sets out what steps the four Ardal authorities will take to implement **Socially Responsible Procurement** and, importantly, sets out a clear expectation of what we require from our suppliers and contractors.

In conjunction with the Ardal **Selling to the Council guide**, potential and existing suppliers and contractors should be aware of the requirements contained within this policy. Some of these will be minimum requirements for all contracts, whereas others will only be applicable to contracts over a particular contract value or where a contract has specific potential Well-being impact.

To ensure our procurement process is proportionate, and does not create any unnecessary barriers to participation, the actual requirements you will be expected to meet and / or comply with will vary for each tender. However, if you are considering, or actively, bidding for contracts, we would expect you and your supply chains to be able to respond positively against the requirements set out within this policy.

Even if you are one of the many suppliers and contractors that already work with us, we still expect you to consider how you can support us in the delivery of this policy during the term of any contract.

Although primarily an external facing document, the expectation is that this policy is understood and followed by Council officers to ensure that requirements and commitments are being secured to achieve the priorities set by the Ardal partner authorities.

What do we mean by Socially Responsible Procurement?

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 places a socially responsible procurement duty on all Welsh councils to seek to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural Well-being of their area by carrying out public procurement in a socially responsible way.

This means acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle which the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 defines as ***'acting 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'.***

OUR POLICY FRAMEWORK

This policy provides a Well-being framework to ensure a joined up consistent approach to the delivery of 'Socially Responsible Procurement' that encapsulates UK and Welsh Government legislative requirements and the Ardal partners priorities. Our policy framework contains eight Socially Responsible objectives aligned to the four Well-being Outcomes. Underpinning these is our commitment to be globally responsible.

WELL-BEING OUTCOMES	ENVIRONMENTAL		SOCIAL				ECONOMIC	CULTURAL
OUR EIGHT SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE OBJECTIVES	REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS	ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY	EMBEDDING FAIR WORK AND ETHICAL EMPLOYMENT	CREATING SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS GROWTH	WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES	PROTECTING THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS	SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY	PROMOTING A VIBRANT CULTURE, HERITAGE AND WELSH LANGUAGE
OUR FOCUS WILL BE ON	Challenging our need to buy. Working with our suppliers and contractors to reduce the carbon impact of our purchased goods, services, and works to support our commitment to be Net Zero by 2030.	Using circular economy principles to protect the natural environment, minimise waste, and reduce the consumption of natural resources by using them efficiently and effectively.	Embedding the highest ethical standards across our supply chain, ensuring fair work, and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.	Creating employment and training opportunities for local people to reduce unemployment and raise the skills level, especially for local people from disadvantaged groups.	Working with our communities, schools, and community support organisations, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need.	Improving the Well-being of young people and vulnerable adults by ensuring they are safe, promoting their rights, and creating opportunities to fulfil their potential.	Promoting circular economy principles and supporting our local economy by using our purchasing power to help local businesses and voluntary and community organisations to thrive and drive more local employment.	Promoting Welsh culture, Welsh heritage, and the Welsh language.

Further detail on each Socially Responsible objective is included in pages 11 to 29. For each Socially Responsible objective this policy provides detail on the wider policy context, clear statements of our ambitions in terms of we will do and what we expect from suppliers and contractors. This Policy will be applied in a proportionate way to reflect the value and type of contract.

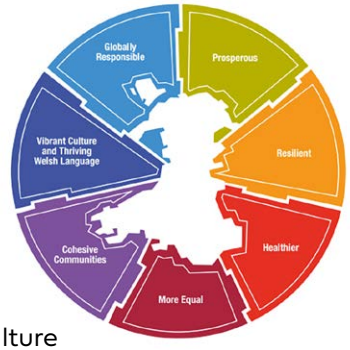
KEY LEGISLATION INFORMING OUR POLICY

This policy has been informed and shaped by UK and Welsh legislation, national policy, and the local policy priorities of our Ardal partners. Although throughout this policy we reference and provide links to relevant legislation, Welsh Procurement Policy Notes, wider national/local policy and guidance, the following are key UK and Welsh legislation:

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

Wales is the only country in the world with a Well-being of Future Generations Act. It sets out seven Well-being goals for Wales:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales.



The Act also puts in place a "sustainable development principle" made up of the "five ways of working" for public bodies in Wales to follow to deliver the seven Well-being goals and improve the environmental, economic, social, and cultural Well-being of Wales.

Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

The Act recognises that Procurement is an important lever to support the creation of a more equal, more sustainable, and more prosperous Wales.

It requires Local Authorities to carry out procurement in a socially responsible way by taking positive action, in accordance with the "sustainable development principle", as defined by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We will be required to:

- Consider socially responsible public procurement when carrying out procurement for prescribed contracts.
- Include social public works clauses in major construction contracts and social public workforce clauses in any outsourced contracts. (current requirements are contained within this policy against the relevant Socially Responsible Objective)
- Carry out contract management duties to ensure that socially responsible outcomes are pursued through supply chains.
- Publish a Contract Register and Contract Forward Plan
- Prepare a Procurement Strategy setting out how we intend to carry out public procurement.
- Produce an annual Procurement Report.

Procurement Act (2023)

The Act replaces the Public Contracts Regulations (2015) and aims to provide a simple, flexible, and transparent system for procurement in Wales, England, and Northern Ireland. The headlines include:

- Embedding a fully transparent procurement system with the creation of a single digital platform for public procurement.
- Duty to Publish Notices at six key stages of the Procurement Cycle, includes Pipeline, Direct Awards, Variations.
- Delivering value for money, maximising public benefit, transparency and acting with integrity.
- Duty to have regard to barriers facing SMEs and what can be done to overcome them.
- Duty to identify and manage conflicts of interest and limits circumstances that contracts can be awarded without competition.
- Strengthen rules around Contract Management, prompt payment and publishing info on supplier performance.
- New Exclusions framework and Debarment List provide clear rules for excluding suppliers.

OUR LOCAL PRIORITIES

In addition to the UK and Welsh Legislation and Policy, this policy also reflects the local priorities of Monmouthshire County Council. Monmouthshire County Council approved the Council's Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 which sets out its purpose 'To become a zero-carbon County, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life'. The Plan also sets out the Council's high-level objectives for the next five years:

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

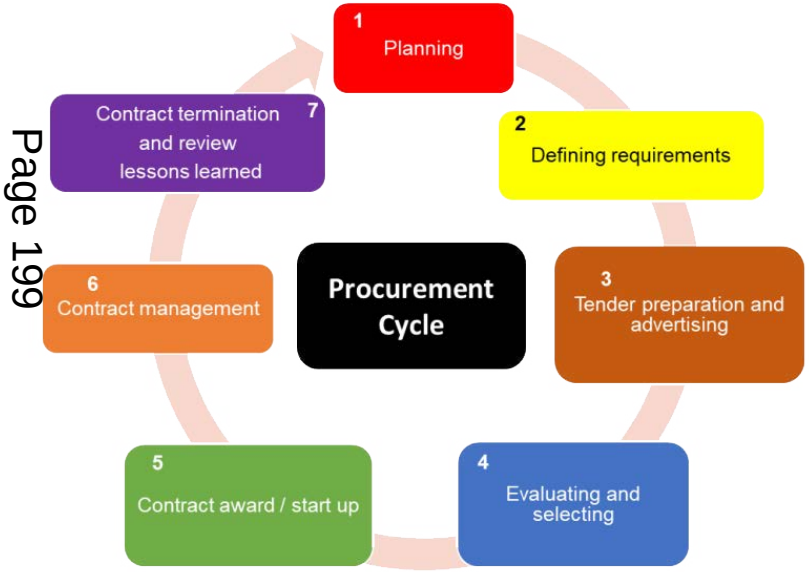
Whilst Monmouthshire County Council recognises the key role procurement will play in accelerating the move to net zero, ensuring fair work and ethical employment throughout our supply chains, and maximising the local economic and social impact of our spend to help tackle poverty and inequality, the Council's Procurement Objectives as contained within the Council's Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-2028 are slightly different to the other three Ardal Local Authorities, to reflect local priorities, and are detailed as follows:

- Contributing to reducing the Council's carbon emissions to Net Zero by 2030;
- Making procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector;
- Improving Fair Work, Equity and Safeguarding practices adopted by suppliers;
- Increasing Community Benefits;
- Securing value for money and managing demand;
- Ensuring legal compliance and robust and transparent governance; and
- Promoting innovative and best practice solutions.

DELIVERING WELL-BEING THROUGH PROCUREMENT

Delivery of Well-being needs to be considered at all stages of the procurement cycle.

To have the biggest positive impact on Well-being, we need to ensure that it is fully considered at planning and defining requirements stage and then embedded within tender documents, whilst ensuring delivery is actively managed at the contract management stage.



The Social Partnership & Public Procurement (Wales) Act sets out specific contract management duties to ensure that socially responsible outcomes built into contracts are delivered, and that the obligations are passed on to sub-contractors in supply chains.

Ways in which Well-being can be embedded and delivered through the procurement cycle include, but are not limited to:

- Encouraging innovative solutions from early market engagement and by focusing on new ways of working.
- Using the Sustainable Procurement Hierarchy in developing specifications to identify opportunities to buy sustainably, minimise carbon impact, waste, and any negative environmental impact.
- Structuring tender processes and documents to improve accessibility to smaller and third sector businesses.
- Setting selection criteria for bidders that take account of Well-being considerations linked to legislation and policy, including carbon reduction, and equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Considering the Well-being impact as part of whole life cost of decisions made when awarding contracts.
- Including Social Public Works Clauses and other Contractual clauses to ensure that Well-being commitments are understood and delivered.
- Securing additional Community Well-being Benefits from contractors which goes beyond the primary purpose of the contract to support delivery of wider Council priorities.
- Managing contracts effectively to ensure that requirements and added value commitments are delivered.

OUR APPROACH TO SECURING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING BENEFITS

Community Well-being Benefits are well-being commitments offered by bidders over and above the primary contract requirements i.e. the requirements as stipulated in the specification and/or Terms and Conditions. These may also be known as Community Benefits or Social Value. They are typically sought in higher value contracts (currently over £250,000) but encouraged for inclusion in contracts below this value where appropriate.

What we are looking for

- Although further detail is contained within each of the Well-being themes, we typically seek Community Well-being Benefits in respect of:
  - Employment and Training opportunities for disadvantaged groups
  - Support for community, educational, environmental, and cultural initiatives delivered through Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and Community Groups
- Individual tenders, particularly for larger construction projects, will typically provide further detail on specific priorities and initiatives linked to the project.

How we do it

- In all applicable tenders, typically above £250,000, we provide bidders with an opportunity to offer Community Well-being Benefit commitments which are evaluated as part of their tender – this is usually 5%-10% of the overall evaluation weighting.
- These commitments must be related to the delivery of the contract but cannot include anything which is a primary requirement of the contract. Our expectation is that tenderers commitments will typically equate to 1% to 3% of contract value.
- Bidders record their commitments as targets against specific well-being measures and are required to provide a written explanation of how they will deliver the target.
- Further information on our approach to capturing Community Well-being Benefits can be found on our website at ardal-procurement.gov.uk/Community Well-being Benefits

An employee is from a **"Disadvantaged group"** if that employee:

- has not been in regular paid employment for the previous 6 months, or
- is between 15 and 24 of age, or
- has not attained an upper secondary educational or vocational qualification (International Standard Classification of Education 3) or is within 2 years of completing full-time education and who has not previously obtained his or her first regular paid employment, or
- is over the age of 50 years, or
- lives as a single adult with one or more dependants
- works in a sector or profession where the gender imbalance is at least 25% higher than the average gender imbalance across the United Kingdom, and belongs to that under-represented gender group, or
- is a member of an ethnic minority and requires development of his or her linguistic, vocational training or work experience profile to enhance prospects of gaining access to stable employment.
- is disabled

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What we want to do

and

What we require our contractors to do

REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on working with our suppliers and contractors to reduce the carbon impact of our purchased goods, services, and works to support our commitment to be Net Zero by 2030.

We want: to reduce the Council's carbon emissions to Net Zero by 2030 by reducing the carbon impact of our purchased goods, services and works.

We want to work with organisations who: are committed and actively working to reduce their own carbon emissions and that of their supply chains and to be Net Zero by 2050.

We want to:

- Use our Buying Responsibly principles in planning all procurements and challenge the need to purchase in general. The Sustainable Procurement Hierarchy to be used in planning all purchases and the consideration of alternative delivery models.
- Understand new emerging technologies, products and solutions which can deliver requirements with a lower carbon footprint and use our specifications and requirements to require lower carbon emissions solutions.
- Ensure that our specifications and requirements are in line with Ardal Guidance .
- Ensure all bidders and suppliers to Ardal Councils are committed to Net Zero by 2050.
- Ensure all suppliers and contractors bidding for and delivering contracts valued over £6m (incl VAT) have a published Carbon Reduction Plan and to encourage this below that value.
- Ensure award criteria incentivises bidders to submit carbon reduction approaches.
- Ensure carbon reduction commitments are delivered by including performance measures and KPIs which require reporting on CO2e emissions.
- Ensure our suppliers and contractors minimise, and where possible eliminate, waste to landfill and to adhere to relevant legislation for the removal and disposal of waste and recyclable materials.

We require our contractors to:

- Confirm their commitment to be Net Zero by 2050 and to deliver any contract in a manner which supports the Council's commitment to be Net Zero by 2030.
- Publish a Carbon Reduction Plan and commit to annually monitor and report on Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and to make plans to reduce emissions (this is a mandatory requirement for all contracts over £6m (incl VAT) and this threshold will be reviewed annually with a view to lowering it).
- Work towards monitoring and reporting on the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions associated with the delivery of all contracts above £6m (incl VAT).
- Implement a sustainable procurement hierarchy approach throughout their business to divert hard to recycle waste from landfill, use take-back schemes for electrical and electronic equipment, and eliminate single use plastic packaging through reuseable packaging solutions and schemes.
- Commit to reduce energy consumption, switch to low carbon energy, and prioritise low or zero emission modes of transport.
- Provide climate change or carbon reduction training to their staff.
- Proactively engage with the contract owner to identify and implement improvements to drive down carbon emissions during contract term.

Legislative and Policy Context

- This theme has strong links to the policy ambition of transitioning to a Net Zero Wales by 2050, and the 2050 Zero Waste Wales target, which is laid out in the strategy document Beyond Recycling (a strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality).
- The Welsh Procurement Policy Note WPPN 12/21: Decarbonisation through procurement - Addressing CO2e in supply chains | GOV.WALES) sets out further policy guidance to public sector bodies across Wales.
- Monmouthshire Council Climate & Nature Emergency Strategy Climate & Nature Emergency - Monmouthshire

ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on protecting the natural environment and reducing the consumption of natural resources by using them efficiently and effectively and minimising waste.

We want: to enhance the natural environment and biodiversity and reduce consumption of natural resources by sourcing them sustainably.

We want to work with organisations who: take positive steps to minimise negative impact on nature and biodiversity across Wales and outside of our borders

We want to:

- Ensure that our specifications and requirements reduce, and where possible, eliminate products which come from unsustainable production which contribute to deforestation (timber, soy, palm oil),.
- Ensure our contractors actively seek to minimise and reduce water consumption and avoid river pollution.
- Ensure our contractors reduce their dependency on plastic packaging.
- Encourage and facilitate a programme of tree planting and plant growing projects to provide an element of off-setting for net-zero carbon and to help improve the natural habitat and local biodiversity.
- Encourage sustainable local food production.

We require our contractors to:

- Ensure timber and paper products carry Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest certification or are made from recycled materials and carry FSC Recycled or Ecolabel certification or similar.
- Minimise the amount of waste generated where goods or services provided are likely to generate waste e.g. materials reused wherever possible, recycling and composting is maximised.
- Minimise the use of water wherever possible and promote the use of water efficient equipment and services, and where appropriate have an active approach to water management with clearly defined targets for reducing consumption by location and/or activity.
- Ensure cleaning products are cruelty free and not tested on animals.
- Ensure that products including food and other supplies are from sustainable sources which have not had a overly negative impact on the natural environment and contributed to deforestation.

We encourage our contractors to:

- Support initiatives to protect and improve the natural habitat and biodiversity of the Authorities.

Legislative and Policy Context

- This theme will have strong links to the policy ambition of transitioning to a Net Zero Wales by 2050.
- Biodiversity and the natural environment elements are linked to Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act: Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty.
- There is guidance on reducing impacts to the natural environment outside of our borders at Deforestation Free Business - Size of Wales - SizeOfWales-DeforestationToolkit-English-Jan2023.pdf.
- The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023
- Monmouthshire Council Climate & Nature Emergency Strategy Climate & Nature Emergency - Monmouthshire

EMBEDDING FAIR WORK AND ETHICAL EMPLOYMENT

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective is focused on embedding the highest ethical standards across our supply chain, ensuring fair work, and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.

We want: to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to employment rights (including the minimum and living wage), equality, diversity and inclusions, health and safety, and trade union representation.

We want to work with organisations who: go beyond their legal obligations to maintain high standards of ethical conduct, treat their employees fairly and promote equality and diversity in employment and service provision.

We want to:

- Implement and embed the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains into our procurement activity through tackling modern slavery, human rights abuses, blacklisting, false self-employment, unfair use of umbrella schemes and zero hours contracts.
- Encourage our suppliers and contractors to adopt the Real Living Wage and encourage them to become a Living Wage Accredited Organisation.
- Promote diversity, inclusion, equality and fairness by encouraging our suppliers and contractors to have flexible working practices and work policies that minimise the risk of discrimination and the consequences of discrimination as a result of bullying and/or harassment relating to the Equality Act 'protected characteristics'.
- Ensure our suppliers and contractors take all possible steps to ensure that risks of human trafficking and modern slavery are mitigated in any of their supply chains or their own operations.
- Ensure our suppliers and contractors have effective Health & Safety policies and procedures in place and that these are implemented.

We require our contractors to:

- Be compliant with employment, industrial relations, equalities and health and safety law for contractors, and ensure that due diligence is applied throughout supply chains.
- Adhere to the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and encourage them to become signatories.
- Avoid the excessive use of unfair and zero-hour contracts and only use them when clearly beneficial to both employer and employee.
- Commit to working practice that improves the physical and mental health of employees.
- Comply with any applicable obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- Have a clear and up to date Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Policy, and provide training to all employees (Mandatory Requirement on all contracts or above £2m).
- Diversify their workforce through recruitment programmes inclusive of black and minority ethnic individuals.
- Comply with Modern Slavery Act 2015 wherever it applies, and routinely undertake supply chain modern slavery due diligence where appropriate.
- Allow Trade Union access and Collective Bargaining.
- Collect and monitor equalities data from its employees for all contracts of £2m or above.

We encourage our contractors to:

- Pay all staff the Real Living Wage and to commit to becoming a Living Wage Accredited Organisation
- Have flexible working practices, and LGTBQ+ / Gender reassignment friendly work policies which are inclusive in their equality training
- Collect and monitor equalities data from its employees for contracts below £2m in value.

Legislative and Policy Context

- This theme requires compliance with employment, industrial relations, equalities and health and safety law by contractors, and that due diligence is applied throughout supply chains. In addition to ensuring compliance with the law, the intention is to encourage the adoption of practices which are consistent with fair work and exceed the baseline provided by employment, industrial relations, equalities and health and safety law.
- Policy developments in this area include the Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and its Guides, particularly those on tackling blacklisting and unfair employment practices, which were initially drafted to address challenges in the construction sector. Welsh Procurement Policy Note WPPN 11/21: Ethical employment practices in public sector supply chains – advice for the Welsh Public Sector [HTML] | GOV.WALES.
- The Code is underpinned by the Fair Work agenda in Wales.
- Another important area is the Public Sector Equality Duty (within the Equality Act 2010), with further links to the recently published Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales | GOV.WALES and Draft Disabled People's Rights Plan: 2025 to 2035 | GOV.WALES.
- Cardiff Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- In terms of Globally Responsible links, there's the Welsh Government's International Strategy, and the Wales and Africa programme.
- Monmouthshire Council Strategic Equality Plan Strategic-Equality-Plan-2024-28_English-2.pdf

CREATING SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS GROWTH

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on creating employment and training opportunities for local people to reduce unemployment and raise the skills level, especially for local people from disadvantaged groups.

We want: to create sustainable employment opportunities for local people through skills and training pathways, with a focus on people from disadvantaged groups.

We want to work with organisations who: will commit through contract delivery to support the creation of training and employment opportunities for local people from disadvantaged groups.

We want to:

- Provide employment opportunities to facilitate sustainable long-term employment for designated disadvantaged groups.
- Create opportunities and co-ordinate access for apprenticeships, internships and work placements, which are prioritised for our communities.
- Create more opportunities for local residents and co-ordinate access for higher level apprentices / degree apprentices.
- Provide work experience opportunities and job opportunities for disadvantaged local residents who are unemployed or underemployed.
- Improve and support pathways to enable workers to transition from those in traditional high carbon industries to retrain and move into low carbon industries.
- Work with partners to identify skills gaps and then develop programmes/ courses to address these skills gaps i.e. carbon reduction and 'green' industries.
- Remove barriers to employment.

We require our contractors to:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to providing employment, apprenticeships, supported employment pathways training and work placement opportunities, to local residents and in particular, disadvantaged groups.
- Work with our Employability and Skills teams to co-ordinate the delivery of any employment or training commitments for supported and tailored pathways to support disadvantaged groups including Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) & Children Looked After (CLA) and those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- Utilise partner contacts including DWP, Careers Wales to provide exposure to employment opportunities.
- Develop employability and skills plans outlining how they will deliver on any commitments made in tenders.
- Make full use of the National Apprenticeship and skills providers to increase apprentice opportunities.
- Work with schools, colleges and youth support services to help equip young people with the right skills to match the requirements of the labour market including work experience placements (paid where appropriate) and careers support.

Legislative and Policy Context

- This theme links to the Welsh Government's plan for employability and skills: Stronger, fairer, greener Wales which contains the following key priorities:
  1. Young people realising their potential.
  2. Tackling economic inequality.
  3. Championing Fair Work for all.
  4. Supporting people with a long-term health condition to work.
  5. Nurturing a learning for life culture.
- The key focus for this policy is therefore on ensuring long-term employment, addressing skills gaps by supporting the training and upskilling of people that are both in and out of employment including apprenticeships and traineeships. Key to this is removing barriers to employment of disadvantaged people and people with protected characteristics.
- Other important links include LGBTQ+ Action Plan, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, Age-friendly Wales, Gender Equality Action Plan, Action on Disability, and A More Equal Wales, and upskilling programmes including: The Young Person's Guarantee, Jobs Growth Wales +, Net Zero Skills Action Plan, and Learning for Life.
- Monmouthshire Council Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy Monmouthshire County Council launch new Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy - Monmouthshire

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on working with our communities, schools, and community support organisations, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need.

We want: to support our communities, schools, youth support services and community groups to address poverty and inequality targeting effort towards those in greatest disadvantage.

We want to work with organisations who: will commit to play an active role in local communities, working with local community organisations to deliver additional well-being benefits, targeted at areas with the greatest need.

We want to:

- Secure volunteering and in-kind support for local community groups and initiatives by encouraging suppliers and contractors to offer Community Well-being Benefit commitments through our contracts that:
  - Help support the health and well-being of communities by linking contractors commitments with local schools and colleges, community and residents' groups to help to improve local facilities, and run or sponsor activities / events, which will directly benefit those living there.
  - Support the growth of VCSE's and community organisations i.e. not only in kind donations but also professional services and advice.
  - Support local communities to get involved in Dementia Friendly projects.
  - Support local communities to hold events that bring people together including arts, cultural, food / growing, sporting or reinvigorating community space.
- Ensure that any Community Well-being Benefits are focused on our priorities as set out in tender documentation.
- Develop and promote a Community Well-being Benefits Scheme to create a register of community projects looking for support.

We require our contractors to:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting local community groups and initiatives which help support the health and well-being of communities.
- Actively and meaningful work with Council teams, VCSEs and Community Groups to deliver as a minimum any contractual commitments made.

We encourage our contractors to:

- Make Community Well-being Benefit commitments to support community and educational initiatives.
- Work with our Community Inclusion teams, Youth Services, Community Focused Schools/Clusters and other organisations already working within our communities.
- Promote and/or support programmes that encourage people to volunteer in their communities.

Legislative and Policy Context

- The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales provides a range of documents that support organisations on their journey to supporting the delivery of the Well-being Goal "A Wales of Cohesive Communities".
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act requires Welsh Councils to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support.

PROTECTING THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on improving the well-being of young people and vulnerable adults by ensuring they are safe, promoting their rights, and creating opportunities to fulfil their potential.

We want: to safeguard and promote the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We want to work with organisations who: will work with the Council and our communities to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults and to promote and facilitate independence.

We want to:

- Ensure contractors adhere to the Council's Safeguarding Policy for Contractors and that their employees can identify abuse or exploitation and take responsibility for reporting concerns in an appropriate and timely way.
- Encourage our suppliers and contractors to support a range of programes and initaitives including:
  - Supporting a Child Rights approach and a Neuro Diverse, Dementia Friendly City approach.
  - Supporting Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) & Children Looked After (CLA) and Carers in line with the Corporate Parenting Charter.
  - Raising awareness of, and prevent, protect and support victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence - Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.
  - Promote and sponsor opportunities for vulnerable children and adults who are in need of care and support i.e. events for carers.

We require our contractors to:

- Adhere to the Council Safeguarding Policy for Contractors and ensure their staff know what the indicators of abuse / harm look like and what to do if they have concerns.

We encourage our contractors to:

- Make Community Well-being Benefit commitments to support initiatives aimed at supporting young people and vulnerable adults where allowed within the tender process.
- Diversify their workforce through recruitment programmes inclusive of Additional Learning Need (ALN), CEYP, CLA.

Legislative and Policy Context

- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act requires Welsh Councils to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support.
- Safeguarding Policy for Contractors provides guidance to Contractors so that they understand their role in supporting the Council to safeguard and promote the well-being of children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect Harm.

SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on supporting our local economy by using our purchasing power to help local businesses and voluntary and community organisations to thrive and to drive more local employment.

We want: to support our local economy by using our purchasing power to help local businesses and voluntary and community organisations to thrive and to support residents to secure good employment.

We want to work with organisations who: will maximise the use of local suppliers and contractors through their supply chain and specifically seek to provide opportunities for SMEs and VCSEs.

We want to:

- Promote our Contract Forward Plan to local businesses, and increase the number of opportunities advertised through Sell2Wales.
- Actively promote opportunities for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Voluntary and Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) to bid for work by, where appropriate, breaking down larger contracts into 'lots', reserving below threshold procurement for MSMEs/VCSEs, and carrying out pre-market engagement including market warming events.
- Encourage our suppliers and contractors to support the local economy by using local businesses in their supply chains and local labour wherever possible to fulfil contract obligations and ensuring prompt payment.
- Encourage our suppliers and contractors in the transition to a more circular local economy by waste prevention, reducing waste and closing product and material loops through value retention within the resource hierarchy.
- Work with partners such as Business Wales, Business in Focus, Federation of Small Businesses and South Wales Chamber of Commerce to improve the skills of local SMEs to access public sector opportunities.
- Ensure that payments to contractors and throughout supply chain are made within 30-day payment terms.

We require our contractors to:

- Advertise sub-contracting opportunities through Sell2Wales, in addition to its usual channels, and hold Meet the Buyer events (this is a mandatory requirement for all works contracts over £2m).
- Actively develop local supply chains and take steps to improve supplier diversity, increasing the number of ethnic minority owned businesses, MSMEs and VCSEs in their supply chains.
- Work with local employability and skills providers – to make local services aware of developments at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Work to advertise all vacancies and recruitment opportunities through Communities for Work Plus, Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus (JCP).
- Commit to a number of their workforce coming from the relevant County or locality, including those employed through the supply chain, and ensure 25% of workforce, including supply chain, on works contracts over £5m to come from local area.
- Pay sub-contracted suppliers and contractors within 30 days after receipt of acceptable invoice and endevours to paying MSMEs, ethnic minority owned businesses and local businesses 10 days after receipt of an acceptable invoice.
- Establish Project Bank Accounts to administer payments to contractors and sub-contractors for larger value construction contracts in accordance with project bank accounts policy (WPPN 03/21).

Legislative and Policy Context

- International trade agreements prevent Welsh public bodies from restricting contract opportunities to suppliers from a particular place. However, positive action in making contracts more accessible to smaller and local suppliers has been happening for many years. This was initially through the Opening Doors Charter for SME-friendly procurement and also through the Welsh Government's Community Benefits Policy.
- Foundational economy: delivery plan | GOV.WALESBeyond recycling | GOV.WALES
- This theme is informed by WPPN 07/21: SME-friendly procurement and considers what we can do to open up opportunities for SMEs and voluntary organisations through supply chains. Sell2Wales already has functionality available to allow Tier 1 advertising.
- Improvements to Sell2Wales are underway, to bring the platform in line with the reformed procurement legislation and make it more accessible to organisations in Welsh public sector construction supply chains.
- There are links with the UK-led Procurement Act in terms of having to consider barriers that SMEs may face in competing for contracts and reserving below threshold procurements for SMEs.
- Monmouthshire Council Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy Monmouthshire County Council launch new Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy - Monmouthshire

PROMOTING A VIBRANT CULTURE, HERITAGE AND WELSH LANGUAGE

ardal

This Socially Responsible objective focuses on promoting a Vibrant Culture, Heritage and Welsh language.

We want: to promote and protect Welsh culture, Welsh heritage and the Welsh language.	**We want to work with organisations who:** are willing to play an active role in promoting and protecting Welsh culture, Welsh heritage and the Welsh language.

We want to:
 	
Culture & Heritage
• Encourage our suppliers and contractors to support a range of cultural and heritage programes and initaitives including:
  o Supporting access to local assets such as libraries, play facilities, museums, galleries, sports facilities, arts organisations, natural resources and historic buildings to promote cultural and linguistic activities.
  o Promoting and support cultural events.
 	
Welsh Language
• Encourage our suppliers and contractors to work with providers such as the National Centre for Learning Welsh to provide opportunities for staff to learn, use and develop their Welsh language skills
	We require our contractors to:
	
	Culture & Heritage
	• Support community and grassroots sport or other cultural events, including providing access to musical instruments or sports kit.
	• Support the protection and enhancement of cultural assets/facilities or historic sites.
	• Encourage their staff to volunteer in community and cultural settings.
	• Support opportunities for the community to access to arts and creative opportunities to promote mental health and well-being.
	• Encourage staff and their families to sign up for and use a free library card.
	
	Welsh Language
	• Comply with our adopted Welsh Language Standards as described in our Welsh Language Compliance Notice. Please see the Welsh Language Commissioner's Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and Bidding for Contracts and Grants: Welsh language considerations; and Cardiff Council's Welsh Language Standards Guide to Third Parties.
	• Promote the use of the Welsh language and support opportunities for their staff and/or the wider community to develop and/or improve their Welsh language skills.

Legislative and Policy Context

- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose duties on certain organisations, including all Welsh Councils, to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language. Each Ardal Council has published a Bilingual Strategy focused on increasing the number of Welsh speakers, increasing the use of Welsh, and to provide favourable conditions to support the language's growth.
- The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales provides a range of documents that support organisations on their journey to supporting the delivery of the Well-being Goal – "A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language".
- Cymraeg 2050 is the Welsh Government's action plan to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Each Ardal Council maintains a Strategy to Promote the Welsh Language and support Cymraeg 2050's main themes to increase the number of Welsh speakers, increase the use of the Welsh language, and to provide favourable conditions in support of the language's growth. These Promotion Strategies vary across each Ardal Council.
- Monmouthshire Council Compliance Notice & Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

MONITORING AND REPORTING / CONTACTING US

Monitoring and Reporting

The Socially Responsible Procurement Policy outlines Ardal's vision for organisations wanting to work with any Ardal Council. The Policy will be implemented through each Council's established Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Action Plan. From 2026 delivery of the policy will be monitored and reported in each Council's annual performance report of its Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

Contacting us

If you have any questions or thoughts about this policy, please let us know.

E-mail
ardalprocurement@cardiff.gov.uk

Website:
https://ardal-procurement.gov.wales

If you would like to hear from Ardal

To receive updates and news from Ardal Councils then please scan the QR Code

Cabinet, Council and Individual Cabinet Member Decisions (ICMD) Forward Plan

Monmouthshire County Council is required to publish a forward plan of all key decisions to be taken. Council and Cabinet items will only be considered for decision if they have been included on the planner no later than the month preceding the meeting, unless the item is considered urgent.

Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	Cabinet member	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner	Date item originally scheduled for decision
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	21-May-25
Council	04-Mar-26	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028	Ian Chandler – Social Care	Reason is to endorse a new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025 - 2028	Jane Rodgers	24/10/25	
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	
ICMD	17-Dec-25	Annual Performance Report - Planning	Paul Griffiths – Sustainable Economy	Report the Annual Performance Report to Welsh Government	Andrew Jones	15/10/25	
ICMD	17-Dec-25	Section 6 Report to Welsh Goverment on Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems	Catrin Maby – Climate Change and Environment	Report of Councils actions taken to help maintain and enhance biodiversity	Colette Bosley/Kate Stinchcombe	15/10/25	
Cabinet	10-Dec-25	Agree S106 Funding for Caldicot Multi-User Route that connects the newly constructed Caldicot Links/Greenway Active Travel route with the Country Park	Sara Burch	To agree additional funding for the Caldicot Multi-User Route	Colette Bosley	15/10/25	
Cabinet	10/12/25	Strategic Risk Assessment	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	Hannah Carter	29/10/25	
Cabinet	10/12/25	Community and Corporate Plan - Q2 Progress Update	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Leader	To provide Cabinet with an update on the progress that has been made to deliver the commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28.	Hannah Carter	29/10/25	
Cabinet	10-Dec-25	Joint Committee of the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales	Ian Chandler	Joint Committee of the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales - to consider a Deed of Variation to the current Joint Committee Agreement regarding the required quoracy level for committee meetings	Jane Rodgers	24/10/25	
Cabinet	10-Dec-25	Socially Responsible Procurement Policy	Ben Callard - Resources	'1. To approve the adoption of the Socially Responsible Procurement Policy. 2. To delegate authority to approve any	Cath Fallon	20/10/25	

				subsequent updates to reflect national Guidance and/ or meet new legislative requirements, to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Resources.			
Council	04-Dec-25	Regional Partnership Board Annual Report 2024/2025	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Natasha Harris (Torfaen)	24/10/25	
ICMD	26-Nov-25	LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) ACT 1994 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (PRECEPTS) (WALES) REGULATIONS 1995 – Proposed Payment Schedule	Ben Callard – Resources	To seek Member approval of the proposals for consultation purposes regarding payments to precepting authorities during the 2026/27 financial year as required by statute	Ruth Donovan	07-Nov-25	
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Inclusion Strategy and Additional Learning Needs Policy	Laura Wright - Education	The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an opportunity to consider the Inclusion Strategy and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the local priorities as outlined in the Learning Place section of the Community and Corporate Plan.	Morganna Wagstaff	13-Oct-25	
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	2025/26 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 2	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25	
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Car Parking Review	Paul Griffiths	That Cabinet endorses the following recommendations 1.That Cabinet agrees the strategic objectives for the Council's parking strategy 2.That Cabinet agrees the proposed MCC actions in response to the recommendations	Craig O'Connor	9/10/25	
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Panel Performance Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Leader	'To provide an update on the proposed approach for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment which is a requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.	Matt Gatehouse	25/08/25	
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Destination Management Plan	Sara Burch & Paul Griffiths		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25	**Jun-25**
Council	04-Dec-25	Annual Safeguarding Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Diane Corrister	18-Jul-25	
Council	04-Dec-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	Panel Performance Assessment		'To provide an update on the proposed approach for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment which is a requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.	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	2025/26 Revenue Monitoring Update 1	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12/76/25	
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	
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	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 destination for residents and visitors alike.	Tracey Thomas	20-May-25	
ICMD	08-Oct-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Ben Callard	The purpose of this report is to make 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	18-Sep-25	
ICMD	24/9/25	Health & Safety Annual Report			Kate Thompson	5/8/25	Deferred future date unknown
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) Act 2021.	richard Jones	10-Jun-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 report detailing the plan to pay the real living wage rate to employees of third parties contracted to work at the authority's sites, and to seek approval to pursue accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer.	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 and welcome across the wider community.	Sharran Lloyd and Jane Harvey	27-May-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	

				energy requirements of the county and the transition that will be required to support carbon neutrality of the energy demands. The report seeks Cabinets endorsement of the Local Area Energy Plan to enable the development of the regional Area Energy Plan and a supporting Investment Prospectus.			
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Review of Housing Support Grant Programme.	Sara Burch		Ian Bakewell	23-May-25	

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
18th November 2025 (10th Nov agenda dispatch)	**Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 2**	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Medium-term Financial Plan Update	To review the budgetary situation.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Annual Health and Safety report	To scrutinise the report on how the Council's health and safety incidents and risks are managed.	Kate Thompson Cllr Callard	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Social Services Complaints Process	To scrutinise the performance of the Council's complaints process, and issues raised by it.	Annette Evans Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: To note and refer any questions arising: Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy update	To scrutinise the steps the Council will take to implement the Socially Responsible Procurement.	Cath Fallon Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Pre-decision scrutiny
SPECIAL 3rd December 2025	**Economy, Employment and**	To update the committee on the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan.	Hannah Jones Will McLean Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	Skills Strategy action plan update			
	Potholes and Road Conditions	To scrutinise the assessment of requirements, how these are prioritised, MCC's approach, etc.	Carl Touhig Cllr Griffiths?	Performance Monitoring
	ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: Planning Annual Performance Report	Scrutiny of the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Andrew Jones Philip Thomas Craig O'Connor Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
	ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: Community & Corporate Plan progress update	To inform members of the plan's progress.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter Cllr Brocklesby	Performance Reporting
SPECIAL 27th January 2pm	**School Exclusions update**	To scrutinise the latest figures and the Council's performance.	Morwenna Wagstaff Keeva McDermott Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring
	Schools Health Research Network (after 2.30)	To inform the committee about the data and insights from the SHRN work led by Cardiff University relating to pupil well-being.	Emma Taylor Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: Strategic Risk Assessment	To inform members of the authority's risks, and for the committee to consider any areas for further scrutiny.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter Cllr Brocklesby	Performance Reporting
10th February 2026	**Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals (invite other members)**	To scrutinise the 2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 3	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
10th March 2026				
21st April 2026	***Development of Children's Placements – 12mth update***	*To update the committee following scrutiny in April 25.*	*Morwenna Wagstaff* *Will McLean* *Cllr Wright*	*Performance Reporting*
	Investment and Commercial Interests Update – 12mth update	To update the committee following scrutiny in April 25.	Nick Keyse Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed?	**Panel Performance Assessment?**		Matt Gatehouse	

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
To be confirmed	**Grants item – with People members?***	To scrutinise the Council's use of grant money, to assure that it is fit for purpose.	Jonathan Davies Hannah Jones	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	**Consultants and Agencies – with People members?***	To scrutinise the Council's use of consultants and agency workers – the number, relative value, reasons, etc.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies?	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed – best end of 2025?	**Shared Prosperity Funding 2023-25**	Shared Prosperity Funding measures 2023 -2025, update on the measures for transition year 25/26 and future funding risk.	Hannah Jones Will McLean	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed – April/May best *[1 page summary – see minutes]*	**NEET Reduction Strategy**	To scrutinise the strategy's performance.	Hannah Jones Louise Wilce Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed – June 2026	**Update on the Pupil Referral Service (PRS)**	Discussion on significant changes that have occurred in the service and the risks around increasing demand.	Morwenna Wagstaff Jackie Elias Hayley Page Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Specialist Resource Bases & Additional	To review progress at 12-month stage and include reviewing	Morwenna Wagstaff Jackie Elias	Performance Reporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	Learning Provision (including progress with ALN implementation)	progress with ALN following the implementation of new legislation.	Hayley Page Cllr Wright	
	Supporting Vulnerable Learners	To follow up from June 25 – annual.	Morwenna Wagstaff Lucie Doyle Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed	***Recruitment and retention***	*Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver.*		
To be confirmed	***Use of Reserves***	*Future proofing and resilience planning as well as supporting long-term strategic priorities.*	*Peter Davies* *Jonathan Davies* *Cllr Callard*	
Social Justice Strategy progress				
Business Monmouthshire Project monitoring				
'Learning led' review of				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
educational provision in Chepstow				
Review of Property Assets				

- **Exclusions** ~ Annual Reporting ~ January/February
- **Additional Learning Provision & Specialist Resource Base development** ~ Annual Reporting ~ June
- **Support for Vulnerable Learners** ~ Annual Reporting ~ June

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Action List

23rd September 2025

Minute Item:	Subject	Officer / Member	Outcome
4	To provide a written response to the committee about solar panels at/on Castlegate and Newport Leisure Park	Peter Davies, Nick Keyse	Requested.
6	To ask Will McLean to provide a specific update in his Director's Report about the rising trend of harmful sexual behaviour in schools	Will McLean	Requested.
6	To consult education and youth offending colleagues for more detailed data to confirm any correlation between knife carrying and school exclusions	Jane Rodgers, Diane Corrister, Jess Scarisbrick	Requested.
7	To remind Democratic Services about Cllr Bond's suggestion to add a 'Completed' column to the planner	Robert McGowan	Reminded.
8	To check why the Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy action plan update item at the next meeting isn't on the C&C Planner	Robert McGowan	The report is just an update for P&O Scrutiny

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present	Officers in Attendance
County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chair) County Councillors: Jill Bond, John Crook, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, M. Newell, Peter Strong, Ben Callard and Ian Chandler	Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships. Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance/Section 151 Craig O'Connor, Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being Deb Hill-Howells, Chief Officer Infrastructure Diane Corrister, Head of Childrens Services Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adult Services Jess Scarisbrick, Safeguarding and Early Help Service Manager Dave Loder, Finance Manager - Directorate Management Accountant Nikki Wellington, Finance and Support Services Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillors Rachel Buckler and Paul Pavia

1. **Apologies for Absence**

   Paul Pavia sent his apologies and arranged a substitute who themselves was subsequently unable to attend the meeting. Rachel Buckler sent her apologies.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

   None.

3. **Public Open Forum**

   None.

4. **Revenue Monitoring Update 1 - To scrutinise the revenue position for services falling within the committee's remit**

Cabinet Member Ben Callard and Jonathan Davies introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Peter Davies, Matthew Gatehouse, Deb Hill-Howells, Craig O' Connor, Will McLean and Jane Rodgers:

- *Can a simplified version of council spending charts (like pie charts) be included with council tax bills, so residents can better understand where the money goes?*

Officers responded that while bills currently link to detailed information online, they will consider producing a simpler hard copy version for future billing cycles.

- *Have there been any improvements regarding the £90K overspend at Castlegate since the report was compiled?*

Officers explained that while there are still some vacancies affecting income, recent new tenancies (especially in flexible office space) are positive, and active marketing continues. The remaining vacant space is more challenging to let, but overall tenancy levels are close to targets and existing tenants are expanding.

- *Are the staff vacancies structural/planned or due to normal turnover and recruitment delays?*

It was clarified that there are currently 733 vacant posts, but not all have associated budgets due to career development structures. Teams have vacancy factors built into budgets, and all vacancies outside schools require senior sign-off to ensure careful management. The council employs around 4,100 staff (headcount), with fewer full-time equivalents.

- *Have solar panels been installed or considered at Castlegate or Newport Leisure Park?*

Castlegate's roof structure is suitable and such installations are considered during maintenance, but at Newport Leisure Park, tenants are responsible for their own energy costs, so solar panels would not benefit the council directly.

- *Regarding the £109k car parks overspend, are we predicting a further budget cost with the 2 new enforcement officers?*

Officers clarified that the overspend is mainly due to reduced penalty notice income, not pay-and-display, and recruitment is underway to restore enforcement capacity, aiming to resolve the issue. The total number of enforcement officers will be six after recruitment.

- *Has there been any analysis of the Tour Of Britain's value to local businesses?*

The Tour of Britain provides an economic impact report, which will be shared when available, though it might not detail impacts by specific area within Monmouthshire.

- *Can we have an update on Innovation House? Is there the possibility for it to be used by the training department?*

It was clarified that training uses part of the ground floor for courses, reducing costs by avoiding external venue hire, but the building still has other tenants and this is an interim solution.

- *Is Innovation House included in resources reporting and are underspends due to vacancies or other factors?*

The Cabinet Member and officers confirmed that assets like Innovation House are managed corporately within landlord services and reported under the broader resources portfolio.

- *Can tenants at Spytty Park and Newport Leisure Park be encouraged to install solar panels?*

Tenants are responsible for their own buildings and would need to weigh the lease length against installation costs, but the council can support tenants interested in renewables. Previous attempts to install and sell energy to tenants were not financially viable for the council. **Action: Peter Davies to discuss with Nick Keyse and provide a written response back to the committee**

- *Is the council now "right-sized" after previous budget restrictions? What about the impact on staff well-being?*

It was explained that staffing levels are low compared to benchmarks, creating pressures, but the council actively monitors staff well-being and offers support through occupational health, informal groups, and training. The process of right-sizing is ongoing and continually monitored.

- *How does the council determine the appropriate number of staff in social care compared to other areas, and how would this be explained to residents given the significant impact of social care services?*

Staffing levels are based on council-set budgets and service demand, with adjustments made annually through budget pressures and savings. Not all service delivery is by directly employed staff, as some is outsourced, and staffing needs are continually reviewed using service intelligence and demand modelling.

- *Is the council strict enough in enforcing parking penalties, especially for persistent offenders, and whether external debt collection is used?*

A fully resourced enforcement team is being recruited, technology solutions are being explored, and there is a service agreement with another authority for debt recovery.

- *How do we manage supply teaching costs and could the council use in-house or part-time teachers to reduce expenses?*

It was explained that schools often have insurance for supply cover, the council is exploring its own scheme, and advice is given to schools to insure against these costs.

- *Are new comprehensive schools making full use of their facilities for income generation?*

Schools have shared use agreements with leisure centres, and while rental opportunities exist, there are limitations due to supervision and management requirements.

- *Noting the overspend in school transport, the importance of communicating that the council supports pupils without safe routes needs to be stressed.*

This point was acknowledged. The Member suggested reviewing insurance thresholds for supply cover to ensure schools benefit from their policies.

- *Why has the social care budget increased by 22% over two years, which is higher than inflation, and how can this be explained to residents given ongoing savings targets?*

Officers responded that budget lines can change due to service transfers (e.g., housing and homelessness moving into social care), new policy initiatives from Welsh Government with additional funding, and increased demand for high-need care, especially post-pandemic. It was emphasised that the rise is due to a combination of new responsibilities, policy changes, and higher demand, not just inflation.

- *Can you explain the use of the contingency fund to cover the shortfall in National Insurance funding and how further contingencies would be managed?*

The contingency fund is being fully used for this purpose, and future mitigation will rely on financial discipline, maximising grant and income opportunities, and using capital receipts.

- *What are the reasons for rising high-cost care packages, and what is the relationship with the health service?*

Increased complexity and longevity of care needs, demographic changes, and higher thresholds for health-funded care have led to more costly social care packages. There are ongoing discussions with health services about eligibility and funding boundaries.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Members and officers for the report and their responses. The report was moved.

5. **Chief Officer for Social Care AMR - To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.**

Jane Rodgers introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Cabinet Member Ian Chandler, Diane Corrister and Jenny Jenkins:

- *74% of care leavers in employment, education, or training, means there are 26% who are not – is this typical or a cause for concern?*

Officers explained that the actual numbers are small, percentages can be skewed, and there are legitimate reasons (such as parenting or health issues) for some not being engaged. They emphasised ongoing support and tracking for all care leavers, with some entering employment or education later.

- *Why is the number of adults using direct payments not increasing, given their perceived benefits?*

While direct payments are encouraged, they are not suitable for everyone due to the responsibilities involved. Some people explore the option but decide against it, and there is expected to be an increase in uptake due to recent changes in domiciliary care commissioning.

- *Where is "staff churn" greatest, is it among professionally qualified staff or other roles?*

Most turnover occurs in direct services (domiciliary care, reablement, residential), while professionally qualified and leadership roles are harder to recruit for but have less "churn". Each area faces different recruitment and retention challenges.

- *How are people supported in managing direct payments, and how do we mitigate against potential risks such as coercive control or fraud? What about monitoring, payroll, and safeguarding for vulnerable recipients?*

The council retains responsibility for reviewing care and support needs, offers managed bank accounts and payroll services to handle tax and National Insurance, and provides dedicated direct payment advisors. Social workers continue oversight, and mechanisms are in place to minimise the administrative burden and protect recipients.

- *Why is positive feedback from adult social care surveys lower than during or before COVID, and is there any understanding of this trend?*

Officers explained that satisfaction can be influenced by various factors (e.g., waiting times, changes in workers, unmet expectations), and while disappointing, the service focusses on workforce training, communication, and quality assurance to address these issues.

- *Is learning from the recent changes in domiciliary care commissioning in the South being applied to the North and Central areas?*

A full review with partners is pending, but interim lessons include improving communication with providers and residents, and adapting approaches to local provider landscapes. Officers emphasised the importance of engaging providers and supporting operational teams.

- *What is the general learning from the significant number of complaints, and have there been any resulting changes?*

Officers noted that complaints provide detailed insights, with communication being a recurring theme. The service is working to improve communication, especially around financial advice and legal processes, and ensures staff are trained to handle complex interactions.

- *A discrepancy in the reported numbers of looked after children was noted.*

The observation was acknowledged and officers committed to checking and correcting the figures.

- *A member suggested ensuring social worker support is in place before major changes and involving local councillors as advocates for isolated residents.*

The Chief Officer agreed to consider these points.

- *What will be the impact of Monmouthshire's growing older population and declining working-age population on future adult services demand? Should we be concerned about our ability to meet this demand? Does the replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) make sufficient provision to address demographic imbalance?*

Officers acknowledged the challenge, explaining that service redesign focuses on prevention, early intervention, and reablement to manage increased demand. They noted the importance of housing strategy and attracting younger people and care workers, but emphasised that shifting demographics is a long-term issue. The RLDP aims to create more affordable housing to retain younger residents and care workers, but this is a gradual process.

- *The Chair highlighted discrepancies in reported workforce numbers between infographics and the main report, requesting clarification. He emphasised the importance of workforce grants and expressed concern about the potential risk of future grant cuts. Referencing recent national figures on the cost of looked after children, he noted that Monmouthshire's per-child cost appears lower, and asked for clarification on average costs. He commended improvements in children's services response times and adult social care metrics, such as reduced waiting lists and unfilled care hours, and thanked the team for these achievements.*

Chair's Summary:

The Chair expressed appreciation for the extensive and excellent work carried out daily by social care colleagues across the county, noting that most are working in the community rather than in the council building. He emphasised the high value and gratitude felt by the committee for both frontline staff and officers, acknowledging that this may not always be apparent during scrutiny sessions. He highlighted the usefulness of including case studies and graphical data in the report, making the service more accessible and understandable for councillors and residents. He encouraged wider sharing of the report to help residents understand how council tax funds are spent and

to raise awareness of the positive impact of social care services. He recognised the significant effort involved in producing the report and thanked the officers. The report was moved.

6. **Safeguarding Annual Report - To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.**

Jane Rodgers introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Diane Corrister, Jessica Scarisbrick and Cabinet Member Ian Chandler:

- *Regarding the emergence of harmful sexual behaviour in schools, is the increase due to actual incidents or a greater awareness and reporting? Are influences like online content or post-COVID effects factors? Does the topic warrant further scrutiny?*

Officers responded that there is both increased awareness and a real rise in incidents, with online influences and post-COVID complexities contributing. They explained that improved training and reporting have made the issue more visible, and that multi-agency groups are working to address it in schools.

Action: to ask for a specific update in the Chief Officer's Director's Report

- *Can we have clarification on the "other" and "inappropriate conduct" categories in practitioner concerns, especially considering their significant proportion compared to specific abuse categories?*

It was explained that "other" refers to concerns in a practitioner's personal life (e.g., substance misuse outside work), while "inappropriate conduct" covers behaviours not fitting other categories, such as verbal abuse. Officers agreed to consider further breakdowns.

- *The improvement in sharing one-page profiles with transport staff is to be commended. How many cases has this change reduced from?*

The team acknowledged the improvement in transport cases but did not have the previous case numbers on hand, offering to follow up if needed.

- *Do the amber ratings in the action plan relate to actions not visible in the main report?*

Some amber actions are ongoing or have moved into the next cycle; there is a separately linked action plan document for further details.

- *Should the safeguarding report be explicitly called a "self-evaluation" report, given that it focusses more on strengths and less on weaknesses, and should it include more feedback from service users?*

Officers acknowledged the point about self-evaluation, explaining that the report is benchmarked against regional and national frameworks and external inspection findings, and agreed to clarify this in future reports.

- *There is an apparent link between rising permanent exclusions in schools and knife carrying – is this a genuine correlation or just a passing reference?*

Knife carrying is a national and local issue but is not the sole factor in exclusions. Officers offered to consult education and youth offending colleagues for more detailed data to confirm any correlation **– ACTION**

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member and officers for this report and their responses. The report was moved.

7. Council and Cabinet Work Plan.

Councillor Bond reminded officers of her suggestion to add a 'completed' column to the Planner. Officers will follow up again with Democratic Services colleagues **– ACTION**

8. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Work Programme and Action List.

Councillor Bond requested clarification as to why the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan update is not on the Council and Cabinet Work Planner **– ACTION**

9. To confirm the minutes of the previous meetings:

- 9a. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee – 9th July 2025 (Special Meeting).

- 9b. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee – 15th July 2025 (Ordinary Meeting).

The minutes were confirmed.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 18th November 2025 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 1.13 pm.